THE OFFICE OF ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

# An Introduction and Guide to Academic Unit Review

FOR DEPARTMENTS AND SCHOOLS

Revised: April 2018

THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

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# Preface

Academic unit review can be among the most meaningful experiences departments, schools and colleges have at The Ohio State University. These periodic studies of a unit's progress and potential are profoundly important to developing a shared future vision as colleagues come together to chart their unit's next strategic milestones. Through academic unit review, those colleagues also develop a richer understanding of how their unit's activities contribute to Ohio State's core goals of teaching and learning, research and innovation, outreach and engagement, and resource stewardship. And with that understanding, they can more effectively help their unit and the university forward.

Reviews are aligned with college and department strategic planning and chair appointments. Academic unit reviews are scheduled every eight years. The results of the external reviews thus inform our units' strategic documents.

## PURPOSE OF AN ACADEMIC UNIT REVIEW

The review of an academic unit (a department or school) is an evidence-based, improvement-oriented effort to identify unit-level strengths, issues, and steps to advance its strategic goals, which should be in alignment with those of its college.

Reviews are conducted on an eight-year cycle and are a collaboration of the unit, its college, and the Office of Academic Affairs (OAA). The review includes all research areas; undergraduate, graduate and professional academic programs; and outreach and engagement efforts.

The following activities, described in greater detail below, comprise an academic unit review:

1. The unit writes a self-study.
2. An external review team visits and provides an informal and formal report.
3. The unit writes a plan of action, confirmed by the college and OAA.

Unit faculty should play a key role in all phases of the review and action planning process, provide input, receive updates, and have access to copies of all studies, reports, and plans.
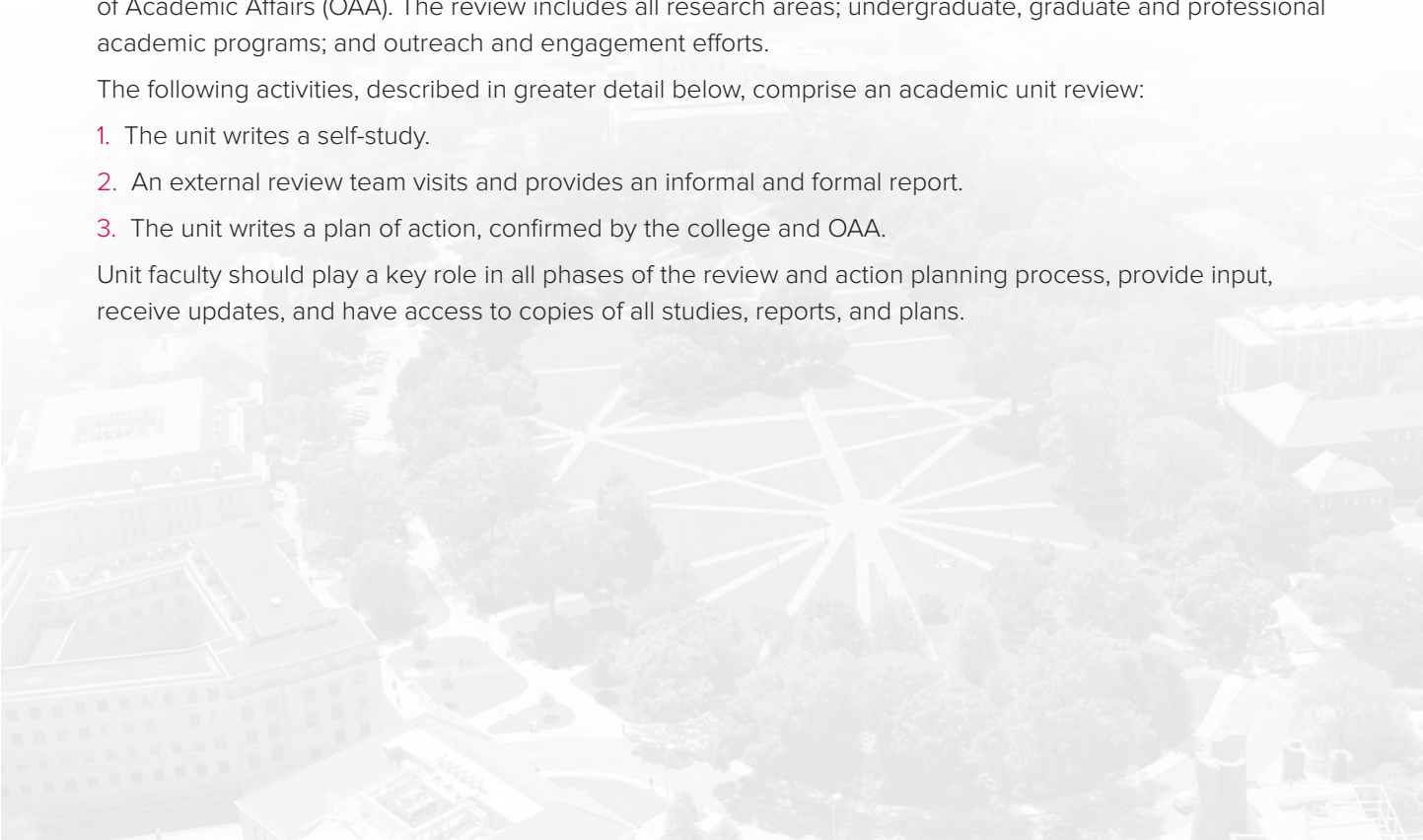
# THE SELF-STUDY

