Introduction

The College of Saint Benedict and Saint John’s University (CSB/SJU) are committed to supporting high quality academic departments and programs\(^1\) that provide our students with an excellent liberal arts education. Because we, at both institutional and individual levels, are committed to the integrity of our work and our responsibility to those whom we serve, we must invest in ongoing self-evaluation. The goal of this reflective activity is both to improve the focused learning offered by our departments and to reinvigorate our overall education in the liberal arts.

To guide our self-assessment, the Academic Policies, Standards, and Assessment Committee (APSAC), in coordination with the Provost, Vice Provost, Director of the Office of Academic Review and Curricular Advancement (OARCA), Director of the Common Curriculum, and the Faculty Senate, has created this Procedure for Systematic Evaluation of Academic Learning (SEAL). This document describes processes involved in recording, sustaining, and improving academic excellence at CSB/SJU.

There are three basic long-term goals served by systematically collecting, evaluating, and reporting descriptions of evidence of student learning and scholarly and creative activities in departments, namely:

- Programs will be able to analyze the effectiveness of their educational activities and formulate strategies for improvement based upon the analysis and interpretation of appropriate information;
- Our institutions will gain better guidance both for allocating current resources and for targeting advancement efforts to seek new resources;
- Those engaged in the advancement of the academic enterprise at CSB/SJU will have better information available to publicize achievement to a national or international audience.

Three regular reports produced by programs form the foundation for the process of continuous improvement:

- The Annual Report (described in the complete SEAL document);
- The Self-Study Report, (see page 7);
- The Final Program Review Portfolio, (see page 5).

The remainder of this document describes the process and content of Program Review.

\(^1\) For clarity, both departments and programs at CSB/SJU will be referred to collectively in this document with the designation “program.”
Program Review

*Audience:* The Provost’s office is responsible for administering program review; programs should submit final versions of the documents produced for their review to that office. From there, as necessary, documents will be forwarded to the Vice Provost, Academic Dean, the Director of OARCA, and to the chair of APSAC. Members of the Academic Affairs Committee of the Boards will read program review documents; the Boards must ultimately endorse the program review and resulting action plan. Finally, each program’s self study and the report from their external reviewer will be posted on the OARCA Intranet SharePoint site where it may be reviewed by any member of the CSB|SJU faculty or staff.

*Timing:* In general, programs will conduct a review every ten years unless a program is externally accredited; in the latter case, review will occur on the schedule of the accrediting body. Reviews may be undertaken more frequently at the request of the department with approval from the Provost or at the direction of the Provost. The detailed timeline for the program review process is presented below.

*Purpose:* Program review is a formative endeavor; it is not merely an exercise in information gathering and reporting. Programs should conduct their review with a spirit of authentic self-examination. Program review provides an opportunity for the program’s faculty to evaluate the current state of its curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment practices, to take appropriate steps to assure ongoing quality, and to explain its vision for the future of the program. The results of program review serve to highlight needs and priorities of both the program and our institutions and aid in the effective allocation of institutional resources.

**Timeline for the program review process**

The timeline for the programs not externally accredited is given below. The details for each step in the timeline are available by clicking the appropriate hyperlinks within that step. In this timeline, the program review year is defined as the year in which the external reviewer(s) visit our campuses, the action plan is agreed upon, and the final program review report is submitted. The program review schedule is available at [http://www.csbsju.edu/Academic-Affairs/OARCA/Program-Review-IAR-Resources.htm](http://www.csbsju.edu/Academic-Affairs/OARCA/Program-Review-IAR-Resources.htm). It is assumed that the program undergoing review has submitted its annual reports each year.

*Two years prior to the program review year*

In the spring semester of this year, the Director of OARCA will remind the program’s chair, the chair of APSAC, the Provost, Vice Provost, and Academic Dean of the upcoming program review. For example, if the program review year is the 2014–15 academic year, then this reminder will be made in the spring semester of 2013.
The year prior to the program review year

1. In the summer of this year (the summer of 2013, if program review is in the 2014–15 academic year), the program’s faculty members may wish to meet for one or two days to plan the program review process. Programs may apply to the Director of OARCA for funds to support this planning session if desired. This meeting might involve:
   1.1. Evaluation of the program’s previous program review and the annual reports written since then;
   1.2. Evaluation of any comments that the program received from APSAC, the Director of OARCA, the Director of the Common Curriculum, or members of Academic Affairs Administration since the last program review;
   1.3. Formulation of specific questions that the program would like to address as part of its program review process;
   1.4. Identification of one or more of the program’s faculty members to coordinate the program review process. Except under extraordinary circumstances (and with approval of the Provost), program review coordinators must be tenured faculty members.
   1.5. Identification of potential external reviewers for the upcoming program review;
   1.6. Identification of potential peer and aspirant programs for the upcoming program review;

