Bronx Community College
City University of New York

Guidelines for Periodic Academic Review and Departmental Self-Study

November, 2014

Guidelines for
Periodic Academic Review and Departmental Self-Study

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I. Overview

The requirement for departmental academic review as a formal periodic process, including both a self-study and external evaluation, is mandated by the CUNY Board of Trustees. Each CUNY college is required to report annually on these academic reviews as part of the CUNY Performance Management Process.

The BCC *Guidelines for Periodic Academic Review and Departmental Self-Study* draw upon the standards and approaches to assessment defined by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education. These *Guidelines* are intended for use in internal college reviews to assist faculty in writing a departmental self-study as well as preparing for the site visit by external reviewers. In addition to the external reviewers, other readers of the self-study will be department faculty and college administrators.

The self-study is envisioned as providing a reflective report on the department's contribution to realizing the college's mission and achieving its goals. In addition to providing a snapshot of the department's instructional activities and resources, curriculum development and engagement, and organizational infrastructure, the self-study should provide evidence and analysis of faculty assessment of student learning and how faculty use outcomes assessment to shape departmental curricular, instructional, and resource planning.

In compliance with Middle States' Standards, three key ideas shape the purview of these *Guidelines:*

1. They place documentation of student learning assessment at the heart of the academic review process and reporting.
2. They envision the scope of assessment as a department-wide activity with assessment results used to make improvements.
3. They are intended to promote analytical and meaningful reflection upon teaching and learning as the basis for departmental planning.

In this vein, the self-study should provide faculty perspectives on the following:

1. The extent to which a department fulfills its mission and meets its academic goals.
2. The effectiveness of teaching practices and use of resources.
3. The methods used to assess both 1 and 2.

In consultation with the Office of Academic Affairs (OAA), planning for the site visit by two external evaluators begins in the last stages of preparing the self-study. After the site visit and receipt of the external evaluators' report, the department will be asked to prepare an evidence-based action plan for improving instruction and the curriculum.

External agency accreditation reviews follow agency-generated guidelines and procedures for self-study preparation that incorporate accreditation agency standards and procedural expectations. Departments that offer externally accredited programs may reference these findings as appropriate.

II. Department-Specific Inquiry Questions

Each department will be expected to address some specific and unique curricular areas as outlined in questions that may focus upon recent program or course revisions, new courses or programs, changes in instructional infrastructure, grant-funded initiatives, recently introduced resources, or other matters. These questions may arise in several ways: They could be prepared by the Office of Academic Affairs and presented to the department as an Addendum to these *Self-Study Guidelines*. These questions may also be departmentally generated, perhaps through a preliminary analysis of data compiled for Section III.E, from a review of CUNY PMP and Middle States reports, or from faculty experience in the classroom. The self-study should provide answers to these questions, but where they are embedded in the narrative and in the appendices may vary, depending upon the nature of their focus.

III. Components of the Self-Study Report

A. Department Overview

Provide a departmental mission statement with goals that relate to the college's mission, goals, and strategic planning (See college catalog and/or Web site). The department's mission and goals should reflect its values and vision with regard to instructional and other areas of departmental faculty work; curricula, programs, and courses; and co-curricular programs. This discussion should include identification of the career and/or educational pathways for which the department's coursework and programs prepare students after they graduate from BCC. Departmental mission and goals may be contextualized by any of the following:

1. One or more degree or certificate programs offered, including dual/joint programs with CUNY senior colleges.
2. Multi-sectioned courses or sequence(s) of courses taken by students in several programs across disciplines and departments.
3. Departmental faculty involvement with other instructional programs: Honors, Remedial Programs, Teaching with Technology, Writing Across the Curriculum, etc.
4. Clinical, internship, practicum, or other program capstone learning experiences.
5. Other departmental faculty work that is related to or supports instruction (e.g., advisement, adjunct faculty development, co-curricular programs, student clubs, etc.).

B. Programs and Courses

1. Identify student learning outcomes in departmental courses and programs, providing details of what students should be able to demonstrate, know or perform after completing each required course and each program offered in the department. This includes courses in the department preparing the self-study that fulfill curriculum requirements for students in programs offered by other departments. Explain why and how the learning outcomes will be important for graduating students who transfer to senior colleges and/or seek employment.

