

Academic Program Review

Internal Panel Handbook: A Step-by-Step Guide for Internal Panel Members

Internal Panel Composition and Expectations

Program review internal panels are selected for each academic unit reviewed. The review of an academic unit includes evaluating degree and stand-alone certificate programs, unit facilities including accessibility, health and safety, faculty, staff, and students. The review Internal panels are typically composed of three tenured faculty members who are not in the same unit undergoing the academic program review. The panels are responsible for carrying out the program review and for making recommendations to the executive vice president and provost in a formal report.



Composition

- Panel chair, who is a senior, experienced faculty member and who serves on the Institutional Effectiveness Council (IEC) or has previously served on the IEC and/or an internal panel (leader).
- Faculty member from the same college as the unit (or for smaller colleges, faculty member outside of the college but in an allied field).
- Faculty member outside of the college of the unit,
- At least one of the panel members must have graduate faculty status for review of academic units with graduate programs.
- Additional panel members may be added, as needed.



Expectations

- An examination of the unit's self-study report, including any accompanying materials, and the external reviewer's report.
- A tour of facilities (when appropriate).
- Meetings with the unit's administration, faculty, staff, and students.
- Meeting(s) with the external reviewer (as appropriate).
- An exit meeting (with the unit's chair/director, the dean, the associate vice provost for institutional effectiveness, and the executive vice president and provost or the provost's representative), which provides a confidential opportunity for the panel members to clarify any remaining issues or questions as well to provide their preliminary findings.
- A final 10-page report outlining the panel's findings and recommendations (see internal panel report [template](#) and [example](#)).

Step 1: Recommendations

(October)

The Office of Institutional Effectiveness (OIE) communicates with the Deans asking for nominations of tenured faculty to serve on internal panels.

Step 2: Invitation

(November)

Once the recommendations for the internal panel reviewers are received from the Deans, nominees are invited to participate. The time commitment and tasks needed for this work will be transparent in the invitation. The anticipated time commitment is 20-30 hours, with the Chair on the higher end. The time commitment is dependent on how long it takes to review all materials, conduct the interviews, and finalize the report.

Step 3: Orientation

(January)

The internal panel will attend a brief orientation meeting led by the Office of Institutional Effectiveness. The meeting will consist of an overview of the academic program review process. Access to review all materials will be sent via a Box link upon conclusion of the orientation session, including the Orientation PowerPoint.

- **Orientation (@ 30 minutes)**

Step 4: Internal Panel Evaluation of Unit Materials

(February)

The internal panel communication will primarily occur via email correspondence; however, it is expected that the internal panel meet at least twice either by zoom or in-person (not including scheduled interviews).

- **Review of materials (@ 8 hours)**
 - Foundational Documents: Strategic Planning Reports, Student Learning Assessment Reports, if applicable, Integrative Learning Core Reports, the previous Unit Self-Study, and the previous Unit Action Plan.
 - Unit Self-Study Report
 - External Reviewer Report
 - Internal Panel Guiding Documents: examples of completed actions plans and internal panel reports, examples of interview questions, and the Internal Panel Review Report Template.
- **First Internal Panel Meeting (@ 1 hour)**
 - Discussion of all materials.
 - Determine interviews needed. Consider participants by grouping, size of those groups, as well as potential date/times to be requested for the interviews to occur, i.e.:
 - students - undergrad vs grad, faculty - by rank, staff
 - facilities tour
 - external reviewer – by request only
- **Internal Panel Chair communicates requested interviews with OIE.** OIE will work with the Unit's Department Chair or Director for scheduling.

Step 5: Group Interviews

(early March)

Feedback from prior academic program reviews have indicated the following best practices for the interview process. Although the interviews are typically scheduled in early March, many faculty calendars fill up quite early in the semester. The earlier the interviews are scheduled the better. It is essential to stress to the Department Chair or Director, the importance of ensuring undergraduate students attend the scheduled interviews. All interviews should be conducted in person if possible. Zoom can be done if needed. Do not allow

for hybrid interviews. If conducted by zoom, ensure that all internal panel members are given co-host responsibility.

- **Second Internal Panel Meeting (@ 1 hour)**
 - Finalize interview questions (see [example questions](#)).
 - Identify what each internal panel members task will be during the interviews.
 - One member should be identified as the facilitator (the person who asks the questions)
 - One member should be identified as the note taker. Notes should be entered into a word document that is sharable. Ensure the questions are in order and listed as a header in the document. Do not distribute handwritten notes.
 - One member to close out the interview by asking what recommendations they would make.
- **Conduct Interviews (@ 11 hours).** Interviews typically last about 1-hour each. Ideally, interviews are scheduled over two-three days and should be in-person.
 - Day 1 (2 hours total) – includes meeting with chair of department and tour of facilities
 - Day 2 (6-8 hours total) – includes 45-minute meetings with 15-minutes left for discussion. Day 2 interviews include: Tenured faculty, Associate Professors, Assistant Professors, Instructors, Staff, and Students (grad and under grad). If in-person, lunch will be provided.
 - Day 3 (1 hour) – final meeting of review with the Dean.

Step 6: Exit Interview *(end of March/early April)*

The agenda for the exit interview begins with introductory remarks by a representative within the Office of Academic Affairs. The timing of the exit interview should occur 2-3 weeks after the interviews. The purpose of the exit interview is to address any questions that were not answered or did not have time to ask during the interview process. It is helpful, but not required, to have a draft of the internal panel review report, to share any preliminary results, and/or to share strengths/weaknesses of the unit. All panel members should go through their notes and look for discrepancies/gaps across interview responses.

- **Exit interview (@ 1 hour)**

Step 7: Final Report *(end of semester, usually 1st week of May)*

Internal panel members will typically have approximately 4 weeks to finalize the internal panel review report. The report should be no more than 10 pages.

- **Draft and finalize report (@ 10 hours)**
 - The internal panel chair will draft the initial report and send to members for review and editing.
 - Meetings to discuss edits can be scheduled with members on an as needed basis.

Step 8: Approval of Action Plan Draft *(early May after Final report has been submitted)*

The program review process concludes with an action plan, comprised of recommendations based on the internal panel and external reviewer's reports, proposed actions by the responding unit with input from the faculty, and a timeline for completing those actions.

- **Approve Action Plan (@ 30 minutes)**
 - OIE will combine recommendations from both reports to draft action plan recommendations. A draft action plan will be sent to internal panel members for reviewer prior to sending to department.

Internal Panel Member Experiences

“The Academic Program Review process helped me understand how other programs at LSU treat scholarship, teaching, and service and it gave me a deeper appreciation for all the wonderful people that make up this university. I’ve been able to take some of the good ideas I’ve learned back to my college while making some new friends along the way. It was a rewarding experience.”

Scott Baldrige, Professor, Department of Mathematics

“It was an interesting process to learn about the inner workings of another department in my college, resulting in a variety of ideas of how to improve my own department.”

Catherine Deibel, Associate Professor, Department of Physics & Astronomy

“Participating in an Academic Program Review gave me an opportunity to be more holistically involved in the strategic planning, evaluation, and assessment processes at LSU. With a committee of colleagues from departments across the University, I heard new and diverse perspectives from students, faculty, and others, which informed us as we accomplished our charge to provide strategic guidance to the department we reviewed. The experience broadened my knowledge about LSU and will be invaluable to me going forward as a leader.”

Sigrid Kelsey, Director of Scholarly Publishing, LSU Libraries

“Having served on several of these review panels, it is inspiring to see the sensitivity and responsibility that faculty teams exercise in reviewing the circumstances and accomplishments of our colleagues in other units.”

David Kirshner, Professor, School of Education

“I thoroughly enjoyed participating in the Academic Program Review process because it allowed me to learn about how another program on campus operates. In academia it is easy to focus on one’s own research and department and forget that there are so many exciting things happening all around us. I especially enjoyed hearing from talented graduate students and committed faculty members who work tirelessly to excel in their fields.”

Michelle Livermore, Associate Professor, School of Social Work

“After experiencing other universities as an external evaluator, it was a great pleasure to be able to do the same kind of activity closer to home. The opportunity to meet new colleagues and to discover the talents and professionalism behind the doors of buildings I’ve walked past a hundred times was a particular delight. The workload is not onerous, and the OIE team is there to help make everything go smoothly. A recommended LSU experience!”

Rod Parker, Professor and Director, School of Art

“I enjoyed meeting and working with LSU faculty from other departments. It was interesting learning about other departments; having the opportunity to review them in detail and identify strengths, challenges, and their opportunities for improvement.”

Georgianna Tuuri, Professor, School of Nutrition & Food Science

“Serving on the committee for the Academic Program Review Process for three different departments showed me many of the same struggles all departments are having and some innovative solutions that I was able to bring back to my home department for improvement.”

John R. White, Associate Dean of Research, College of Coast & Environment and Professor of Oceanography & Coastal Sciences

“Being on the IRP has allowed me to see a bigger picture of LSU, including how the university functions as a whole and how it goes about accomplishing its overall mission.”

Daniel Whitman, Associate Professor, Department of Management

“Serving on the panel for the Academic Program Review is not just a faculty responsibility, but also a wonderful experience. I enjoyed working with the panel members from other academic departments of LSU and appreciated the opportunity to talk to faculty and students of the department under review. I learned a lot on how different academic units of LSU operate individually and collectively.”

Jianan Wu, Professor, Department of Marketing and Flores MBA Program