2. By 15 September (of 2013, if program review is in the 2014–15 academic year), programs should submit to the Provost and the Director of OARCA a) a list of potential external reviewers accompanied by documentation of each candidate’s suitability and b) the candidate(s) for program review coordinator. Except under extraordinary circumstances and with approval from the Provost, a program will have one external reviewer.

3. By 15 October (of 2013, if program review is in the 2014–15 academic year), the Provost’s office must approve the external reviewer and program review coordinator for the program review process.

4. By 15 October (of 2013, if program review is in the 2014–15 academic year), programs should submit to the Provost a list of potential peer and aspirant programs with a rationale for each choice.

5. By 15 November (of 2013, if program review is in the 2014–15 academic year), the Provost must approve the peer and aspirant programs (2–4 of each) to be used in the program review.

6. By 30 June (of 2014, if program review is in the 2014–15 academic year), programs should submit a preliminary version of their self-study report to the Provost office in lieu of their annual report.

The program review year

7. In the summer of the program review year (the summer of 2014, if program review is in the 2014–15 academic year), the program’s faculty members may wish to meet to reflect upon what they have learned thus far from their self-study. Programs may apply to the director of OARCA for funds to support this reflective session if desired. This meeting might involve:
7.1. Reconsideration of or reflection upon any of the analyses conducted for the self-study;
7.2. Further informed discussion of the program’s goals for the next 10 years and the plans to achieve them;
7.3. Discussion and revision of questions to be addressed by the external reviewers.
7.4. Planning for the **external reviewer’s visit**.

8. **By 1 October** (of 2014, if program review is in the 2014–15 academic year), the program review coordinator(s) will receive a critique of the preliminary version of the self-study from the chair of APSAC. They may also receive comments from the director of OARCA, the Academic Dean, the Provost, or Vice Provost as needed.

9. **Before Thanksgiving break** (of 2014, if program review is in the 2014–15 academic year), programs should submit the final version of their self-study report to the Provost’s office. As soon as the self-study is complete, the program review coordinator(s) should send it to the external reviewer, who should receive a copy of the self-study at least **three weeks** before visiting our campuses.

10. **In January or February** (of 2015, if program review is in the 2014–15 academic year), the **external reviewer will visit** our campuses. Although, this is the typical time frame in which visits occur, they may be scheduled earlier, as long as the reviewers are given at least three weeks to review the documentation sent to them by the program under review. For example, if a program sent final version of their self-study to the reviewers by mid-October, then they could bring in their external reviewers before Thanksgiving. Since external reviewers are allowed one month to deliver their evaluation, programs should avoid scheduling their external reviewer visits after 28 February.

11. **By 1 April**, the **external reviewer’s report** is submitted to the Provost and to the program review coordinator.

12. After receipt of the external reviewer’s report, both the program’s faculty and Academic Affairs Administration will reflect upon its observations and recommendations.
12.1. **Within three weeks** of receiving the external reviewer’s report, the program review coordinator should submit the **program’s response** to that report to the Provost’s office. This document should explain concisely the reaction of the program’s faculty to the observations and suggestions made by the external reviewers.
12.2. The Provost, Vice Provost, Academic Dean, Director of OARCA, and the chair of APSAC will review the program’s response.
12.3. The Provost will then organize at least one meeting of the individuals above, and (at minimum) the program chair and the program review coordinator. The attendees of this meeting will work together to produce an action plan for the program. The action plan details steps that both the program and Academic Affairs Administration can take to address the findings of the program review process and improve the program’s ability to meet its academic mission.

13. By 30 June, the program will submit its final program review portfolio the Provost’s office in lieu of their annual report for that year. The final review portfolio consists of:
13.1. the self-study report;
13.2. the external reviewer’s report;
13.3. the program’s response to the external reviewer’s report;
13.4. the final version of the action plan that has been agreed upon by the program and the Provost.

