



Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts
Program Review Guide
June 2015

For additional information on the MCLA Program Review process go to
<http://www.mcla.edu/Academics/institutionalresearch/programreview/index>

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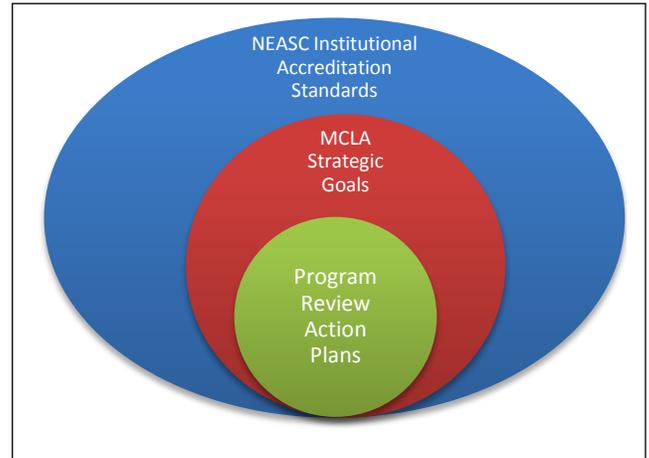
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Program Review

Purpose

The program review process is an opportunity for department members to reflect on the current academic offerings as well as planning for the future direction of the department. The goal of the program review is to strengthen programs by providing a way to establish strategic priorities for the department and the college.

Another purpose of program review is to ensure the quality of academic programs and identify areas for improvement. These areas may include student enrollments, curriculum, library and other resources, facilities, academic reputation, and student learning, as determined by a comparison with national standards and best practices in programs at public comprehensive institutions that have a regional and teaching mission similar to MCLA's.



A program review process for all academic majors is required as a condition for accreditation by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC).

Process

Departments engage in program review in accordance with a schedule developed by the Academic Dean and Vice President for Academic Affairs. This schedule ensures that all programs will be reviewed on a seven-year cycle. Multiple programs within a department are reviewed together, when appropriate. Program review includes the preparation of a self-study document, a site visit by external reviewers, an external reviewer report, administrative review of the documents and recommendations, a departmental response, and a faculty-driven action plan for ongoing program improvement that coincides with college's strategic plan.

Procedure

Program review minimally includes the following steps:

1. The analysis of data about the program by the faculty.
 - The Data Packet will typically include data from the 5 years prior to the review, or as available.
2. A collectively written self-study that briefly describes different aspects of the current program, uses the data gathered to appraise its strengths and weaknesses, and then projects a plan for the coming years.

3. A visit (typically one day) and written report by one or two external reviewers.
4. A response by the department to the external reviewers' recommendations submitted to the office of Academic Affairs.
5. A meeting with the program Chair about process, the self-study, external reviewers' report and departmental response by the Academic Dean and Vice President for Academic Affairs, to determine strategic action steps arising from the review.

When a program review process is undertaken in a spirit of cooperation and improvement, it can be a useful process for the department and the college. It will identify strengths in your department and areas that need attention and improvement. It will provide an opportunity for reflection on the mission of the program and for its role in the context of the college and its strategic goals. Assessment, however, cannot succeed as the work of any one person. It is a process with far-reaching implications and, as such, it should include program faculty, professional staff, and students as appropriate at each phase.

The purpose of this guide is to provide information and direction for the program review process, and to assist in the documentation and assessment of the program or programs.

The Associate Dean of Academic Affairs is the coordinating administrator for this process.

Timeframe of Program Review Process (projected Spring site visit)

A program review schedule with a spring visit is preferable.

