# Department and program curricular review guidelines

## The curricular review

**The curricular review is an 18 to 20 month long process**. The objective of the review is to facilitate self-reflection, innovation and assessment of all aspects of the curriculum. The review will examine the extent to which the department or program supports student learning and engagement and all other aspects of the AUP student experience. It will also help define the department or program’s position in terms of current theories and practice in the represented disciplines. Hereafter, the term “department” will be used interchangeably for “department” or “program”. **Note that this is a review of the departmental curricular offerings and not a review of faculty. Please do not include any personal information or comments on faculty work in your reports.**

A specific curricular review may have unique drivers. Such drivers may include:

* The changing nature of the discipline.
* Opportunities offered by new learning technologies.
* Shifting student demographics.
* New faculty.
* The changing expectations of professional statutory and regulatory bodies.
* Analysis of program information.
* The emerging change, through drift over time, of the original departmental aims and outcomes.

Regardless of the drivers and the scale of the review, the curricular review should facilitate the development of both individual faculty and faculty cohorts. It has the potential to improve communication and collaboration between faculty and staff, across departments and between departments and administrative units, leading to a stronger team ethos and departmental identity. Presently, the office of the Provost has proposed a five-year curricular review cycle for departments. Table 1 shows the current schedule.

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| **Departments** | fall 2017 | fall 2018 | fall 2019 | fall 2020 | fall 2021 | fall 2022 | fall 2023 | fall 2024 | fall 2025 | fall 2026 | fall 2027 | fall 2028 | fall 2029 | fall 2030 |
| Art History and Fine Arts | X |  |  |  |  | X |  |  |  |  | X |  |  |  |
| Comparative Literature and English |  | X |  |  |  |  | X |  |  |  |  | X |  |  |
| Computer Science, Mathematics and Environmental Science |  |  |  | X |  |  |  |  | X |  |  |  |  | X |
| Economics |  |  |  | X |  |  |  |  | X |  |  |  |  | X |
| Film Studies |  | X |  |  |  |  | X |  |  |  |  | X |  |  |
| French Studies and Modern Languages |  |  |  | X |  |  |  |  | X |  |  |  |  | X |
| Global Communications |  | X |  |  |  | X |  |  |  |  | X |  |  |  |
| History | X |  |  |  |  | X |  |  |  |  | X |  |  |  |
| International and Comparative Politics | X |  |  |  | X |  |  |  |  | X |  |  |  |  |
| International Business Administration |  |  | X |  |  |  |  | X |  |  |  |  | X |  |
| Psychology |  |  | X |  |  |  |  | X |  |  |  |  | X |  |

**Table 1. Curricular review schedule for departments**.

## The curricular review design

**The curricular review follows a curricular review design.** The curricular review design is drafted by the department chair in the initial stages of the curricular review and follows a period of consultation with other members of the department. During this consultation, the chair may wish to address the following questions:

* + What are the most important issues to consider during the review?
  + What objectives and constraints will guide the curricular review? For example:

o Academic excellence.

o Student and faculty retention.

o Student and faculty recruitment.

o Cross-disciplinarity.

o Faculty expertise.

* + What is the likely evolution of the disciplines represented in the department over the next five years?
  + What type of curriculums are other schools proposing in those disciplines?
  + What sources of information and evidence are available, in order to examine your department or program?
  + How will the review process be assessed? How will one know if it has been successful?
  + Five years down the line, what are the graduates doing? How will that affect the curriculum?
  + How does the curriculum assist students in making career decisions?

The curricular review design should address the following points:

* **Objectives** – Based on the preliminary consultation, the design should articulate what the faculty intends to achieve with the review and how their goals align with the broad curricular review objectives.
* **People** – The design should Identify who is responsible for:
* Leading the review.
* Being the main contact point for the Provost and Dean.
* Day to day planning and coordination.
* **Action items** – The design should describe the kind of actions expected to follow from the review process. Such actions items may entail the collaboration of other units and/or departments. Possible actions could be, for example:
* to establish working groups, to carry out identified tasks.
* to develop new courses or modules.
* to retire specific courses or modules.
* to inform future hires with the review findings.
* to initiate collaborations with other institutions.
* **External reviewers**- External reviewers should be proposed on the basis of their experience with excellent undergraduate programs in leading liberal arts institutes.

The curricular review design should be included in the departmental report for the current year.

## The curricular review report.

**The department chair is responsible for the curricular review report.** The chair, in consultation with the department, drafts the report after discussions with relevant administrative units and analysis of student surveys and departmental reports. The report is expected by the end of June and will be available to the provost and external reviewers.

The following section outlines a series of subjects that the chair might address in the curricular review report. These subjects are here briefly articulated and followed by a short, non-exhaustive, list of relevant questions, which she may wish to address. Given the uniqueness of each program, the chair may want to design questions relevant specifically to that department. The chair should consider the findings from the assessment reports and surveys of alumni and students in her reflections[[1]](#endnote-1). The report should summarize the discussions of the most important emerging issues and articulate the connections with the curricular review design document.