The results of the program review will be presented to the CSB and SJU Boards of Trustees during a joint meeting that will take place in the fall of the academic year following the program review year.
Appendices

Appendix I: Duties of the program review coordinator

The program review coordinator is responsible for overseeing the timely completion of all of the tasks associated with the program review process. Normally, programs select one individual to fulfill this responsibility, but may appoint two or more individuals if the situation dictates it. Except under extraordinary circumstances (and with approval of the Provost), program review coordinators must be tenured faculty members.

The program review coordinator(s) will receive compensation in the form of a stipend or release time. The program review coordinator, program chair, and Academic Dean (in consultation with the Associate Dean) will negotiate the type and extent of compensation.

The specific duties of the program review coordinator(s) include:

- Communicating with the Provost, Vice Provost, Academic Dean, Director of OARCA, and the chair of APSAC as necessary;
- Organizing meetings of the program’s faculty as necessary to accomplish program review tasks;
- Communication with external reviewer, ensuring that he or she is briefed on the principal tasks, impediments, or challenges facing the department that have guided and informed the self-study report, helping to arrange their transportation and lodging as needed, and organization of the visit of the external reviewers to our campuses;
- Compilation and timely submission of the self-study, the program’s response, and the final review portfolio.

Please note that the program review coordinator is not solely responsible for performing all of the analysis and writing associated with producing the program review documents; they may work with their colleagues and delegate duties as necessary to accomplish tasks efficiently.

Appendix II: Selection of the external reviewer

Individuals who serve as external reviewers should have professional experience that allows them to serve effectively as disciplinary experts and impartial evaluators of the program’s academic quality. This evaluation will examine the quality and rigor of the program’s curriculum and pedagogy, advising of students, student outcomes assessment, and the quality of faculty scholarship, teaching, and service. External reviewers will be expected to identify and recommend realistic opportunities for meaningful improvement in the program’s curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment practices. While such individuals would typically be senior or emeritus members of an appropriate academic discipline, under some circumstances it may be appropriate for an external reviewer to be employed outside higher education.

The program review coordinator will submit the name, qualifications, and rationale for each potential external reviewer to the Provost, Vice Provost, Academic Dean, and Director of OARCA for consideration. Candidate external reviewers should be contacted to ensure their willingness and availability before their names are submitted for consideration. If multiple
candidates are submitted, the program review coordinator may wish to rank them in order of their perceived suitability. If the program believes that two external reviewers are needed, they should include a justification for this request. However, programs should be aware that one external reviewer is the norm. If there is more than one external reviewer, then they will come to campus at the same time and write a single report as a team.

Appendix III: Identification of peer and aspirant programs

Each program should identify 2–4 peer and 2–4 aspirant programs for comparative purposes in the self-study. Peer programs are those that the program judges to be similar to themselves in their goals and objectives for student learning, curriculum, pedagogy, and post-graduate statistics. Aspirant programs are those that have characteristics that the program would like to emulate in these areas. Not every peer or aspirant program need be located at an institution like ours.

As part of the self-study, the program should compare itself to their peer and aspirant programs in as many ways as possible so as to identify strengths and areas for improvement. In addition to the areas identified above, comparison of the facilities, instrumentation, spaces, staffing, budgetary allocations, internship programs, or other dimensions might be fruitful depending upon the characteristics of the program.

Appendix IV: Format of the self-study

1. *Executive Summary* — Please summarize the highlights of your program’s self-study in three pages or fewer.

2. *Program’s status at the time of its last review* — Please summarize in three pages or fewer to give the readers of the self-study report some context for the analyses presented.
   2.1. The narrative of this section should be accompanied by Appendix 1a: Executive summary from the last program review and Appendix 1b: Action plan from the last program review.

3. *Program’s current status and its activities since its last review* — Please explain and evaluate how your program has changed since its last program review, and present your readers a clear and frank analysis of your program’s strengths and areas where you believe improvements are needed. Your program has submitted many annual reports since its last program review, so be certain that your self-study includes a synthesis and evaluation of what those reports have revealed. This section of the self-study should evaluate your program’s progress and status in the following areas:
   3.1. Mission, goals, curriculum, pedagogy, and advising
      3.1.1. The narrative of this section should be accompanied by Appendix 2: Mission and goals and objectives for student learning and Appendix 3: Course offerings and plans of study for majors and minors
3.1.2. Please explain your program’s mission, goals and objectives and why your faculty believes that these are appropriate for students at our institutions. This evaluation should compare your program’s mission and learning goals to those of peer and aspirant institutions and also address the relationship between your program’s mission and goals and those of CSB and SJU.

