Harvey Mudd College
Academic Program Review Guidelines
(Revised: June 2014)

On January 27, 2002, the Harvey Mudd College faculty adopted a policy for assessing how well its programs fulfill the college mission. The policy was revised in 2007 as part of a normal review process to reflect best practices in academic program review. This revision again updates and revises that policy by describing the purposes, characteristics and procedures for an academic program review. The guidelines are suggestive, not prescriptive, and should be of help to programs as they plan for, undertake, and interpret the results of an academic program review.

The Purposes of Academic Program Review
Student learning and program planning are at the heart of the HMC review process. Reviews will typically include an internal program self-study and a multi-day visit by external reviewers. The insights gained through this process should provide feedback to help the faculty do its job better, use its resources more efficiently, attract new resources to its curriculum and programs, and enter a beneficial conversation about good educational practice with respected colleagues from other institutions.

Overview of the Academic Program Review Process
An academic program review typically occurs every seven years. It includes a self-study by the department, followed by a visit from three external reviewers. Approximately one month after the external review, the reviewers submit their report to the Dean of the Faculty, who then forwards the report to the department. The department chair, review coordinator and Dean of the Faculty meet to discuss the content of the report and any necessary responses. One year later, the department chair makes a brief follow up report to the Dean of the Faculty, outlining how the department/program has responded to the external reviewer's report, and discussing any further recommendations for action. The Dean of the Faculty's Office pays for the external review.

The Schedule for Academic Program Review
Academic program reviews rotate from department to department with typically one review in any given year. Along with the seven academic departments, the Core Curriculum is also included in the review cycle. The Dean of the Faculty, in consultation with the Department Chairs Committee (DCC) sets the rotation order, and departments should consult the Academic Program Review Schedule for upcoming review dates and links to completed review documents.

Getting Started with Program Review
Ideally, academic program reviews will be spread over three semesters, a period that should allow a department ample time for preparation, collecting and analyzing data, writing the self-study, hosting an external visit, and discussing how to apply what has been learned in the process. The Dean of the Faculty initiates the review process by informing the department chair that a review should be completed by a certain date. One person—either the chair or some other designated department member—should serve as the review coordinator. While program review is a shared endeavor among the faculty, the review coordinator is generally responsible for:
1) Convening and leading a program review committee;
2) Preparing the academic program review plan;
3) Managing the review process.

As compensation for serving as review coordinator, a faculty member may negotiate with the department chair (or, if the department chair serves as coordinator, with the Dean of the Faculty) for a course release, or summer stipend support. The review coordinator works closely with members of the program review committee and the Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness to gather necessary information and write the self-study.

Because academic program review is situated at the department/program level, departments with joint majors must address them within their program review, or clearly delineate why it is not appropriate to address joint majors. It may be advisable in the case of joint majors to have faculty from other departments on the program review committee. Early in the process, the department/program will want to set aside sufficient time for departmental discussion of an appropriate focus for the self-study. In order to facilitate that discussion, the review coordinator may want to distribute a set of possible topics or issues for the self-study before that initial discussion. Selected questions and topics for academic program review can be found here.

A detailed timeline and checklist for academic program review can be found here.

Resources Available for Program Review
In planning for and undertaking a program review, several resources are available to departments.
- National studies of general curricular issues for liberal arts colleges/engineering programs/STEM disciplines.
- Studies by national organizations in your discipline or field.
- Academic program reviews conducted at HMC by other departments (available in the Dean of Faculty's Office).
- The Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness can provide:
  - Advice on the development of academic program review plans;
  - Assistance articulating and revising departmental goals and student learning outcomes;
  - Help in identifying and supplying existing assessment data from institutional surveys to inform the review where appropriate (The National Survey of Student Engagement, the CIRP Freshman Survey and Senior Surveys cover many topics relevant to student learning and program review);
  - Provide technical support for web-based surveys (of alumni and students);
  - Assist with the collection and analysis of other institutional data relevant to academic program review.

Selecting the External Reviewers
The program review committee creates a list of 6-8 potential external reviewers including names, titles, institutions and email addresses. The committee should also include brief statements explaining the appropriateness of each suggestion. This list and statements should be forwarded to the Dean of the Faculty, who approves and formally invites potential reviewers. While a department is free to choose potential external reviewers as it sees fit, it may be beneficial to include one person from a comparable liberal arts college and one person from a research university that offers PhDs in relevant disciplines. This helps to ensure that the department receives feedback on how well HMC is preparing students for further study as well as on the unique situation of HMC as a liberal arts college.

Generally, close associates of HMC faculty members are not eligible to serve as external reviewers. The department will indicate dates it would prefer the external reviewers to visit campus. The Office of the

Dean of the Faculty will determine availability and once reviewers have confirmed, arrange travel and housing for reviewers. The department is responsible for arranging the on-campus schedule for the visit. Sample on-campus visit schedules can be found here.

The Basic Elements of a Self-Study Report
The review committee creates a self-study report that it will provide to the Dean of the Faculty and the external reviewers no later than two weeks before the external review visit. While there is no single, prescriptive model for the self-study report, they will typically include the following basic elements:
1) A history of the department/program, which may include changes in faculty, facilities, and/or curriculum;
2) A statement of department's goals and student learning outcomes. An explanation, diagram, or summary of how the department's goals and student learning outcomes map onto or reflect the Educational Goals of Harvey Mudd College is an ideal inclusion in a self-study;
3) An assessment of student learning in the department/major(s) in light of the department's student learning outcomes. The assessment of student learning may contain some indirect evidence (e.g., survey results, interviews, focus groups), but should have at least one direct assessment of student learning (e.g., embedded exam questions, portfolio evaluation, standardized test results, capstone project evaluation). The assessment of student learning could be a summary and review of the department's annual assessment of student learning;
4) Data on enrollment and majors, disaggregated by relevant demographics;
5) Results from student/alumni surveys;
6) Comparative data from departments or programs at similar colleges;
7) Faculty profiles, such as CVs or other documents that speak to including teaching, research, and service;
8) Financial support for faculty and students (i.e. grants received for research, travel, senior projects)

The External Review
External reviewers typically spend two days on campus. The external review team meets with the Dean of the Faculty on the beginning of the first day of their visit and meets with the Dean of the Faculty for an exit interview in the late afternoon in the second day. After this exit interview, the reviewers should have time to discuss their written report (and no further contact with department members). The department sets the schedule for the visit, ensuring that external reviewers meet with all continuing department/program faculty and support staff as well as individuals in joint or related departments or programs, including those at other Claremont Colleges. This allows reviewers to gain the fullest picture of the department. Many departments find it valuable to have reviewers meet with students, visit one or more classes, and review any significant resources (e.g., laboratories, workspaces). It may be advisable to provide reviewers time to read or review student work such as thesis or clinic work, or class projects. Many departments find it useful to have a reception or dinner for the reviewers and department/program one evening during the visit.

Final Report

After receiving and discussing the external reviewers report, the department chair/review coordinator meets with the Dean of the Faculty to discuss it. The chair/review coordinator should contact the Dean's office to arrange this meeting, typically within one month of receiving the report. Should further

communication and/or clarification between the department and the external reviewers be necessary, the Dean of the Faculty will facilitate this process and retain any documentation that results from this.

The department chair then takes the recommendations from the report to the DCC for discussion. Where appropriate, the chair then seeks approval from relevant campus committees for the recommended changes. The chair also reports the results of the program review to the departmental and affiliated faculty and makes copies available. The Dean of the Faculty reports the results of the program review to the Board of Trustees Educational Planning Committee. The department chair is responsible for overseeing the implementation of recommendations. The Dean of the Faculty is responsible for retaining the final report for institutional accreditation purposes.

A year after the external review, the department/program submits a brief follow-up report to the Dean of the Faculty. The report outlines which recommendations have been implemented and why, which have not been implemented and why, what impact the changes have had, and where the department/program intends to move in the future. The report can also provide the department with an opportunity to remind the administration of additional steps that need to be taken. The department chair meets with the Dean of the Faculty to discuss the follow-up report.