Task	Target Dates
Vice President sends notification to department Chair of upcoming review.	Mid-to late March of year preceding review visit
Vice President and Academic Dean host an orientation meeting for Chair or designee.	April-May of year preceding review visit
Institutional Research, Assessment and Planning (IRAP) provides a Data Packet to department Chair.	Mid-to late April of year preceding review visit
Chair forms an advisory committee and designates a program review coordinator for the process.	Mid-to late April of year preceding review visit
Chair submits the names and contact information for up to six potential external reviewers to Vice President and Academic Dean for consideration.	By end of August
Once approved, invitations and proposed dates are sent to external reviewer(s) by Associate Dean.	August - September
Chair submits draft of self-study to Associate Dean of Academic Affairs.	late-November
Review of draft by Associate Dean, Dean And VP completed.	December
Any needed revisions to the draft are completed	Early February
Associate Dean sends external reviewer(s) copies of self-study and supporting documents.	One month prior to scheduled visit (visits in March-April)
Chair and Associate Dean host site visit	As scheduled
External reviewers submit their report to Associate Dean	Four weeks after visit
Chair submits a departmental response to external report to Vice President and Academic Dean.	Within 6 weeks after report is received
Academic Dean and Vice President of Academic Affairs meet with Chair to discuss action steps.	Within 6 weeks after departmental response is received

Timeframe of Program Review Process (projected Fall site visit)

This is an alternate schedule to be used when a spring visit is not feasible.

Task	Target Dates
Vice President sends notification to department Chair of upcoming review.	Mid-to late March of year preceding review visit
Vice President and Academic Dean host an orientation meeting for Chair or designee. If it is agreed that a spring visit will not be feasible, then the following schedule should be followed.	April-May of year preceding review visit
Institutional Research, Assessment and Planning (IRAP) provides a Data Packet to department Chair.	Mid-to late October of year preceding review visit
Chair forms an advisory committee and designates a program review coordinator for the process.	Mid-to late September of year preceding review visit
Chair submits the names and contact information for up to six potential external reviewers to Vice President and Academic Dean for consideration.	By end of December
Once approved, invitations and proposed dates are sent to external reviewer(s) by Associate Dean.	January-February
Chair submits draft of self-study to Associate Dean of Academic Affairs.	Mid-March
Review of draft by Associate Dean, Dean and VP completed.	April
Any needed revisions to the Data Packet and self-study draft are completed	End of May
Associate Dean sends external reviewer(s) copies of self-study and supporting documents.	One month prior to scheduled visit (visits in October-November)
Chair and Associate Dean host site visit	As scheduled
External reviewers submit their report to Associate Dean	Four weeks after visit
Chair submits a departmental response to external report to Vice President and Academic Dean.	Within 6 weeks after report is received
Academic Dean and Vice President of Academic Affairs meet with Chair to discuss action steps.	Within 6 weeks after departmental response is received

Writing the self-study

The self-study must be completed electronically using the specified template. Each section should fully utilize the Data Packet supplied by IRAP, but programs may elect to include additional relevant documents and additional data requested from IRAP as needed. The audience of the self-study is the external reviewers. It should provide them with a full description of the content area, an honest appraisal of its strengths and weaknesses, and a projection of where the program wants to enhance its strengths, address those areas where it wants to improve, and how it intends to do so.

The completed draft self-study should be sent to the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs for review by the Associate Dean, Dean and VP. Once approved, the Associate Dean will send the completed self-study along with the Data Packet, and all supporting documentation to the external reviewers a month before the scheduled visit. Faculty CVs, syllabi, assessment reports should be sent in separate files.

The External Review

The department Chair should propose potential external reviewers and send the names, full CVs and order of preference to the Associate Dean. The list will be forwarded to the Dean and Vice

President for review. Proposals of names should be made at least one semester/6 months in advance of the projected visit date.

External reviewers should hold senior academic rank in an appropriate field, have a familiarity with public liberal arts institutions, but not have any close ties to current faculty or staff that might compromise the objectivity of the visit.

