

University of Minnesota Medical School

Periodic External Reviews

Objective of External Reviews

The objectives of periodic reviews of departments, centers, and institutes (here and after referred to as departments) are as follows:

1. To provide departments with the opportunity to reassess their directions, goals, strengths, and weaknesses in the areas of teaching and research, and where applicable, patient care and service.
2. To determine present and future needs of each department with respect to personnel, programs, and other resources.
3. To examine the degree to which the department coordinates its activities with other departments and schools of the University in contributing to the excellence of the Medical School.
4. To assess the department's continued relevance to the mission of the Medical School and the University.

The external review process is intended to be a prospective planning document for departments, centers, and institutes as well as for the Dean of the Medical School, the Senior Vice President of the Academic Health Center, and when appropriate, the Graduate School.

Schedule and Timeline for Reviews

Each department will be reviewed approximately every 7 years. While the timetables for reviews may vary, the following basic sequence of events will occur.

- The department head will be notified of the intention to perform an external review and will be asked to initiate a self-study.
- The department head will appoint a self-study committee and its chair to initiate the self-study process. The Associate Dean for Faculty Affairs should attend the first meeting of the self-study to give the committee its charge and answer questions.
- The department head will submit to the Associate Dean for Faculty Affairs a list of department heads from other universities who might serve as potential external reviewers. The Associate Dean for Faculty Affairs in consultation with the Dean of the Medical School will select an appropriate external review committee and ask one member to serve as chair. For smaller departments, there will ordinarily be two

- Site visit: this will ordinarily last 2 to 3 days, depending on the size of the department.
- The external review committee's exit interview with the Dean and Associate Dean and submission of its initial report will be the last scheduled event of the site visit. Approximately 3 hours will be allowed for the reviewers to write their initial report.
- The external review committee will complete its report and transmit it to the Dean.
- The Dean will review the external review committee's report with the department head and possibly with the self-study committee of the department.
- The department head will review the report with the department.

Appointment of the Self-Study Review Committee

The department head appoints the chair of the self-study committee and the remaining committee members. The committee should represent a broad faculty interest in evaluating the proposed academic plan prepared by the department for the review and be composed of 7 to 10 faculty members. Representation is sought from those departments interacting in some way with the department under review. An *ex officio* member of the committee is the Associate Dean for Faculty Affairs.

Development of the Self-Study Document by the Department

In a letter formally notifying the department head that the review process has been initiated, the Dean requests that a report be prepared that will serve as the principal reference document for the external review committee and Dean's Office. The primary component of the document is the academic plan outlined in the department's directions in education, research, and service for the next 5 years. The self-study document also includes descriptions of the education programs, research programs, resources, past accomplishments, and service programs of the department. The latter will obviously differ between clinical and basic science departments, centers, and institutes. The committee chair is responsible for follow-up with the department to assure completion of the self-study document. Please see the Self Study Outline for specific details.

The department head should designate an individual from his or her office to serve as liaison with the Dean's Office. The departmental liaison should be the executive assistant

to the head or equivalent. This arrangement assures that the head, through his/her direct report, is aware of all requests made by the self-study committee. This also ensures a single point of initial contact for the committee, the Dean's Office, and the external reviewers. The departmental liaison is integral to the completion of the self-study document.

Self-Study Committee Meetings

The self-study committee meets anywhere from 8 to 10 times (depending on the size of the department and the number of issues involved) prior to the site visit to develop a full understanding of the department under review and its proposed plan. The Associate Dean attends the initial meeting of the self-study committee to discuss the charge to the committee and to answer any questions. The remainder of the initial meeting builds the foundation for the review process and includes: 1) selection of nominees for external consultants in consultation with the Associate Dean; 2) selection of individuals to meet with the committee; and 3) identification of any necessary subcommittees. Subsequent meetings include discussions with individual faculty members selected and any others elsewhere in the Medical School, University, or the community if appropriate. Departments offering graduate degrees should include the appropriate Dean from the Graduate School and possible solicitation of information from the Dean of the Graduate School. The committee staff is responsible for adequate documentation of each meeting. This should be in the form of notes or minutes at the discretion of the chair.

