Program Evaluation Workshop

Overview of the Site Visit Process
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Timing and Scheduling of Site Visit

Work with the Provost’s Office (Cindy Pemberton and Amy Watson) to set a date for the site visit as early in the Spring semester as possible; the aim is to have a final draft of the site visit report by mid-April.

- Liaise with PEC site visit chair in early November, arrange to share a draft of the self-study. The PEC site visit chair will identify any issues, gaps and give feedback by mid-November to allow submission by early December.
- Notify the PEC site visit chair and the PEC coordinator (Amy Watson) by end of the first week of October of dates when the department chair/program directors &/or significant faculty will be unavailable (conference travel, for example) as well as provide at least 3 preferred site visit dates.
- Stay in communication loop as the PEC coordinator contacts external reviewers and schedules site visits. Flexibility is key because the timing is often driven by the availability of the external reviewers.
- Visit typically involves 1-2 days of meetings during which the external reviewers will meet with ALL faculty and administrators in the program, including full and part-time NTT teachers plus students, alumni and any other constituency directly impacted by the program.

Highlights of a Typical Site Visit

The site-visit chair consults with the external evaluators and the program director/chair to arrange meetings with a wide range of distinct constituencies. The site-visit chair facilitates the meetings, data-gathering, and overall logistics in conjunction with the PEC Coordinator. In addition to closed-sessions by the team at the beginning, at the midpoint, and before the exit interview, the following meetings with the full team are typical:

- Dean (should be early in the visit).
- Department chair and/or program director (again, early in visit).
- Faculty: tenured, non-tenured, full-time NTT and part-time NTT (typically each group meets the team separately).
- Students, undergraduates and graduates, including GTA’s/GRAs.
- Alumni (typically the most difficult to arrange, but very valuable).
- Before the external reviewers leave, the site visit team prepares and conducts an exit interview with the Provost, the Dean and chair/program directors.

NB: Typically the external reviewer responsible for drafting the report will lead the “exit” interview, providing an initial summary of observations, comments, suggestions, and proposals. While wish-lists and arguments for expansion are nice, the key is to focus on STRATEGIC PLANNING, on proposals that are viable within the extant budget/program – no new resources.
Other Possible Activities
Each visit is, by definition, different, because each depends on the nature of the program(s) being evaluated AND on the lines of enquiry pursued by the external reviewers. Program chairs/directors are encouraged to propose activities that will provide useful insights and information, such as:

- Class observations or other student-centered activities.
- Lunch and/or dinner with key players (see reimbursement policy)
- Facilities tour.
- Confidential meetings with specific students or faculty.
- A mechanism for anonymous comments.

Ongoing Conversations by the Site Visit Team
Throughout the visit, the team will typically hold short “breather” meetings in between scheduled sessions; often this is when the external team will request additional material, which the on-site chair will endeavor to provide (preferably with a smile on her/his face). It is very likely the schedule will also include the following:

- Beginning Day 1: Identify protocols including the role of the on-site chair and the role of the chief external reviewer; identify issues from the self-study that need investigation or further data; reiterate the purpose of the PEC process (improvement through self-reflection and strategic planning!)
- End of Day 1: Review findings from the day, request additional information/data, and adjust agenda for Day 2 meetings, if necessary.
- After Day 2 sessions: Discuss findings and preliminary conclusions/proposals before exit interview with Provost, Dean and chair. Reiterate the purpose of the PEC process.

After the Site Visit
Please copy the PEC Coordinator—Amy Watson—on all communications throughout this process. The site visit chair is responsible for establishing and enforcing deadlines for drafting and completing the Site Visit report.

- Within two weeks of the visit: external chair circulates draft report to entire Site Visit Team.
- Within three weeks: team provides feedback to external chair.
- Within four weeks: revised draft of Site Visit Report is sent to the department chair for fact check, then returned to External Chair for final edits.
- Within six weeks: final Site Visit Report is forwarded to PEC, Provost, Dean and department (ideally this is before the end of Spring semester).
- Provost meets with PEC Site Visit Team Chairperson.
- Provost meets with Dean and Department Chairperson to review draft of improvement plan (aka Strategic Plan) based on site visit report.
- Departments present Strategic Plan to PEC.