The self-study is not a description of the unit. Rather, it is an evidence-based, and constituent-informed analysis that leads to the identification of core strengths, key issues and potential steps to address them. A unit and its college may elect to emphasize some areas over others, guided by—for example—resource challenges or college strategic plan goals. Specific questions for the self-study are provided in appendix B.

The self-study, typically 30 to 40 pages in length, will include the following sections:

## Executive summary

- University Mission/Vision Statement
- Overview of the unit
- Mission and purpose
- External reputation

## Faculty

- Recruitment, mentoring, and retention
- Diversity
- Intellectual life of the unit
- Trends in academic appointments

## Research agenda and foci

- How and how well is new knowledge being created
- Funding patterns and trends
- Interdisciplinary research

## Educational programs and students (graduate/professional/undergraduate)

- Student academic preparation and engagement in learning
- Graduate student recruitment, time to degree, and placement
- Recent and planned curricular and programmatic changes
- Undergraduate enrollment and degree completion patterns and trends, time to degree, job placement
- Majors and minors since last review
- Instruction and student satisfaction
- Role of technology in instruction
- Use of student outcomes assessment
- Structure of advising and academic support. Optional undergraduate activities

## Outreach and engagement

- Current pattern and potential activity

## Infrastructure and resources

- Finances, staffing, and academic support
- Status of technology needs
- Space issues

## Governance

- Recent leadership succession and impact
- Effectiveness of internal governance: Pattern of Administration and Appointments, Tenure and Promotion processes

# THE EXTERNAL REVIEW TEAM VISIT

The external review team members should be considered experts in the field whose opinions will carry weight with the entire unit. The team members should not have any ties to The Ohio State University. Their names and a short biographical sketch should be provided to, and approved by, the college and the vice provost for strategic planning and implementation.

***The external review schedule will include the following:***

- An opening orientation session with the dean and vice provost for strategic planning and implementation
- Meetings with:
  - The vice president for research, vice provost and dean of the graduate school, vice provost and dean of undergraduate education
  - The department chair/school director
  - Tenured faculty
  - Untenured faculty
  - Representative groups of undergraduate and graduate students
  - Representatives from units or centers with collaborative research interests
  - The dean and college senior staff/leadership team
- An exit session at which the external team reports findings to the chair/director
- A separate exit session at which the external team reports its findings to the provost, college dean, the academic affairs leadership team, and associate director of institutional research

The team will have morning and afternoon breaks on the first full day, and open time in the evenings for the team to work (no social events). Please see the sample schedule in appendix C.

# THE PLAN OF ACTION

The plan of action should outline both short-term and long-term steps the unit will take in response to the external team's recommendations.

A draft of the plan of action is shared with the college dean, provost, vice provost for strategic planning and implementation, and associate director of institutional research. These officers, together with the unit chair/director, then meet to discuss overall reactions to the external team's report and review the plan in light of that feedback.

The final plan of action document will be shared with OAA and the college dean. It should be integrated into the department or school's strategic plan.