* 1. **Department mission and program learning outcomes**: The report should articulate the rational for the department’s mission statement and student learning outcomes. It should explain how they are linked and how they support each other. The following questions regarding the department’s mission statement and learning outcomes may be of interest:
     + - * Do they reflect the current state-of-the-art of the discipline?
         * Do they respond to the needs of your students?
         * Do they reflect the expertise of your faculty?
         * Do they integrate effective practice as an intellectually rich subject of study?
         * Do they support learning of complex problem-solving, communication, and interpersonal skills?
         * Do they enhance the likelihood that knowledge will be retained and transferred to new situations?
  2. **University Mission**: The report should discuss how the department’s mission and learning outcomes fit with the institutional mission, college-wide curriculum, graduate qualities (core capabilities), and other programs that support the majors. It should review the departments assessment plan, are the learning objectives still applicable or should they be reviewed? Is the curriculum alignment matrix still applicable or should it be reviewed? The following questions may be relevant:
     + How does the department contribute to FirstBridge, writing- intensive courses, and other interdepartmental programs?
     + What opportunities does the department offer to non-majors to develop liberal arts core capailities?
     + Does the department receive and provide sufficient support to other majors?
  3. **The Structure of the Curriculum**: The report should describe the rationale for the current curricular structure of the programs. The following questions may be relevant:
     + How are the theory and methodology of the discipline introduced?
     + How are the theory and practice actively integrated throughout the curriculum?
     + Are there any aspects of the disciplines covered by the department, which are either over or under represented within the curriculum?
     + What are the overall strengths and weaknesses of the curriculum, and what are the best opportunities for improvement?
     + Is the course sequencing appropriate and legible?
     + How are students introduced to the use of information literacy and technology in the discipline?
     + How does the structure prepare students for independent study?
  4. **Students**: The report should describe the intellectual environment that your department creates for its students. The following questions may be relevant:
     + How are students advised in your department?
     + How does advising address student goals and expectations?
     + How does your department challenge its students?
     + How does your department meet the needs of academically struggling students?
  5. **Resources**: The report should evaluate the physical and human resources available to support departmental goals and how well they are being utilized. The following questions may be relevant:
     + Is the use of resources optimal?
     + Does the department have sufficient access to technology, equipment, physical space, databases, etc.?
     + Does the department have sufficient professional and support staff?
     + Is there sufficient library and technology support for your department?
  6. **Assessment**: The report should explain the methods of assessing student learning outcomes and the results of the department’s analysis. The following questions may be relevant:
     + How has the assessment changed or remained the same over time?
     + How have the department’s curriculum or courses changed as a result of your assessment?
     + How have the surveys informed the faculty’s understanding of the effectiveness of the curriculum?
  7. **Action plan**: In light of the above, what actions are planned for the coming academic year? For example the chair may:
     + establish working groups, to carry out identified tasks.
     + develop or retire courses or modules, change course sequencing, pre- or co-requisites.
     + alter the contribution to FirstBridge or writing intensive programs.
     + develop study trips or participate in established ones.
     + change the assessment processes (Alignment matrix, evidence collection, etc.).
     + initiate collaborations within or outside the institution.
     + apply for new hires within the department.
     + experiment with new pedagogical styles.

## External reviewers report

**External reviewers will visit the department and draft a report** in the late stages of the curricular review. The reviewers are tasked with examining the curricular review report along with all other relevant documentation. Their report should address any issues or questions raised in the curricular review report along with any other issues they may deem relevant or interesting.

In particular, the reviewers may wish to address the following questions:

* + What are the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the departmental curriculum (SWOT analysis)?
  + Does the curriculum reflect the departmental mission and learning objectives?
  + Does the curriculum reflect the state-of-the-art of the disciplines represented?
  + Does the curriculum reflect the direction towards which the disciplines are evolving?
  + Is the curriculum aligned with the offerings in other liberal arts institutions? Should it be?
  + Does the curriculum maximize the potential of faculty scholarship and expertise?
  + How should the department henceforth assess how their curriculum serves the student body?

To assist the reviewers in their task, the department chair, with the assistance AA, will provide the following information and documents, as well as any other materials that the department deems relevant, at least 15 days ahead of their visit:

• The curricular review report.

• Vitae of faculty in the department.

• A record of the number of majors in the last few years.

• Semester course schedules for the last few years.

• Sample course syllabuses.

• Departmental assessment reports for the last few years.

• Undergraduate Handbook.

• Relevant admissions materials (dashboards).

• A list of representative departmental alumni including contact information and current occupation.

These materials should be provided by the department chair to each consultant electronically. Hard copies are unnecessary. In addition, one electronic copy should be provided by the department chair to the Provost. The reviewers’ with be charged with concluding their reports and sending them to the Provost and Department Chair within one month of the on-campus visit.