Arrangements for the visit (travel, hotel) will be made by the Associate Dean working with the Academic Affairs Administrative Assistant. The program Chair, in consultation with the Associate Dean, should create an itinerary for the visit that includes: meetings with the Chair, faculty, students, Academic Dean, Vice President of Academic Affairs, tour of MCLA campus and program facilities, and other items as appropriate to the review.

The reviewers will be asked to write a single report, addressing the questions contained in the “External Reviewer Report Questions” (Appendix D). The reviewers will be asked to complete the report within four weeks of the conclusion of the site visit and send an electronic copy to the Associate Dean, who will forward it to the department Chair, Dean and Vice President.

Closing the Loop

Once the External Reviewer Report has been received, the program Chair (in conjunction with program faculty) will be asked to write a brief response for the Academic Dean and Vice President for Academic Affairs. The response should be written after a review of the External Reviewer Report by program faculty. It may correct erroneous information, underscore or disagree with any points in the external report. The response will not be shared with the external reviewers.

Within 6 weeks of having received the program’s response, the Academic Dean and Vice President for Academic Affairs will arrange to meet with the program Chair to discuss the review and to develop action steps as part of the program's strategic plan.

The Assessment Advisory Group (AAG) will periodically review the program review process and make any recommendations for improvement of the process to the Academic Dean and Vice President for Academic Affairs.

Storage of Program Review documents

In order for the Program Review process to support candid and thorough reflections, the self-study will be accessible only to MCLA faculty, and relevant administrators and staff.

After the conclusion of the review, Institutional Research, Assessment and Planning will retain an electronic copy of the self-study, external reviewer report, and departmental response.

Appendix A

Self-study Template

The questions below require responses in both the self-study and the external reviewers' reports. They incorporate the questions that the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education requires institutions to address during the review of proposed degree programs as well as those the institution needs to address for accreditation by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC).

Standard A - Program Mission

The mission of the program clearly supports the mission and strategic goals of the college. The mission gives direction to the program and provides the basis for evaluating the program.

This will probably be the shortest section of the self-study, but it is important nevertheless. The mission should be clearly stated, current, and used by faculty and staff to guide both the day to day affairs of the program and the formation of action plans.

Questions to guide the narrative:

- Briefly discuss the history and logic of the program's mission and any recent changes or contemplated changes to it.
- Discuss how the mission of the program supports a) the mission of the college, b) the LEAP goals and c) the strategic goals of the college. How does the program address the area of significant public need in Massachusetts and nationally?
- How effective is the mission of this program in guiding its actions?
- How can the program build on the strengths of its mission?

Data Packet items provided: mission statement of the college, mission statement of the program, strategic goals of the college, LEAP goals

Standard B - Program Goals

The program has clearly stated goals that support the mission and strategic goals of the college and regularly measures its progress towards them. Results are used to develop action steps that will further strengthen the program.

Questions to guide the narrative:

- Briefly discuss the history and logic of the program's goals and any recent changes or contemplated changes to them.

- How effective has the program been in its progress towards its goals?
- What steps are planned to continue to make progress towards program goals?
- What support is needed from the college to help the program achieve its goals?

Data Packet items provided: program goals

Note: Sections A and B may be combined in the narrative.

Standard C - Student Learning

The program has clearly defined outcomes for student learning that are made known to its students. It has a systematic process for measuring how and what its students are learning and uses the results to improve the program.

Questions to guide the narrative:

- Briefly discuss the history and logic of the program learning outcomes and any recent changes or contemplated changes to them.
- Provide a summary of the findings of assessments in the previous two semesters.
- How have assessment findings been used by the program to improve the curriculum, student learning or some other aspect of the program.
- How will it address any areas it has identified as needing attention?
- How effective* has the program been in the process of assessment, in reviewing and using results? For example, have all faculty in the program participated in assessment.
- What support is needed from the college to enable the department to develop a more effective assessment process and/or help students achieve the learning outcomes?