# TIMELINE AND ACTIVITIES

| APPROXIMATE TIME FRAME | RESPONSIBILITIES | COMMENTS |
|---|---|---|
| 12 months prior to external review team visit | Hold one-hour kickoff meeting | Dean, chair/director, vice provost for strategic planning and implementation, and associate director of institutional research meet to discuss the review. |
| 12 months prior | Choose date for review | OAA works with the unit and college to select the review date. |
| 11 months prior | Nominate candidates for the external review team | Department/school nominates 8 to 10 reviewers from top programs and provides their contact and bio information as well as brief justification for nomination; list must be approved by the college and vice provost. |
| 11 months prior | Invite review team | College dean extends invitations, sends instructions and selects a *team lead*. College makes travel arrangements and reserves accommodations at the Blackwell Inn |
| 11 months prior | Hold logistics and data meeting | Department chair/school director meets with the associate director of institutional research and planning to discuss logistics and data for the self-study. |
| 11 months prior | Launch self-study | The chair/director organizes and initiates the self-study. The process should be transparent to the department. |
| 2 months prior | Develop itinerary | The department sets the visit itinerary and schedules meetings for external team (see Appendix C - Sample Schedule for External Review Team). |
| 1 month prior | Distribute final materials | The college sends the self-study, visit itinerary, college and (if applicable) unit strategic plan to the external review team and associate director of institutional research and planning. |
| 1 week prior | Do final check | The college verifies that the team has the self-study and answers any questions from the team. |
| Host external review team | | See Appendix C - Sample Schedule for External Review Team |
| Within 4 weeks of visit | Receive external review team report | The external review team sends the department/school, college, and vice provost for strategic planning and implementation a 5-10 page report. |
| Within 10 weeks of visit | Develop Plan of Action | See Plan of Action on page 5 |
| 3 months after visit | Meet to discuss Plan of Action | See Plan of Action on page 5 |
| After meeting with provost | Integrate plan of action into unit strategic plan | The chair/director, in consultation with the faculty and the college, modifies the unit's strategic plan to incorporate the plan of action (if a strategic plan exists). |

# APPENDIX A: PRIMARY ROLES: COLLEGE, UNIT, AND OAA

## College

- Establish a long-term schedule of reviews by unit, by academic year, and expected team visit dates (should be staggered throughout year)

- Work with unit to identify external reviewers: honoraria (discipline/college norms have ranged from $1,000-$1,500, plus hotel, meal, and travel expenses)

- Invite external reviewers.

- Work with external review team to arrange travel

- Secure accommodations for the team, typically at the Blackwell Inn

  – Ensure one of the guest rooms has work space for the team, if possible

- Work with the unit to schedule, identify, and reserve meeting spaces for the team visit

- Serve as the primary point of contact for correspondence with team members and with OAA

  – Confirm the itinerary with OAA (developed in collaboration with unit chair/director)

  – Send self-study and supporting materials (including team visit schedule) and college/institutional context and "charge" to external review team, Jay Johnson, and Ryan Schmiesing at least three weeks prior to the team visit.

  – Follow up with external review team

- Schedule the plan of action meeting with the unit chair/director and OAA and embed action plan progress in annual interactions with the provost and OAA

## Unit

- Establish strategy, process, and emphases for the self-study based on the outline and questions provided by OAA in appendix B

- Review information provided by OAA and other university sources, including unit and college sources

- Compose a brief, analytic self-study (approximately 30-40 pages, plus data and appendix)

- Develop itinerary (See appendix C)

- Co-host the external team during the visit

- Arrange for transportation of the team to and from the airport and the Blackwell Inn

- Write the first draft and final version of the plan of action document

- Through established planning, reporting, and budgeting processes, enable the chair/director to regularly and routinely monitor progress against the action plan

## Office of Academic Affairs

- Provide policy coordination and oversight

- Provide data and logistical support to college and unit

- Schedule the opening meeting with dean/chair and exit session with external team

- Assist with review of self-study drafts, verify and approve review team and visit schedule

- Ensure appropriate sessions are on the calendars of provost and the provost's leadership team

# APPENDIX B: DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR SELF-STUDY

**Executive summary**

- Overview of the unit and background

- What is our unifying and overarching goal (mission)?
  - What is the unit mission and purpose?
  - To what degree/in what ways are the unit's activities linked to the mission of the unit, the college, and the university?
  - When was the mission last reviewed and discussed? Is there a process for reviewing the mission and purposes of the unit?
  - Does the mission effectively link unit strengths in research and teaching with societal needs and opportunities for the future?
  - How deep and extensive is knowledge of the unit's mission, vision, goals among its faculty members, staff, and stakeholders?
- External reputation
  - How do others see the unit and how does the unit want to be viewed?
  - What is the unit's sense of its reputation among other institutions and peers? What are the gaps between where the unit is now and where it wants to be?
  - What are the emerging trends in the discipline? What is being done and can be done to move forward and seize emerging opportunities? Do these changes in the discipline suggest a need to refocus or adjust priorities?
  - What are the unit's strengths and weaknesses? How have these changed over time? What should be done?

