Program Review – External Reviewer Expectations

External reviewer reports play an important role in Western Illinois University's program review process and in the university's reporting to the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE).

Please keep the following guidelines in mind when preparing your report:

- Most reports are approximately 5–8 pages in length.
- Provide evidence-based observations whenever possible, referencing materials reviewed, meetings held, or data discussed.
- Reviewers are encouraged to use concise paragraphs or bullet points where appropriate.
- Focus on program-level analysis rather than evaluation of individual faculty members.
- Recommendations should be specific, actionable, and prioritized where possible.
- Reports should be written for a broad academic audience, including program faculty, college leadership, university administration, and state review bodies.
- Where appropriate, reviewers may suggest models or practices from peer institutions.

The external reviewer report will be used by the program to prepare the program review summary submitted to the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE). External reviewers should submit their written reports (electronically) to the Dean, copy to Program Coordinator/School Director, within four weeks of the campus visit.

Program Review for IBHE

Suggested External Reviewer Report Outline

Reviewer Information

- Name
- Title and institution
- Area of expertise
- Date of review / visit
- Materials reviewed (e.g., self-study, syllabi, assessment reports)

Overview of the Review Process

Brief description of how the review was conducted.

Possible elements:

- virtual or in-person review
- meetings with:
    - program faculty
    - program/school leadership
    - students
    - alumni or community partners (if applicable)
    - dean/college administration
    - provost office staff
- documents examined

Program Overview

Brief summary of the program.

Possible elements:

- program mission and goals
- program student learning outcomes
- degree(s) or certificate(s) offered
- curriculum structure
- program emphases, options, or tracks
- enrollment patterns

- faculty composition
- distinctive program features

Context and External Environment

Comment on major changes affecting the program.

Changes in the Discipline or Field

- What developments in the discipline should the program be responding to?

Changes in Student Demand

- Are there notable trends affecting student interest or enrollment?

Changes in Societal or Workforce Need

- How well does the program align with workforce or societal needs?

Institutional Context

- Are there institutional factors affecting the program's sustainability or growth?

Major Findings

Program Strengths

What are the most significant strengths of the program?

Examples may include:

- curriculum quality
- faculty expertise
- student engagement
- experiential learning
- partnerships
- assessment practices
- alignment with workforce needs

Areas for Improvement

What issues most limit the program's effectiveness or future growth?

Possible areas:

- curriculum gaps or redundancies
- staffing challenges
- advising structure
- facilities or technology
- assessment practices
- recruitment or retention

Evaluation of Program Quality and Capacity

Reviewers may comment on the following areas as appropriate.

Curriculum and Learning Outcomes

- alignment between courses and program learning outcomes
- scaffolding of competencies
- capstone or culminating experiences
- alignment with disciplinary expectations

Faculty Resources and Program Capacity

- faculty expertise and workload
- balance of full-time and adjunct faculty
- advising responsibilities
- sustainability of program structure

Assessment and Continuous Improvement

- clarity of program learning outcomes
- assessment methods used
- evidence of improvement based on assessment

Student Experience and Outcomes

- advising and student support
- experiential learning opportunities
- career preparation
- alumni outcomes

Accreditation Readiness (Optional)

If accreditation is being considered, reviewers may comment on:

- alignment with accreditation standards
- experiential learning structure
- faculty capacity
- documentation and assessment practices

Recommendations

Please provide clear and actionable recommendations. Each recommendation should include the following components:

- Recommendation (a concise statement of the recommended improvement).
- Rationale/Evidence (brief explanation based on observations, data, or discussions during the review).
- Suggested Action or Consideration (examples of steps the program might take to address the recommendation).

Short-Term Recommendations (1-2 years)

- Recommendation 1
    - Rationale/Evidence
    - Suggested Action
- Recommendation 2
    - Rationale/Evidence
    - Suggested Action

Long-Term Recommendations (3-5 years)

- Recommendation 3
    - Rationale/Evidence
    - Suggested Action
- Recommendation 4
    - Rationale/Evidence
    - Suggested Action

Overall Evaluation

Brief concluding statement summarizing the reviewer's overall assessment of the program and its future prospects.

Optional Appendix

- Suggested resources or models from peer institutions