Selection of External Reviewers by the Self-Study Committee

The involvement of external review consultants in the review process provides an opportunity for the self-study committee and the Dean to obtain a wide perspective of trends in the discipline of the department under review and the direction of the department in the national context as well as comparative information and/or perception regarding the status in which the department is held. These consultants are usually department heads in other medical schools. The selection of external consultants is a participatory and consultative process involving the committee and the department head. The final selection of consultants is reviewed by the Associate Dean of Faculty and Graduate Affairs in consultation with the Dean of the Medical School.

When the preferred consultants have been identified, the Dean's Office representative contacts them and agrees on a general time frame for the site visit, which is agreeable to the department. Confirming specific dates is the responsibility of the department staff person. One of the consultants is asked to serve as chair and assume responsibility for writing the report that reflects the views of the consultants. A letter is sent to the consultants by the department liaison confirming the dates of their visit and providing some general information about the review process. The consultants are asked at that time to provide names of individuals with whom they would like to meet during their visit to

the University. No later than one week before their visit, the consultants are sent a copy of the agenda, the department self-study document, and a list of the committee members.

Solicitation of Comment on Department under Review

The head of the department under review or his/her designee sends a memorandum outlining the review to all department heads and directors of centers and institutes and to all faculty employed in the department under review.

Site Visit

The review process culminates in a 2 to 3 day session of meetings during which the external consultants interview the department head, other key faculty from the department, and other related faculty members within the Medical School. The review is conducted in the format of an NIH site visit. Participants include various members of the department and selected representatives of other departments whose activities relate to those of the department under review as well as representatives of the Medical School and the Graduate School as needed. In addition, the department head and the consultants should have an opportunity to propose individuals to meet with the consultants.

The Associate Dean is particularly helpful during the time leading up to and during the site visit itself. This person should be available during the site visit in order to assist with any last-minute adjustments made during the visit. The Associate Dean is required to attend 2 meetings during the visit: 1) the initial meeting with the Dean; and 2) the exit interview with the Dean.

The basic structure of the site visit is flexible within an overall structure. The proceedings begin with the Dean's brief remarks to the consultants. The external reviewers then meet with the department head. The head's remarks usually require an hour, including a question and answer period. The balance of the day and the following day are generally devoted to interviewing the individuals listed and to touring the department. The evening of the first day usually includes a social dinner with the consultants and the review committee at the discretion of the consultants.

Lunch on the second day is generally spent with the head of the department being reviewed. This luncheon may also include other department members at the discretion of the external consultants. This provides an opportunity for the consultants and the head to ask questions and follow up on any unfinished business. The external consultants then meet together in a working session to discuss and summarize the review and develop an outline, which will later become their report. Following their deliberations, the consultants meet with the Dean and the Associate Dean, as well as a representative of the Graduate School where indicated, to discuss and review their recommendations. Their outline is submitted as their initial report.

The consultants are asked to produce a single formal report reflecting the views of the group after the conclusion of the visit. The chair of the external reviewers then submits the report to the Dean. The report should be considered an "open" document that can be made available to the self-study committee and ultimately to members of the department.

Final Report

The external review committee is encouraged to submit its final report to the Dean within six weeks of the site visit. By completing its report in a timely manner, the review committee can eliminate needless anxiety on the part of the department as to the outcome of the review. The report should be written in such a way that it can be shared by the Dean with the head of the department under review, the self-study committee, the Senior Vice President, the faculty of the department under review, and the Dean of the Graduate School if appropriate.

The external review committee determines the structure and contents of its final report. Reports will differ depending on the department under review and on the pertinent issues raised during the review.

Post-Review Activities

After the Dean has received the external review committee's final report, he/she meets with the department head and perhaps the department's review committee to discuss its findings and recommendations. Once this has been accomplished, he may elect to take the opportunity to meet with the department as a whole to discuss this review.

Budgetary Considerations

Departments are responsible for covering any costs associated with preparing for the External Review, such as meetings of the Self-Study Review Committee or printing of Self-Study materials. The Medical School Dean's Office is responsible for all charges incurred by the reviewers for travel as well as honorarium paid to the reviewers. There are a limited number of additional charges that are acceptable to be reimbursed by the Medical School Dean's Office. Please see the External Review Budget Guidelines for additional information.