**Faculty**

- Recruitment, mentoring, and retention
  - How are faculty working together to help colleagues be successful and valued members of the unit?
  - What initiatives have been developed or are in place to provide mentoring and support for new faculty members, those working toward successful transition from associate to full professor, and throughout the career cycle? How effective have these efforts been?
  - How has the unit enhanced and addressed work-life issues for faculty (and staff)?
  - How clear is the P&T process with regard to communication and implementation?
  - What has been the impact of new hires/departures over last 3-5 years on quality (research productivity, teaching quality) and diversity? Is there a trend?
  - How do the salaries compare against benchmarks? What planning is in place to address salary compression, if it exists?
  - How does the unit assess its ability to recruit and retain faculty members?
  - What does the future look like with regard to attracting and retaining top scholars?
  - How is hiring linked with program planning, research priorities, and future directions?

- Diversity
  – What is the status of efforts to enhance representation, involvement, and the climate to create a truly diverse intellectual community?
  – What are the trends in minority and gender representation among faculty members?
  – How does the unit rate its ability to attract and retain a diverse faculty? What should be done to continue and/or enhance progress?
  – What is the impact of these developments on curricula, academic support, or research for the unit and on student or unit development?

- Intellectual life of the unit
  – How well do unit faculty engage and interact with each other as scholars and lifelong learners?
  – What is the degree and quality of scholarly interaction among faculty and students?
  – What special opportunities are there for sharing research and information among individuals and groups?
  – Is there a sense of community, openness to new ideas, opportunity to participate, and actual involvement at all levels of faculty rank? If not, what might be done to enhance such involvement?

- Trends in academic appointments
  – How has the proportion of classes taught by T/TT faculty changed?
  – How has the proportion of the faculty FTE changed by track?

### Research agenda and foci

- How and how well is new knowledge being created
  – What are the focal points of the research agenda?
  – What are the current strengths and weaknesses of the research program?
  – Is research increasing in quality? quantity? impact?
  – What steps must be taken and how should the unit move forward over the next 5 years?

- Funding patterns and trends
  – What implications do changes/trends in levels, areas, and sources of research funding have for research quality and productivity in the unit?

- Interdisciplinary activity
  – What is the current pattern and amount of interdisciplinary activity?
  – What potential activity and opportunities should be explored?
  – What are the obstacles to developing collaboration in teaching, research, and service with other programs? How can these be addressed?

**Educational program and students**

- Student academic preparation and engagement in learning
  – What are the trends and impacts of changes in student quality? How does the unit seek to enhance its ability to attract and retain high-quality students?
  – In what ways has the unit improved recruiting for undergraduate and graduate students? How involved are students in the academic life of the unit (research, planning, curriculum)?
  – In what ways should the unit seek to enhance interdisciplinary and international opportunities for its students?

- Graduate student recruitment, time to degree and placement
  – What is the status and track record of PhD placements in recent years? Are graduates seeking and obtaining quality positions? What are the economic/market issues?
  – What are the strengths and weaknesses of graduate student support, mentoring, and training for careers (faculty and non-faculty)?
  – Is the unit aware of career trends in its fields for graduate students? Is it taking steps to prepare them for new and different careers?
  – Is the size of the graduate program appropriate?

- Recent and planned curricular and programmatic changes
  – How have programs changed or planned to change in response to broader trends in the discipline? In what areas might the unit be a leader or innovator in moving the discipline forward?
  – To what extent are programs aligned with college and university goals? How is the unit identifying and enhancing opportunities for collaboration with other disciplines as shaped by these goals?

- Undergraduate enrollment and degree completion patterns and trends, time to degree, job placement
  – How do enrollment plans align with university/college plans?
  – Is the time to degree typical for these programs? What are the "sticking points" in undergraduate and graduate student academic performance and timely degree completion? What has been/is being/should be done to address these issues?
  – What types of employment or graduate programs are recent graduates seeking and obtaining?

- Instruction and student satisfaction
  – How are teaching loads borne across the unit? What strategies might enhance instructional quality and impact?
  – What is the distribution of regular faculty across course levels and areas? Does this distribution maximize student and faculty productivity? If not, what might be done to address this?
  – How are Student Evaluations of Instruction used?

- Role of technology in instruction
  – What progress has been made to effectively integrate technology to enhance student learning, faculty performance, and the quality of programs and services?
  – What are the unit's goals and plans to enhance the benefits of integrated technology use?

- Student outcomes assessment
  – How does the unit gauge student performance, achievement, and satisfaction within the unit?
  – What is the current status of student outcomes assessment?