3.1.3. Please explain the rationale for the structure of your curriculum and programs of study, and evaluate how well it supports your program’s mission and goals. Explain why particular pedagogies are used in your curriculum as appropriate. Explain how advising of students is conducted in your program, and evaluate how well you believe your system of advising works.

3.2. Resources

3.2.1. The narrative of this section should be accompanied by:

3.2.1.1. Appendix 4: Curriculum Vitae of program faculty members — please include staff if appropriate (e.g., lab coordinators);
3.2.1.2. Appendix 5: Staffing summary — shows the FTE of teaching faculty and other faculty responsibilities (e.g., sabbaticals, study abroad, reassigned time, etc.) over the review period;
3.2.1.3. Appendix 6: Enrollment summary — shows the enrollment in the program’s courses over the period covered by the program review (Table with spark lines);
3.2.1.4. Appendix 7: Program-specific resources — (if necessary) describes any specific resources used by the program in its educational mission and scholarly or creative activities (e.g., laboratories, designated artistic spaces, instruments, etc.).

3.2.2. Please provide a clear evaluation of the resources available to the program and whether they are sufficient to meet the program’s goals for both student learning and faculty scholarship and creative activity. If there are specific needs (e.g., library holdings, academic technology, consistent budgetary shortfalls), then these should be documented and explained. Please discuss the current and near-term status of the department’s staffing situation, noting anticipated retirements and providing a justification for the expertise of any new or replacement hires desired.

3.3. Student learning outcomes

3.3.1. The narrative of this section should be accompanied by: Appendix 8: Assessment plan — Please describe the program’s procedures for assessing its student learning outcomes. Be sure to indicate the timing and frequency of assessment activity and include descriptions of tests, rubrics, or other scoring systems used.

3.3.2. Please summarize and evaluate what your assessment activities have revealed about student learning during the time since your last review. How well has your program done in addressing all aspects of its assessment plan? How have your majors and minors performed relative to your expectations? What sorts of post-B.A. activities, education, or employment have your students pursued and how well did their education in your program prepare them for these activities?
3.4. Scholarship and creative activity

3.4.1. The narrative of this section should be accompanied by:

3.4.1.1. Appendix 9: Scholarly and creative activity – faculty — This appendix summarizes the scholarship or creative activities of the program or its faculty during the period since the last program review (please include staff if appropriate (e.g., lab coordinators));

3.4.1.2. Appendix 10: Scholarly and creative activity – students — This appendix summarizes the scholarship or creative activities of the program’s students during the period since the last program review (please acknowledge faculty mentorship of these activities.).

3.4.2. Please evaluate the scholarly and creative activities of your program’s faculty and students during the interval since the last program review.

3.5. Service

3.5.1. The narrative of this section should be accompanied by:

3.5.1.1. Appendix 11: Service to other programs — list courses taught by your program’s faculty that are components of the curricula of other programs (including the Common Curriculum)

3.5.1.2. Appendix 12: Service by faculty — summarize the institutional and professional service activities of the program and its faculty during the period since the last program review.

3.5.2. Please evaluate service performed by your program and its faculty during the time since the last program review. Discussion of service to other programs should include evaluations by those programs. Discuss areas of excellence and those in need of improvement.

4. Program’s vision for the upcoming decade — In this section, the program’s faculty should explain clearly the vision they have for the program’s future, essentially answering the question “where would we like our program to be at our next program review, and what steps must we take to get there?” The format for this section is flexible; a program’s faculty might take each of the components of section 3 above and explain the changes they would like to see happen in each of these areas. Alternatively, faculty might write a narrative that describes their vision and development goals in broader terms. However, this section of the self-study is presented, it should give readers a cogent presentation of the program’s development plan that is informed by its analyses and evaluations from section 3 above, comparisons with peer and aspirant institutions, and an understanding of the evolution of undergraduate education within the field.

