

GUIDELINES FOR EXTERNAL CONSULTANT

I. Introduction

The faculty at UW-L continually strives to offer dynamic academic programs of the highest quality. The Colleges at UW-L encourage and expect their academic departments to be involved in the ongoing development of their academic programs. The faculty recognizes the value of consulting their colleagues at other colleges and universities about academic programs. Such discussions help the faculty stay current with recent developments in these programs and make the faculty aware of how UW-L academic programs are viewed by their outside peers. To formalize this valuable activity, an external consultant may be a part of the periodic review of those academic programs that do not undergo an external accreditation review. The dean overseeing a department to be reviewed shall determine in consultation with the department whether to require an external reviewer. The intention of this requirement is for the external consultant to play a positive, constructive role in the review process. It is anticipated that the main contribution made by the external consultants would be to help departments identify ways to maintain and improve their dynamic, high quality academic programs.

II. Selection of External Consultant

The process for choosing an external consultant should ensure that the individual selected is able to provide a thorough, contemporary, objective, expert review of the academic program. Departments with a wide range of academic programs may need to select more than one external consultant. Typically, a department initiates this selection process by contacting its professional societies to see if these organizations offer the service of providing such program consultants. The departmental self-study committee will forward to the dean a list of names of individuals identified by the faculty and the department chair as qualified and willing to serve as external consultant. The dean selects a name from the list or requests the department to provide a new list. Once the external consultant is selected, the department will make all the necessary arrangements for the visit. Funds to cover all the costs associated with the external consultant's visit will be provided by the office of the Provost/Vice Chancellor.

III. Consultation

The consultant should receive the department's APR Self-Study Report and a copy of the UW-L Catalog at least one month prior to visiting campus. The consultant may request additional information from the department, the dean, or the Academic Program Review Committee. Such requests should be fulfilled expeditiously. Any appropriate and reasonable interviews that are requested by the consultant, the department, or the dean should be scheduled well in advance of arrival to ensure an efficient and productive visitation. These might include meetings with the department chair, program director or coordinating committee, instructors and others associated with the program, and/or students.

The consultant's major contribution to the department and the Academic Program Review Committee is to offer a constructive and unbiased expert view of the program and the self-study document. Thus, the consultation should focus on the academic program and aspects of departmental functioning that have a demonstrable impact on the quality of the program. These foci include, but are not limited to, the following:

- academic program goals
- curriculum
- staffing and workload (instructional and support staff)
- approaches to instruction
- program assessment procedures, instruments and usage

- student advisement
- facilities and resources
- scholarship

The extent to which scholarly work is to be a focus of the consultation is to be determined by the department, in consultation with the dean, prior to the arrival of the consultant. Departmental matters not demonstrably related to the quality of the academic program are outside the purview of this consultation.

IV. The Consultant's Written Report

The consultant's written report to the Academic Program Review Committee should contain the consultant's observations on the accuracy of the department's self-study, and the nature and quality of the program within the context of the priorities and trends of the discipline. The report should contain constructive recommendations along with a rationale for each.