Data Packet items provided: student learning outcomes of the program, most recent curriculum map, assessment reports from the two years/4 semesters prior to the review

Standard D - Program Design and Curriculum

The design, structure and content of the program are comprehensive, coherent and appropriate for its mission and goals.

Questions to guide the narrative:

- Briefly discuss the history and logic of the program design and curriculum as well as any recent changes or contemplated changes to them.
- What are the general education and field specific requirements of the program?
- What level of service, if any, does the program provide to the core curriculum, honors program or other academic programs of the college?
- What are the major similarities and differences between the program at MCLA and those of its closest peers?

- Assess the strengths and weakness of the overall design of the program curriculum.
- What new courses or concentrations have been added since the last review?
- What support is needed from the college to enable the department to build on the strengths of its program design and curriculum and address any identified weaknesses?

Data Packet items provided: list of courses taught over past two academic years, description of program requirements

NOTE: Course syllabi from 2 semesters prior to program review visit need to be provided by the program.

Standard E - Student Characteristics

The numeric, demographic and academic characteristics of the students in the program are consistent with the goals of the program and the college.

Questions to guide the narrative:

- Describe the composition of the student body and any trends in enrollment.
- Describe the composition of the student body and any identified trends.
- Describe any trends in student-faculty ratios evident in the data.
- How effectively does the program retain its students?
- What are the trends in student progress evident in the data?
- What have been the findings about graduates of the program?
- What have been the findings about students who have withdrawn from the program?
- What could the program do to build on a positive trend, develop a positive trend or address an undesirable trend?
- What support is needed from the college to enable the department to build on the strengths identified in student characteristics and address any identified weaknesses?

Data packet items:

Student Enrollment, Class Section Distribution/Class Size/Course Counts, FTE and Student-Faculty Ratio, Student Progress Data, Alumni characteristics

Standard F - Faculty Characteristics

The faculty qualifications, composition and numbers are sufficient to fulfill the mission and goals of the program.

Questions to guide the narrative:

- Describe the composition of the program faculty (including full-time and part-time) and any trends that have evolved (or that appear to be evolving) since the previous review.

- Faculty CVs must be provided to the external reviewers, but in the self-study, brief highlights of some accomplishments in teaching and research and service may be included.
- How is advising carried out, what is the advising load. How is the quality of advising assessed?
- Describe (if applicable) the role of part-time faculty in the program.
- What support is needed from the college to enable the program to support and strengthen its faculty?

Data Packet items provided : Number of all full-time faculty members by rank for the current academic year and four prior academic years; disaggregated by gender/race/ethnicity among tenured and tenure-track faculty; Percentage tenured, percentage with a terminal degree among full-time faculty; List of all part-time faculty members for the current academic year and four prior academic years.

NOTE: Faculty CVs are not in the Data Packet. These need to be provided by the program.

Standard G–Resources and Support

The program has the resources (administrative, informational, technological, physical) it needs to fulfill its mission and goals.

- Describe the available resources: a) staff support, b) library holdings c) physical spaces used (offices, classrooms, labs), and d) technology) and compare them to the needs of the program.
- What resources are needed from the college to enable the program to support and strengthen its program?

Data Packet items: physical space description, library holdings for the program, information technology summary

Summary and Action Plan

- What were the key findings of this self-study process?
 - Based on the data reviewed for this self-study, what are the current strengths of the program? What are areas that could be improved?
- What are the action steps that the program proposes to undertake in order to build on its strengths and address areas that could be improved? Include a timeline.

Appendix B

Self-study Rubric

To be used by departments as a check-list for reviewing their self-study prior to submission.