2. Discuss the alignment of course learning outcomes with the college's institutional General Education learning outcomes or Pathways learning outcomes. As appropriate, this should include mastery of discipline-specific content and skills that may be embodied in both the Personal Growth and Professional Development proficiency as well as other General Education proficiencies.

3. For each program in the department, provide a map or other vehicle for displaying the alignment of program learning outcomes with General Education or Pathways proficiencies

and goals, and discuss what this map or vehicle reveals about student learning in the program.

4. Identify sections of courses with special focus or modality (e.g., writing intensive, honors, teaching with technology), and the faculty who teach them. Describe the relationship between objectives of the course as it is usually offered and the objectives of the course when offered in this modality. Describe student learning assessment of these courses and what analysis of findings suggests about future offerings of them in this mode.

C. Student Learning Assessment

Summarize faculty assessment of student learning outcomes since the last departmental self-study, indicating which courses have been assessed and how assessment results have been used. In particular, describe in detail faculty assessment activities in the last 2-3 years with specific discussion of materials documenting these activities and results that are included in the Appendix of the self-study. Your discussion should feature the process for the following:

1. Development of learning outcomes aligned with General Education or Pathways proficiencies and goals.
2. Determining how and what student work or products were assessed.
3. Development and use of assessment tools such as rubrics or other measurements with criteria for evaluating or rating student performance.
4. Sampling and collecting student work.
5. Conducting outcomes analysis of the levels of student performance and learning.

Discuss how assessment findings are being used, or will be used, to improve or sustain curricular currency, student learning, and teaching effectiveness. Include a description of plans, and efforts already underway, leading to curricular reform or introduction of new teaching practices and resources.

D. Faculty and Teaching

Provide a snapshot profile of current departmental full-time tenured and tenure-track faculty including tenure status; rank; teaching area (include courses each usually teaches); research area; WAC trained (include course number and number of sections of WI courses offered in last 3 years); Honors sections (which courses?). Indicate the number of substitute and adjunct faculty in the last academic year, and provide a breakdown by courses showing the number of sections taught by full time tenured/tenure-track, substitute faculty and adjuncts. Please note that some of this information can be presented in tabular form. Discuss staffing and personnel changes in the last 3 years and the context or reason for these changes.

Describe methods and criteria of evaluating faculty's knowledge in departmental academic disciplines and teaching practices, and discuss methods and criteria used to keep courses current and ensure effective teaching. Include discussion of departmental organizational structures and other arrangements (faculty orientation and mentoring, etc.) that promote and nurture a culture of shared accountability and collaboration for curricular and instructional planning, implementation, and assessment. Include discussion of efforts

through departmental and institutional supports, such as the Center for Teaching, Learning, and Technology, to address improving pedagogical competencies of the faculty.

Describe strategies to promote student success, analyze their effectiveness, and discuss plans for improvement. As relevant, include current faculty assignments or engagements in leadership roles for co-curricular programs that are departmental, divisional, or college wide.

Assess the adequacy and use of course-based resources to enrich student learning, advance teaching excellence, and realize the achievement of educational goals. Describe how the department evaluates use of these resources and their impact on achieving instructional goals and sustaining or improving student learning.

E. Current Students and Graduates

Describe departmental academic support for students with respect to advising, tutoring, lab facilities, technology and other resources, and discuss how they are impacting student success. Where this is available, describe outcomes assessment and its findings for gauging the effectiveness of these resources. Indicate what sort of planning is underway, or will be developed, to assess these student supports and use assessment findings to improve student success.

Discuss and analyze data provided in the Appendix regarding enrollment trends in departmental courses—especially concerning significant passing and withdrawal trends—and programs in the last five years. Analyze student progression through sequenced courses. Discuss projected enrollment and staffing for the next three years, and explain the basis for this projection.

For departments with AA, AS, AAS degree and certificate programs, provide information on the transfer and success of graduates in baccalaureate programs within CUNY. The Office of Institutional Research can help you to obtain data from the CUNY Institutional Research Database. Analyze this data and discuss how it can be used for designing direct assessment of student learning in specific courses and programs. (Consult with the Dean of Research, Planning and Assessment, as appropriate.)

For AAS and Certificate programs, provide information on employment of graduates based upon surveys and outreach to graduates and employers. Useful information includes which features of the curriculum and teaching practices helped prepare the graduates for their positions; which knowledge and skills continue to be of use; and which areas or skills graduates would recommend be addressed or emphasized for future program students. The Director of Alumni Relations may be able to provide you with alumni contact information.

In this section of the self-study, describe how the department keeps course equivalencies on CUNY TIPPS current with curriculum and course development and revisions. Identify courses for which TIPPS updating is needed, and provide a plan for accomplishing this. Please review course equivalencies as currently published on CUNY TIPPS for all required courses that are offered in your department, including courses required for students in majors offered by other departments, e.g., courses in core and required areas of study, and courses in specialization areas of curriculum patterns.

It is very important that equivalencies for non-Pathways and major courses are up-to-date on TIPPS so that students will not encounter difficulty in having BCC required courses accepted for transfer at CUNY senior colleges, especially the colleges to which most of our students transfer (e.g., Lehman, John Jay, CCNY, and Baruch). Transferability of courses should be stated clearly on TIPPS, indicating senior college degree credit for an equivalent course at the senior college. A TIPPS entry indicating that a course transfers for elective credit is not sufficient for this purpose and needs attention. Please identify all courses that need to be reviewed and evaluated, and indicate your department's plan for contacting and consulting with the appropriate senior college department to collaborate on getting TIPPS updated as soon as possible.

Departments that have associate degree programs should evaluate the effectiveness of existing articulation agreements and describe plans for appropriate updating or modification. This is of particular importance for associate degree programs which were revised to include the Pathways Common Core and for other curriculum revisions since the existing agreement was written. Indicate in the self-study which agreements need to be updated, what specifically needs to be modified, and the department's plans for doing this in collaboration with the senior college.

Note that CUNY expects each associate degree program to have at least one articulation agreement with a CUNY senior college. This includes AAS programs that have parallel or related programs at a senior college. In cases where programs may not be able to articulate seamlessly, negotiations with the senior college may result in a "best fit" agreement that ensures a maximum number of transfer credits toward the baccalaureate degree. Describe departmental plans for creating new articulation agreements for programs that do not yet have an agreement with a CUNY senior college.

For assistance with TIPPS and articulation agreements, please contact the Academic and Transfer Resources Coordinator.

F. Emerging Challenges and Future Directions

Identify emerging challenges that might impede the mission of the department. Describe how the challenges may be addressed. Identify future curricular or pedagogical goals and directions the department is considering. Explain the rationale for them, including a description of assessment results and analysis that contextualizes future planning.

Discuss what aspects of departmental work should be strengthened, how and why; and what needs to be changed, how and why.

G. Appendices

Please include the following as appendices to the self-study document.

1. Curriculum patterns of all associate and certificate programs and course descriptions offered by the department as published in the most recent BCC Catalog or Addendum. Include Chancellor's University Report for curriculum and course updates since the most recent Catalog was published, if applicable.
2. The latest version of syllabi for all department courses offered in the last 5 years.
3. Assessment tools, including completed assessment report forms; templates; rubrics or other measurements with criteria for evaluating or rating student work.
4. Samples of different performance levels of student work (presented anonymously) for courses that have been assessed in the last 3 years.
5. Curriculum program maps showing the alignment of institutional General Education or Pathways learning outcomes (for departments with degree and certificate programs).
6. Enrollments, pass and withdrawal rates of fall and spring courses for the last 5 years (include summer courses in programs that have summer clinical coursework).
7. Degree program enrollment and graduation in the last 5 years. (For departments with degree programs.)
8. Existing articulation agreements.

IV. Academic Review Process and Calendar

The Academic Review Process generally occurs over three semesters:

Semester 1: Academic Review Planning
Discussion of *Periodic Academic Review Guidelines* with OAA and on a departmental level with faculty. Development of questions to guide the departmental self-study.

Semester 2: Self-Study Development
Drafting of the Self Study document by department leadership and faculty. Consultation with and review by OAA.

Semester 3: Site Visit and Action Plan
In consultation with OAA, external reviewers receive self-study document, visit campus, and prepare a post-visit review report. Department responds to report and prepares action plan.

Additional information is available on request from OAA with suggested timelines and details on the site visit.