5. Specific foci and questions for external reviewers — After completion of and reflection upon sections 3 and 4 above, the program’s faculty should help guide the external reviewer’s evaluation of their program. This guidance might take the form of specific questions the program’s faculty would like the reviewers to address, or the faculty may suggest items that they would like the reviewer to focus upon during the review of the self-study and the campus visit. Whatever form it takes, it is critical that the program’s faculty provide the reviewer with a degree of guidance sufficient to take maximal advantage of the reviewer’s effort.
Appendix V: The external reviewer’s visit & report

The site visit by the external reviewer is central to the program review process. External reviewers perform two separate, though related functions. The first is to conduct a scholarly impartial evaluation of the quality and effectiveness of a specific academic program at CSB/SJU in relation to disciplinary expectations and practices appropriate for a given academic program. The second is to offer an impartial observer’s recommendations concerning existing opportunities for improvement in the program’s curriculum, pedagogy, assessment practices, scholarship, and advising policies and practices. The evaluation and recommendations are fundamentally concerned with both assuring and improving the quality of student learning.

Briefing Interview

Immediately upon their arrival on campus, the external reviewer should meet with the program chair and the program review coordinator to discuss the department’s self-study report and to review the schedule for the site visit. This should be followed by an interview with the Provost, Vice Provost, and Academic Dean in order to review the self-study report and to reach an understanding of their reciprocal expectations for the program review process. Under some circumstances, it may be appropriate for this briefing to take place in a single meeting involving all parties. Any of the parties just named may seek to initiate such a joint meeting, but all must consent for it to go forward.

Meetings

An external reviewer should have opportunities to conduct face-to-face interviews with the program’s faculty, support and technical staff, students, and any other appropriate personnel while on campus. Every effort should be made to ensure that the reviewers meet with the Director of the Office of Academic Review and Curricular Advancement and the Chair of the Academic Policies, Standards and Assessment Committee.

Debriefing Interview

The external reviewer will conduct two final meetings to inform campus stakeholders of their preliminary findings and recommendations. One will be with the program chair and the program review coordinator, the other with the Provost, Vice Provost, and Academic Dean. Under some circumstances, it may be appropriate for this debriefing to take place in a single meeting involving all parties. Any of the parties just named may seek to initiate such a joint meeting, but all must consent for it to go forward.

Written Report

The external reviewer must write a formal report (or a joint report if there are two approved external reviewers) that is required four weeks after the completion of the site visit, preferably no later than 1 April of the review year. This report should be based on the program’s self-study, and documents, interviews, and other evidence obtained before, during, and after the campus visit. This report is submitted to the program chair and the Provost.
At a minimum, the report must address the following:

- **Departmental Overview**: An evaluation of the coherence and appropriateness of the department’s current mission and learning goals; its contribution to the missions of the institutions; its assessment practices and level of faculty participation in assessment of student learning; its specific contributions to the Common Curriculum; its contribution to the greater educational effort and intellectual life of the institutions; the effectiveness of the department vis-à-vis the number and quality of faculty, students, staff, and resources; and the department’s response to its previous program review;

- **Curriculum, Pedagogy, and Assessment**: An evaluation of the appropriateness of the department’s curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment practices in relation to accepted disciplinary expectations and national trends; changes to the curriculum, pedagogy, or assessment practices since the previous program review; the role and responsibilities of the department;

- **Students**: An overall evaluation of the quality of the education received by students; the richness and suitability of the department’s evidence of student learning; student diversity (including people of color and women); admission standards and practices; appropriateness and success of advising procedures; the use of students in research or as teaching assistants; availability of appropriate student internships; completion rates of students in the department; job placement of students after graduation; student enrollment in graduate school; the role of students in departmental decision-making; and student morale;

- **Faculty**: An evaluation of the appropriateness of faculty training and credentials for achieving the mission of the department; its policies and practices for evaluating and improving the quality of faculty instruction; faculty diversity (including people of color and women); hiring policies, practices, and opportunities; faculty attrition, retention, retirement; promotion policies; the extent of faculty service; the balance of teaching, scholarship, and service achieved by the department’s faculty; the quality and quantity of faculty scholarship in light of its teaching and service obligations; faculty mentoring practices; and faculty morale;

- **Resources**: An evaluation of the adequacy of the budget available to the department; adequacy and appropriateness of educational infrastructure (e.g., classrooms, laboratories, technologies, study areas, libraries); any centers, institutes, or other organizations or individuals affiliated with the department; any other interdisciplinary or extra-disciplinary agreements and endeavors affiliated with the department; and the adequacy of staff, student worker, and student researcher support for the department;

- **Recommendations**: An evaluation of the particular strengths and weaknesses of the academic department; its alignment with the missions of the institutions; ways the department can improve its academic program; and ways the institutions can better support the department in fulfilling its academic mission.