

**Bronx Community College  
City University of New York**

**Office of Academic Affairs**

**Guidelines for Periodic Academic Review and  
Departmental Self-Study**

**January 2017**

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Periodic Academic Review and Departmental Self-Study**

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## I. Overview of the Periodic Academic Review

The requirement for departmental and program academic review as a formal periodic process, including both a self-study and external evaluation, has a long academic tradition. This tradition has been codified as a requirement by the CUNY Board of Trustees in Policy 1.06. Per this requirement, the Periodic Academic Review must occur at least once every ten years for all academic departments and programs.

These BCC *Guidelines for Periodic Academic Review and Departmental Self-Study* draw upon two major sources:

1. The CUNY Policy and guidelines regarding periodic academic program review and
2. The standards and approaches to assessment defined by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education, which is BCC's institutional accreditor.

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.

Drawing primarily from CUNY Policy 1.06, section 3.6, this process of academic review should produce a self-study that:

- a) Encourages members of a department to analyze its curricula and course offerings in relation to the goals of the department, the college, and the University
- b) Investigates the effectiveness of its curricula, course offerings, and teaching in relation to the desired outcomes as perceived by students, alumni, faculty members, and, where appropriate, to the review of the program by professions, industries, and employers
- c) Reviews various characteristics to determine strengths and weaknesses
- d) Considers possible changes, including whether a program needs major revision or, should conditions warrant as much, whether a program should potentially be discontinued.
- e) Evaluates the current levels of resources required for the ongoing degree programs and course offerings
- f) Suggests needed changes in degree programs, departmental organization, and resources

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. Selection of

external evaluators will be made in a collaborative process between OAA and the department. 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. On-going updates on the status of items on the action plan will be requested on a regular basis by OAA.

*Note: External agency program 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 when engaging in a self-study and periodic academic review.*

## **II. Components of the Self-Study Report**

### **A. Executive Summary**

This section should summarize the report, including the major questions asked, findings, and recommendations. (It is typically best to wait until the self-study is nearly complete before attempting to write the executive summary.)

### **B. Department-Specific Inquiry Questions**

Overarching, department-specific questions can help focus the self-study on areas of particular interest or concern. These questions (typically 2-3) may focus upon recent program or course revisions, new courses or programs, changes in instructional infrastructure, grant-funded initiatives, recently introduced resources, particular barriers or challenges for student success, 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 with a request to investigate/address. These questions may also be departmentally generated, perhaps through a preliminary analysis of data compiled for Section II.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 the questions.

### **C. 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 one or more 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.).

#### **D. Programs and Courses**

1. Identify student learning outcomes in departmental courses and all degree 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. Focusing on one or two key SLOs, explain why and how these learning outcomes will be important for graduating students who transfer to senior colleges and/or seek employment. Note: Course-level SLOs can be provided in syllabi in the appendix.

2. Discuss the assessment process of Pathways core courses offered by the department. How does this assessment relate to the broader institutional assessment of general education?

3. Discuss courses offered with special focus or modality (e.g., writing intensive, honors, teaching with technology). If your department offers distance-learning / online courses, please be sure to discuss these courses. 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.

#### **E. Student Learning Assessment**

Summarize faculty assessment of student learning outcomes since the last departmental self-study, indicating which courses or programs 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.
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.

#### **F. 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.

#### **F. 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 passing and withdrawal rates or 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.

In this section of the self-study, describe how the department keeps course equivalencies in CUNY First (formerly found in TIPPS) current with curriculum and course development and revisions. Identify courses for which updating is needed, and provide a plan for accomplishing this. Please review course equivalencies as currently published in CUNY First 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 CUNY First 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 CUNY First, indicating senior college degree credit for an equivalent course at the senior college. A CUNY First 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 CUNY First equivalencies 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 CUNY First equivalencies and articulation agreements, please contact the Academic and Transfer Resources Coordinator.

## **H. 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. This question can be used to summarize answers to the department-specific inquiry questions.

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

## **I. 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. 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. All syllabi should include clearly-stated student learning outcomes.

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 courses and program level student 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.

### **III. Periodic Academic Review Process and Calendar**

The Periodic Academic Review process generally occurs over three semesters:

#### **Semester 1: Academic Review Planning and initial self-study draft**

Discussion of *Periodic Academic Review Guidelines* with OAA and on a departmental level with faculty. Development of questions to guide the departmental self-study. Initial draft of self-study prepared.

#### **Semester 2: Self-Study Completion**

Review/revision of the Self Study document by department leadership and faculty. Consultation with and review by OAA with appropriate feedback and revision.

#### **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.