

CHAPTER 6: Closing the Loop

The final, closing-the-loop step in the departmental/program review process involves the department/program creating an Action and Assessment plan and the Assessment Committee and Dean of Faculty determining the length of the next review cycle.

The department/program must submit to the Assessment Committee by June 30 a brief (2-3 page) **ACTION AND ASSESSMENT PLAN**. The Action and Assessment Plan should include (1) a narrative summary of the chief findings of the self-study and external review; (2) a short list of actions the department plans to take on the basis of those findings; and (3) a five-year assessment plan updated in response to the same findings. The purpose of this document is to facilitate discussion between the Dean and the department/program about personnel and resource allocation decisions and also to aid the Assessment Committee in making a determination about the length of the department/program's next review cycle.

The five-year assessment plan may be as simple as the following table:

Learning Outcome/Curricular Component	Year of Assessment
Student Learning Outcome or Curricular Component #1	20XX
Student Learning Outcome or Curricular Component #2	20XX
Student Learning Outcome or Curricular Component #3	20XX
Student Learning Outcome or Curricular Component #4	20XX
Student Learning Outcome or Curricular Component #5	20XX

*Departments interested in longitudinal assessment may repeat an assessment project.

In the fall following the submission of the Action and Assessment plan, the department/program will receive official word from the Assessment Committee and the Dean of Faculty about the length of the next **PROGRAM REVIEW CYCLE** (3, 5 or 7 years). In cases where the closing the loop stage carries over into the next academic year, departments/programs remain responsible for completing annual assessment responsibilities for the next review cycle.

Program Review Cycles

Each department/program, at the conclusion of the closing the loop process, will be notified by the Assessment Committee of the due date for the next program review and/or any additional requests for materials. If your due-date is 21-22, that means that your self-study is due in SEPTEMBER OF 2021 and that your external review and closing the loop process should happen during that year as well. Delay of a self-study usually removes the possibility of consideration for a seven-year cycle.

Benchmarks for Review Cycles and Typical Timelines

Three-year Review Cycle

A three-year cycle may be recommended for new programs, for departments/programs undergoing substantive change in scope or personnel, which are therefore in essence “new.” Three years may also be recommended for departments/programs having trouble complying with College processes and policies (i.e., program review, assessment, personnel, budget, etc.), departments/programs seeking extra coaching and development opportunities, or departments/programs struggling with achieving and documenting performance in critical operations. A three-year review cycle is usually focused on organizational issues such as implementing student outcomes, hiring, or curriculum development rather than on longitudinal study of student outcomes.

A typical three-year cycle timeline:

- Year 1: annual assessment and follow-through with action plan
- Year 2: annual assessment and follow-through with action plan
- **Year 3: complete self-study or other required document, external peer review and closing the loop.**

Five-year Review Cycle

Five years is a typical cycle at Whittier College and reflects a stable department/program with a history of serving college requirements and/or graduating students with the necessary skills for their discipline, mentoring junior faculty and overall compliance and satisfactory performance in areas of program review, annual assessment, personnel policies and procedures, budgetary responsibility, etc.

A typical five-year cycle timeline

- Year 1: annual assessment and follow-through with action plan
- Year 2: annual assessment and follow-through with action plan
- Year 3: annual assessment and follow-through with action plan
- Year 4: annual assessment and follow-through with action plan
- **Year 5: submit self-study; host external peer review; submit action and assessment plan**

Seven-Year Review Cycle

A seven-year cycle for departments/programs reflects a stable department/program with a history of on-time and successful program review and assessment activities as defined by well-written and regularly assessed student learning outcomes. These departments/programs also have attributes such as solid enrollments across their curriculum, projected stability in faculty, staff and student enrollments, and well-developed action plans that strive for continuous improvement. Like departments/programs with a five-year review cycle, these departments/programs also have a history of graduating students with the necessary skills for their discipline, mentoring junior faculty and overall

compliance and satisfactory performance in areas of program review, assessment, personnel policies and procedures, budgetary responsibility, etc.

A typical seven-year cycle timeline:

- Year 1: annual assessment and follow-through with action plan
- Year 2: annual assessment and follow-through with action plan
- Year 3: annual assessment and follow-through with action plan
- **Year 4: annual assessment and follow-through with action plan and mid-cycle report (usually short)**
- Year 5: annual assessment and follow-through with action plan
- Year 6: annual assessment and follow-through with action plan
- **Year 7: submit self-study; host external peer review; submit action and assessment plan**

Progress Report

If the Committee is recommending a mid-cycle progress report, please briefly explain the area(s) of focus. All departments/programs on a seven-year cycle should include a brief 1-2 page mid-cycle report in year 4 covering progress on assessment, their action plan, etc. Failure to submit a substantive mid-cycle report may result in moving to a 5-year cycle.