## Implementation and assessment plan.

The final deliverable of the curricular review will take the form of a list of action items suggested by the department chair, in consultation with the provost, based on the reports drafted by the external reviewers and any other relevant information. Action items need not be limited to the department. The Chair may also recommend action items for other units or departments of the university. Each action item should be accompanied by a comprehensive implementation and assessment plan. These should be included in the regular assessment and reporting cycles for the following year.

# CURRICULAR REVIEW TIMETABLE

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| --- | --- | --- |
| PHASE | DUE DATE | ACTION/ITEM |
| Information collection and planning | By October 1 | Meeting of Chair with Provost.  Background material available. |
| **FALL** | Ongoing conversations among members of the department.   * Curricular review design. * Identification of possible external consultantsii. * Alumni and Senior Surveysi |
| December 15 | Curricular review design to the Provost, including list of proposed external reviewers . |
| Finalization of Curriculum Review Plan | January 15 | Consultation with Provost . |
| January - February | Consultations with various constituencies, including, for example, Curriculum Committee and other standing committees, Registrar, Student affairs office, Admissions office, Advising, Internship and Careers office. |
| February 15 | Chair drafts analysis of alumni & senior surveys and planning of interviews. |
| February 28 | Final version of curricular review design to the Provost. |
| Curriculum Review | **SPRING** | Ongoing conversations with students, faculty and staff at large. |
| June 30 | Curricular review report to the Provost. |
| June -August | External consultants receive Curricular review report and supporting materials (at least 30 days prior to visit) with copy to Provost. |
| September 15 | Plan for external consultants’ visit to AUP finalized[[2]](#endnote-2) |
| October 15 | External consultants’ visit completed. |
| November 15 | External consultants’ report submitted to Provost and Chair. |
| November 30 | Concluding meeting with department chair and Provost[[3]](#endnote-3) |
| Wrap-up | December 15 | Summary of action items from the department to the Provost. |
| February 15 | New assessment plan from the department to the Provost. |
| May 15 | Include new assessment plan as part of the departmental report |

**Final Deliverables**

**1) Action items identified (Chair, Provost).**

**2) Implementation and assessment plan embedded in departmental report (Chair).**

**Deliverable: External reviewers’ reports (Reviewers).**

**Deliverable: Draft of curricular review design (Chair).  
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**Deliverable: Final curricular review design (Chair).**

**Deliverables: Curricular review report (Chair).**

Regular departmental assessment cycle

**Curricular review flowchart**

1. Please consider the answers to questions included in the alumni, first destinations and senior surveys of the Higher Education Data Sharing Consortium (HEDS). Consider both the quantitative analysis and the narrative comments as they may relate to the objectives and questions of your curriculum review. Based on your findings, interview some students and alumni to explore further any item of interest for the curricular review. Produce a short report summarizing your findings to be included in the curricular review report. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. This normally takes the form of a two-day visit to AUP by a team of two or more colleagues from other institutions. When identifying the external reviewers and planning for their visit you should consider the following criteria.

   1. Selection: External reviewers should be selected based on their experience with excellent undergraduate programs and/or with a graduate program to which we would like to be able to send our students. A list of 3 to 5 possible candidates, together with a brief statement of their qualifications and CV’s, should be submitted to the Provost, together with the draft of the curricular review design (deliverable 1).

   2. Budget: Academic Affairs will make all local travel, lodging, and meal arrangements for the consultants in collaboration with the Chair. These expenses may be charged against the curricular review account. The cost of the review, including €500 honoraria to the consultants and all local expenses, should not exceed the budgeted amount.

   3. Schedule for Visit: Departments should plan the consultants' schedule for the campus visit. Visits should allow time for consultants to meet with students as well as with members of the department or program. Many consultants will want to meet with faculty members from outside of the department as well. A joint meeting of the consultants with the Provost should be included in the schedule.

   *Sample schedule for visit:*

   *Sunday*

   *• Arrive in Paris*

   *• Kick off dinner*

   *Monday & Tuesday*

   *• Meet faculty who teach in the programs*

   *• Meet with staff who support the programs in Academic Affairs, Admissions, Registrar’s Office,*

   *• Library, etc.*

   *• Meet students one-on-one and in small groups*

   *• Visit classes*

   *Wednesday*

   *• Debrief with Provost and Vice President/Director of Enrollment Management*

   *• Depart AUP* [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. At the end of the curricular review, the department has a final meeting with the Provost to discuss the report and the department curricular plans. During this meeting, the Provost will reflect with the department on questions, such as:

   What were the most striking or unexpected findings in the department curricular review?

   How well are your students achieving the learning outcomes?

   Are the department learning outcomes aligned with:

   the state-of-the-art of the discipline?

   current student needs?

   The institutions core capabilities?

   Does the department feel they are adequately supporting interdisciplinary learning, programs, and independent study?

   Are there any forms of external support that could greatly improve student learning?

   What reflections have developed from the external reviews? Are there any comments in the report that appear to stem from misunderstandings with the consultants? [↑](#endnote-ref-3)