Category	Needs substantial re-write	Needs some revision	Acceptable	Exemplary
Narrative	Too brief or too lengthy. Does not provide adequate information for external reviewers. A lack of analysis and frankness. Requests made for support or resources are not connected to data analysis.	Generally of adequate length and detail. Analysis may lack frankness in light of the data. Requests made for support or resources are generally connected to an analysis.	Appropriate length and detail throughout. Analysis is most often frank and based in the data. Requests made for support or resources are connected to data analysis.	Appropriate length and detail. Analysis is frank and based in the data, revealing both strengths and weaknesses. Requests made for support or resources are strongly connected to data analysis.
Use of data throughout the narrative	Data is rarely or never referenced in the narrative or not analyzed adequately.	Data is referenced throughout the narrative, but not always analyzed adequately.	Data is referenced throughout the narrative and almost always thoroughly analyzed.	Data is frequently referenced and is always thoroughly analyzed. Additional data beyond the packet is referenced as needed.
Action Plan	This is missing, too brief or too vague.	This is generally adequate, but may not be realistic or achievable.	This is a realistic and mostly achievable plan. Some elements may not derive directly from the findings of the self-study.	This is a realistic and completely achievable plan. It is detailed and derives directly from the findings of the self-study.

Appendix C

Data Packet Items

All items - except those noted with an asterisk - will be provided by Institutional Research, Assessment and Planning (IRAP). A list of optional data items is included below. These and other items may be requested from the Staff Associate, IRAP, ext. 5413.

Part A - Mission

1. Mission statement of the college
2. Mission statement of the program
3. Strategic goals of the college
4. LEAP goals

Part B - Program Goals

1. Program goals

Part C - Student Learning Outcomes

1. Students learning outcomes of the program
2. Curriculum map
3. Annual reports of student learning outcomes assessment since previous review

Part D - Program Design and Curriculum

1. List of courses taught over past two academic years
2. Description of current program requirements

Course syllabi from 2 semesters prior to program review visit are not in the Data Packet. These need to be provided by the program.

Part E - Student Characteristics

1. Student Enrollment
 - i. Numbers of students enrolled, including double majors
 - ii. Double majors by second major, if applicable
 - iii. Percentage by gender/race/ethnicity
 - iv. Number of minors enrolled
2. Class Section Distribution
 - i. Number of sections offered by level (lower division, upper division, graduate) and total
3. Class size distribution (1-10; 11-20; 21-30; 31-40; 41+) by level and total
 - i. Average class size by level and total (college-wide averages will be provided for comparison)
4. Course Counts
 - i. Individual instruction enrollments by level and total
 - ii. Headcount and credit hours generated by level and total
5. Student and Faculty FTEs
 - i. Student FTE for fall semester, by level (undergraduate, graduate), if appropriate
 - ii. Faculty FTE for fall semester: full-time faculty, part-time faculty, total
6. Student to Faculty Ratio
 - i. Student-faculty ratio (college-wide figures provided for comparison)
7. Student Progress
 - a. Graduates
 - i. Number of degrees awarded (including double majors) by concentration, if applicable
 - ii. Percentage by gender/race/ethnicity among those awarded degrees
 - b. Major Cohort Progress, for the cohort of majors who started five years earlier, by class (Fr, So, Jr, Sr)
 - i. Number graduated or still enrolled in the same major
 - ii. Number graduated or still enrolled in a different major

- iii. Number withdrawn
 - c. Fall Semester Progress (*For three consecutive fall semesters*) among majors enrolled the previous fall, by class (Fr, So, Jr, Sr)
 - i. Number who graduated or returned in the same major the succeeding fall
 - ii. Number who returned in a different major the succeeding fall
 - iii. Number who withdrew
 - d. Student Withdrawal
 - i. Number who withdrew from the program, by reason
- 8. Alumni characteristics
 - i. Results from Alumni survey
 - ii. National Student Clearinghouse information on graduate school attendees

Part F - Faculty Characteristics

1. Number of full-time faculty members for the current academic year and four prior academic years
2. Number of full-time faculty members disaggregated by gender/race/ethnicity among tenured and tenure-track faculty
4. Percentage tenured, percentage with a terminal degree among full-time faculty members

Faculty CVs are not in the Data Packet. These need to be provided by the program.