- Structure of advising and academic support. Optional undergraduate activities
  – How does the unit support and enhance the quality of advising?
  – How does the unit engage students outside of the classroom (clubs, honor societies, internships)?

**Outreach and engagement**

- Current pattern and potential activity
  - How well is the unit connecting learning and new knowledge with the needs of external groups and society?
  - What opportunities and threats have been identified?
  - What role do alumni have in the unit and its efforts to enhance its value to society?
  - How is outreach integrated into research and learning experiences to create a coherent system of knowledge dissemination and creation?

**Infrastructure and resources**

- Finances, staffing, and academic support
  - How do financial resources align with future unit needs (human resources and infrastructure)?

- Status of technology needs
  - What are the unit's current and future technology needs for instruction, research and office support?
  - What is the current and desired role of technology as a means to improve student learning and enhance overall support and productivity?

- Space issues
  - What kinds of space and facility issues does the unit face?
  - What are the projections for future needs?

**Governance**

- Recent leadership succession and impact
  - What leadership changes have occurred in recent years? What has been the impact of these changes? What are the rules/norms that govern succession and leadership within the unit?
  - What is the status of training/professional development in the unit to foster effective leadership and governance? What is planned?
  - What is the process for how "service assignment" appointments are made? How are "service" appointments allocated?

- Effectiveness of internal governance: POA and AP&T
  - What findings emerge from consideration of internal governance (POA) processes? What changes or issues might be pursued and addressed?
  - Do leaders communicate and cultivate a clear vision and collaboration within the unit?

# APPENDIX C: SAMPLE SCHEDULE FOR EXTERNAL REVIEW TEAM

## Day 1

- Arrive at Port Columbus (late afternoon); transportation to the Blackwell Inn arranged by the unit chair
- Dinner with team and team charge by vice provost for strategic planning and implementation and dean (usually starts at 6:30 p.m. at the Blackwell Bistro)

## Day 2

- Meeting of unit chair and team
- Meeting of team and vice president for research, vice provost and dean of the graduate school, vice provost and dean of undergraduate education
- Separate meetings with faculty by sub-fields/interests as appropriate
- Meeting with junior faculty only
- Meeting with support staff
- Lunch (could be working brown bag lunch with undergraduate and then graduate students)
- Meeting with undergraduate majors (representative group)
- Meeting with graduate students (master's and doctoral separately, if appropriate)
- Meetings with other unit committees (curriculum, graduate studies, etc.)
- Facilities/program area tour
- Dinner (team only)
- Evening open – team members draft observations, conclusions, recommendations

## Day 3

- Breakfast for team
- Meeting with dean and senior college staff/leadership team
- Meetings with other colleagues, centers, programs connected with the unit
- Time for additional follow-up activities or requests
- Working lunch (catered or at Faculty Club near exit session location)
- Session with chair/director alone to give brief review of findings
- Reporting out session: provost, college dean, provost's leadership team, and associate director of institutional research
- Team departure

### Contacts

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# Mission/Vision Statement
## AUTUMN 2016

## VISION

The Ohio State University is the model 21$^{st}$-century public, land grant, research, urban, community engaged institution.

## MISSION

The University is dedicated to:

- Creating and discovering knowledge to improve the well-being of our state, regional, national and global communities;
- Educating students through a comprehensive array of distinguished academic programs;
- Preparing a diverse student body to be leaders and engaged citizens;
- Fostering a culture of engagement and service.

We understand that diversity and inclusion are essential components of our excellence.

## VALUES

Shared values are the commitments made by the University community in how we conduct our work. At The Ohio State University we value:

- Excellence
- Diversity in people and of ideas
- Inclusion
- Access and affordability
- Innovation
- Collaboration and multidisciplinary endeavor
- Integrity, transparency, and trust

## CORE GOALS

Four institution-wide goals are fundamental to the University's vision, mission and future success:

**Teaching and Learning:** to provide an unsurpassed, student-centered learning experience led by engaged world-class faculty and staff, and enhanced by a globally diverse student body.

**Research and Innovation:** to create distinctive and internationally recognized contributions to the advancement of fundamental knowledge and scholarship and toward solutions of the world's most pressing problems.

**Outreach and Engagement:** to advance a culture of engagement and collaboration involving the exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of reciprocity with the citizens and institutions of Ohio, the nation, and the world.

**Resource Stewardship:** to be an affordable public university, recognized for financial sustainability, unparalleled management of human and physical resources, and operational efficiency and effectiveness.

THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY