

**GUIDELINES FOR ACADEMIC DEPARTMENT REVIEW  
OFFICE OF THE PROVOST  
NORTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY**

As one step in ensuring the continued high quality of Northeastern's academic programs and its ongoing pursuit of excellence, each of the University's academic units will undergo a periodic review, usually on a five to seven year cycle. These reviews are designed to provide the faculty, the Deans and the Provost with independent and authoritative evaluations of the academic units in order to assist with the long term planning efforts for the unit. A successful review will identify the comparative advantage that the unit has within its discipline, where excellence can be achieved, and opportunities to enhance national stature.

The process includes both self and peer (external) reviews and is aimed at fostering academic excellence at all levels, to determine how to raise and maintain the quality of the academic unit to a higher level, and to provide guidance for administrative decisions in support of continual future improvement. The review will provide the unit with an opportunity to take stock of its strengths and weaknesses and to evaluate its strategies and goals. It is intended to help units determine whether their programs are cohesive, coherent, effective, and true to their mission.

The Dean of the College within which the unit resides is responsible for initiating the review. The Office of the Provost provides oversight and facilitates the process of appointing both the internal and external review committees.

**Goals of Department Review:**

- Ensure quality of degree programs
- Assess department's functions and contribution to the goals of the University
- Identify those aspects of the department that are strong and those that require more focused attention
- Assess progress toward achieving previously-defined objectives
- Gain external perspective through peer/aspirant analysis and external review committee
- Evaluate strategy for meeting objectives
- Develop future goals

**Timeline for Department Review:**

1. Notification to department that it is scheduled for review; to be made by the College Dean no later than October of the review year (normally the last year of the regular review cycle).
2. Department chair meets with College Dean to discuss issues/concerns regarding review, and recommendations regarding members of the internal and external review committees; occurs during fall term of review year.
3. The Dean discusses membership of the internal and external review committees and appointment letters are sent. A spring date is scheduled for external visit.
4. Internal review committee completes Self-Study and discusses with Dean and Provost; due four weeks prior to visit of external committee.
5. External committee visit takes place; spring of review year.
6. Report from external committee to Dean; preliminary report at end of visit and full report within 2-3 weeks.
7. Dean reviews Self-Study and external committee report with department, and submits summary with actionable items to the Provost.

**Self-Study:**

The Self-Study document should not exceed 50 pages, excluding supporting data and documents which may be included as appendices. Material required for the self-study includes:

### **A. Faculty Profile**

1. List all current tenured/tenure track faculty members, indicating academic rank, academic age (years since terminal degree), current workload distribution (% teaching/scholarship/service), and any changes in rank during the review period (e.g., hiring, promotion, tenure award). At the end of the list, please include any prior T/TT faculty members who were in the department during the review period and summarize their reasons for leaving the department in the change-in-rank column.
2. List any other full-time faculty or staff, indicating titles and brief descriptions of roles.
3. Describe departmental governance, including the roles for any faculty with significant service workload distribution.
4. Describe departmental faculty workload policy, including (a) guidelines for the allocation of teaching loads and research expectations, and (b) guidelines for merit and other faculty review.
5. Describe faculty recruitment and retention processes, including initiatives to encourage professional and academic development of faculty. Provide information on the current representation of underrepresented groups among faculty

### **B. Academic Program Profile**

1. For each degree program, provide five-year enrollment, retention and graduation information, including funding support for graduate students (some of the data to be supplied by the Office of the Provost). If applicable, please also include interdisciplinary programs in which the department plays a significant role, and provide a brief description of the interdisciplinary program(s).
2. Provide information, where possible, on placement of graduates.
3. If degree programs involve a subset of departmental faculty, please indicate which faculty members are currently involved with the programs. For the current academic year, indicate the amount of part-time instruction for each program.
4. Describe the goals, priorities and challenges for each degree program, including a summary of how the goals intersect with those of the University academic plan.
5. Describe instructional innovation within the degree programs.
6. Describe processes for periodic review of curriculum and course contents, and for assessing student-learning outcomes.
7. Provide a summary of student evaluations of faculty teaching (data to be supplied by the Office of the Provost). Describe additional approaches to assessing teaching effectiveness, including assessment of teaching assistants. What departmental training and mentoring mechanisms are in place to ensure teaching quality?
8. Provide a summary of how advising is carried out in the degree programs. Describe mechanisms for training, mentoring and evaluating program advisors.

### **C. Scholarship/Research Profile**

1. Describe major areas of specialization for the department, including a summary of how these areas intersect with the goals of the University academic plan.
2. Describe 2-3 key departmental productivity metrics of faculty scholarship/research productivity (e.g., # senior-authored articles, performances, # books, # PhD graduates), and provide a summary for the department's research-active faculty members over the review period. [If appropriate, utilize different key metrics for different areas of specialization.]
3. For departments with PhD programs, indicate which faculty members are affiliated with the department's PhD program, how many students they mentored and graduated during the review period, and list PhD student publications. Describe plans to foster interdisciplinary research/scholarship opportunities for Ph.D. students.
4. Provide a summary of external research funding during the review period, including awards to support future research (some of the data to be supplied by the Office of the Provost). Metrics should include grant proposals submitted, new awards, and expenditures. Provide the department's plan to sustain and grow research productivity including external research funding. Provide metrics regarding the development of intellectual property including disclosures submitted, copyrights, patent applications and patents awarded.
5. Describe mechanisms to encourage student collaboration in faculty research, and provide a summary of undergraduate research projects in the department during the review period.
6. Describe faculty participation in multi-investigator and interdisciplinary research and Ph.D. programs. Provide details of how the department is fostering involvement in interdisciplinary research and graduate programs.

### **D. Strategic Analysis: Areas of strength and weakness, opportunities for the department, threats to departmental goals**

1. Describe current departmental strategic goals, their fit with the University's goals, and the progress toward their attainment.
2. Provide an environmental scan for the discipline. Where is the discipline going?
3. Provide an analysis of departmental peers and aspirants.
4. Outline the department's strategic plan for the next five years including:
  - a) Goals for each academic program
  - b) Goals for the unit's faculty composition, including underrepresented groups, if applicable.
  - c) Goals for the unit's research mission
  - d) Indication of how the department's goals fit with the University's goals, including interdisciplinary goals.