Part G - Resource Support

1. Physical space description
2. Library holdings for the program
3. Informational technology summary

Optional data packet items, available upon request.

1. New Student Profile
 - a. First Time Freshmen
 - i. Counts
 - ii. Average HS GPA
 - iii. Average SAT
2. Transfers
 - i. Counts
 - ii. Community College attended
 - iii. Credits
 - iv. Average College GPA
3. Migration Tables
4. Advisee Profile
 - a. 5 year trend of advisees
5. General Institutional Data
 - a. For baseline comparison
6. Department Dashboard

Appendix D

External Reviewer Report Questions

External reviewers are asked to complete one, co-written report. Please use the following questions as general guidelines.

Program Mission

1. What are the strengths and weakness of the mission of this program?
2. How can the program build on the strengths of its mission?

Program Goals

1. How effective has the program been in working towards its goals?
2. What steps should it take to continue to make progress towards its program goals?
3. What support is needed from the college to help the program achieve its goals?

Student Learning Outcomes

1. How effective has the program been in the process of assessment (collecting, reviewing and using results)? What have been the areas of strength and weakness in the process?
2. What steps could the program take to improve its assessment process? What steps could the program take to improve student learning?
3. What support is needed from the college to enable the department to develop a more effective process and help students achieve the learning outcomes?

Program Curriculum and Design

1. How well does the program design and curriculum accomplish its mission and goals?
2. Is the program sufficiently competitive when considered against its peers?
3. What are the strengths of the program design and curriculum? Is there anything the faculty should consider changing?
4. What support is needed from the college to enable the department to build on the strengths of its design and curriculum and address any identified weaknesses?

Students

1. What are the identified strengths of the students in the program?
2. What do the students identify as strengths and weaknesses in the program.
3. Is a sufficient amount known about students who graduate or leave the program?
4. What could the program do to build on positive trends, develop a positive trend or address an undesirable trend?

Faculty

1. How well does the composition, experience, and expertise of the faculty support the mission and goals of the program?
2. How effectively does the program orient, support and review its part-time faculty?
3. Is there sufficient support for and assessment of academic advising?
4. What are the changes in the composition, expertise, number, etc. of the faculty that will be needed to support the anticipated changes in the program, students, or the field?

5. What departmental or institutional strategies or support is needed to support the current program faculty?

Resources

1. How well do the current resources (physical, staffing, library, technological) support the program’s mission and goals?
2. What additional resources will be needed to support the mission and goals of the program?

Action Plan

1. Are the action steps realistic and achievable?
2. Are there different or additional steps that should be taken by the program faculty and/or administration in the short term and long term to support the program and address any areas of concern?

Appendix E

Sample visit itinerary

Time	Meeting and agenda	Attendees	Location
9:00 – 9:15	Welcome, overview of visit, check on needs for the day (data, technology), complete reimbursement forms	Reviewers meet with Associate Dean	Bowman
9:15 - 10:00	Institutional perspective	Reviewers meet with Dean, Vice President	Bowman
10:00 - 10:30	Initial discussion of the self-study, tour facilities	Reviewers meet with Chair	TBD
10:30 - 11:30	Meeting with Senior faculty	TBD	TBD
11:30 - 12:30	Meeting with Junior faculty and/or Adjunct faculty	TBD	TBD
12:30 - 1:30	Providing the student perspective. No faculty or administrators at this meeting. A student should be designated to make sure the reviewer gets to the location of next meeting.	Lunch will be arranged and provided by department	TBD
1:30 - 2:30	Reviewers have opportunity to review their notes and begin to draft a report	N/A	TBD
2:30 - 3:00	Final meeting with Chair, answer final questions, discuss recommendations	Reviewers meet with Chair	TBD
3:00 - 3:30	Wrap up meeting, a preview of the findings	Reviewers meet with Vice President, Dean, Associate Dean	Bowman