

York University

External Reviewer Nominations for Cyclical Reviews

GUIDELINES

Overview

One of the principal components of the cyclical review process is external evaluation (peer review) with report and recommendations on program quality improvement. Normally, the external evaluation will be conducted by a Review Committee composed of at least:

- Two external reviewers for an undergraduate program;
- Two such reviewers for a graduate program qualified by discipline and experience to review the program(s);
- Two such reviewers for the concurrent review of an undergraduate and graduate program;
- One further reviewer, either from within the university but from outside the discipline (or interdisciplinary group) engaged in the program, or external to the university.

External reviewer nominees should have a strong track record as academic scholars, normally associate or full professors, and ideally should also have had academic administrative experience in such roles as undergraduate or graduate program coordinators, department chair, dean, graduate dean or associated positions. This combination of experience allows a reviewer to provide the most valuable feedback on program proposals and reviews. Further, the nominees should be at arm's length from the program under review. Guidelines for choosing arm's length reviewers are provided below.

Additional discretionary members may be assigned to the Review Committee if required by the complexity of the program(s) or other factors. Such additional members might be appropriately qualified and experienced people selected from industry or the professions, and/or, where consistent with the institution's own policies and practices, student members.

Nomination Process

The senior academic lead (typically a Chairperson/Director) is responsible for submitting recommendations for external and institutional reviewers to the Dean(s)/Principal of the resource/anchor Faculty(ies) for ranking. The ranked list of potential external and internal reviewers must be submitted, along with documentation described below, to the Office of the Vice-Provost Academic by June 1st of the calendar year in which the program is up for review.

Consultation must be undertaken with the relevant Director(s)/ Chair(s), Graduate Program Director, and Undergraduate Program Director if the undergraduate and graduate programs are being reviewed together so as to ensure that the needs of both programs are addressed. Further, if there is more than one department or school involved either at one campus or at different campuses, consultations should be undertaken to produce a comprehensive list of reviewers that are supported by the different program(s) and/or unit(s).

The submission of External Reviewer nominations to the Dean(s)/Principal must consist of a cover memo that includes the names of eight external reviewer nominations and the names of three institutional reviewer nominations. For the institutional reviewer nominees, the following information must be included in the cover memo: full name, rank, academic unit(s). A brief description of the nominees' experience/expertise relevant to the service should also be included.

The institutional reviewer nominations must be from outside the discipline (or interdisciplinary group) engaged in the program, and ideally should also have had academic administrative experience in such roles as undergraduate or graduate program coordinators, department chair, dean, graduate dean or associated positions.

If appropriate, the external reviewer nominees may be grouped into categories reflecting particular areas of expertise, specialization or fields. Further, the following information must be provided for each external reviewer nominee. As much information about the external reviewer nominee should be provided. The Office of the Vice-Provost recognizes that some information may not be available without a CV but often a significant amount of information is available online.

- Name
- Rank
- Institution (including mailing address, telephone, and e-mail address)
- Degrees (including university, discipline and date)
- Areas of specialization (relate these to the program(s) undergoing review)
- Experience/expertise relevant to the service as a reviewer (academic administrative experience in such roles as undergraduate or graduate program coordinators, department chair, dean, graduate dean or associated positions; academic recognition)
- Recent scholarly activity (if possible, cite 3 to 5 recent publications with title, date, type of publication, journal, and publisher (if book))
- Previous affiliation with York, if any (The existence of some previous relationship with York or its faculty will not necessarily rule out selection as a consultant; however, nominees should not normally have close recent affiliations with the University, or close collegial or working relations with faculty members in programs to be reviewed.)

A template for external reviewer nominees is provided in the Templates and Guidelines section at the following link: <https://www.yorku.ca/unit/yuqap/cyclical-program-review/>

The submission to the Office of the Vice-Provost Academic (due June 1) should include the following as e-mail attachments:

- The Dean(s)/Principal's ranked list of the eight external reviewers and three institutional reviewers
- The template for external reviewer nominees and the cover memo as one document (the combined document previously submitted to the Dean/Principal)

Based on the nominations submitted by the Dean(s)/Principal, the Vice Provost Academic will confirm the membership of the Review Committee, in consultation with the Associate VP Graduate/FGS Dean for graduate programs. Through the nomination and selection process, as well as the site visit, the Vice Provost Academic will ensure that members of the review team are aware of and understand their role and obligations. Further, members of the review team will be provided with a Review Report template, which is available on the York University Quality Assurance Procedures (YUQAP) Website.

Guidelines for Choosing Arm's Length Reviewers

(The following information has been taken directly from the Guide to the Quality Assurance Framework prepared by the Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance.)

Best practice in quality assurance ensures that reviewers are at arm's length from the program under review. This means that reviewers/consultants are not close friends, current or recent collaborators, former supervisor, advisor, or colleague.

"Arm's length" does not mean that the reviewer must never have met or even heard of a single member of the program. It does mean that reviewers should not be chosen who are likely, or perceived to be likely, to be predisposed, positively or negatively, about the program. It may be helpful to provide some examples of what does and does not constitute a close connection that would violate the arm's length requirement.

Examples of what does not violate the arm's length requirement:

- Appeared on a panel at a conference with a member of the program
- Served on a granting council selection panel with a member of the program
- Author of an article in a journal edited by a member of the program, or of a chapter in a book edited by a member of the program
- External examiner of a dissertation by a doctoral student in the program
- Presented a paper at a conference held at the university where the program is located
- Invited a member of the program to present a paper at a conference organized by the reviewer, or to write a chapter in a book edited by the reviewer
- Received a bachelor's degree from the university (especially if in another program)
- Co-author or research collaborator with a member of the program more than seven years ago
- Presented a guest lecture at the university
- Reviewed for publication a manuscript written by a member of the program

Examples of what does violate the arm's length requirement:

- A previous member of the program or department under review (including being a visiting professor)
- Received a graduate degree from the program under review
- A regular co-author and research collaborator with a member of the program, within the past seven years, and especially if that collaboration is ongoing
- Close family/friend relationship with a member of the program
- A regular or repeated external examiner of dissertations by doctoral students in the program
- The doctoral supervisor of one or more members of the program
- A previous external reviewer for a Cyclical Program Review or a New Program Proposal in the department/unit in question. Whilst this is preferable, in cases where it is not ideal, at least one of the external reviewers must not have previously reviewed a program in the department/unit.