**Letter of Understanding**

02/02/2025

Dear Dr. Department Chairperson,

Your department is scheduled to complete the regularly scheduled self-study of the Academic Program Review (APR) process.

The attached Letter of Understanding (LOU) provides the focus for academic department of \_\_ 2025-2026 APR self-study. The purpose of this formative self-study is to foster conversations that:

* promote organizational learning for departments and university,
* promote department changes based on data and reflection,
* promote improvement of teaching and learning,
* inform strategic planning for academic programs

Evidence from the APR processes demonstrate Loyola’s commitment to continuous improvement of teaching and learning, and is used to illustrate how Loyola is meeting or not meeting accreditation standards for Higher Learning Commission (Criterion 4)

Please review the following APR LOU, discuss with key stakeholders and then confirm any additional department specific themes or questions you wish to add.

We look forward to working with you during your APR self-Study. Thank you.

Sincerely,

David Ensminger, Faculty Director of Academic Program Review and Assessment

Rachel Shefner, Associate Provost, Assessment, Accreditation, and Regulatory Compliance

**2025-2026 Academic Program Review** **Letter of Understanding**

**Department Loyola University Chicago**

Within the guidelines for APR process, the \_\_ department will use the provided APR guidelines for structuring the Self Study Report. However, the APR Self Study report must make evident in the documentation the focus on the following topics outlined below. Thus, the study of these focal issues will inform the content of the APR Self-Study Report (December 20, 2025). Using the Self Study Report, External Review Report, and meeting with CAS Dean, Graduate School Dean (when graduate programs exist in the department) and meeting with Provost departments will create an APR Action Plan for implementation. We recommend that the APR Self Study Report be concise and focused on addressing the themes and questions posed. We estimate that the narrative would be no longer than 20 to 30 pages. The narrative should be supported by evidence shown in data displays (figures, tables, etc.) within the report, and additional information in appendices if needed. The intent is for the report to present clear evidence-based descriptions of activities and conclusions that accurately reflect the depth of the department’s inquiry and collaborative interpretation and then set the stage for continued program improvement and sustainability.

Academic Program Review focuses on three main themes:

1. how faculty use evidence of student learning to refine program curriculum and pedagogy,
2. how faculty use evidence for identifying strategic issues, make recommendations for optimizing internal resource allocation or re-allocation or inform resource requests to the Dean or Provost to improve program delivery and sustainability,
3. how evidence is used to envision future programming changes.

Each of these must be clearly addressed in your Self-Study Report. Please refer to Prompts to Facilitate Answering LOU Questions for Self-Study for more guidance.

Departments can add department specific themes and questions for their self-study that the department deems relevant to the self-study process. The required themes and questions below along with additional department specific questions will frame the APR self-study process.

1. **Student Learning and Support**

Directly answer a., b., and c. in your report and provide evidence to support your response:

* 1. What is the manner and interval the program assesses Program Learning Outcomes for students? What has been learned from these assessments.
	2. How has the information on the department’s assessment of Program Learning Outcomes been used to address improvements in the curriculum, learning environment, instructional practices, and assessment?
	3. How does the department provide and assure that their students are receiving the support and building relationships they need in terms of academic advising, engagement with instructors, information from administration, etc.?
1. **Strategic Issues and Resources**

Directly answer a, b, c and d. in your report and provide evidence to support your response:

* 1. How does the department and its faculty support Loyola’s mission, vision, and promise of becoming a more diverse and inclusive environment in which to learn, teach, research and serve?
	2. How does the department use the information on student enrollment, number of courses, section size, retention, and completion of programs to understand and make improvements in programs or decisions regarding program resources (e.g., personnel, allocation of school or department funds, use of space, use of department resources)?
	3. How does the department use the information on faculty teaching loads, number of courses taught, number of credit hours taught, number of sections and enrollment size in sections, number of CORE courses taught and number of CORE credit hours taught (where applicable), number of full-time and part-time faculty to make improvements in programs, allocation of resources, and decisions regarding program operations? (e.g., personnel, allocation of school or department funds, use of space, use of department resources)?
	4. Given careful review of data, how can the department and school most effectively allocate or re-allocate resources to improve programs?
1. **Size, Type, Changes, Sustainability of Programs**

Directly answer a. and b. in your report and provide evidence to support your response:

	1. Using assessment evidence, OIE provided data, and other evidence presented in the Self-Study report, what would you project to be the ‘right’ size for each program (undergraduate and graduate, where applicable) three to five years from the completion of your self-study?
		1. How many students?
		2. How would faculty be allocated/assigned across the teaching of programs – and across responsibilities for research and service?
	2. Using assessment evidence, OIE provided data and other evidence presented in the Self-Study report, for each undergraduate and graduate program offering (where applicable), how does the evidence support the department’s decisions to either:
		1. Grow it given its potential and alignment with LUC mission?
		2. Sustain it as it is currently?
		3. Change it substantially to be more effective?
		4. Sunset it, following good practices to teach-out currently enrolled students?

The Office of Institutional Effectiveness will provide and help you access various data on current conditions and historical trends within programs and departments. The department undertaking the APR self-study will review these data and other department level data, develop findings, and collaboratively reflect on and interpret these findings to plan future directions. The data reviewed and general findings will be documented and shared.

**Note the following key dates for deliverables:**

* Attendance of eight APR Cohort meetings during Spring 2025, Fall 2025, and Spring 2026 (TBD)
* Finalization of Department’s LOU to APP February 16, 2025
* External reviewer nominees to APP October 2, 2025
	+ You may submit nominees sooner for approval
* Confirmation of two external reviewers to APP November 14, 2025
* Confirmation of external review campus visit dates to APP Dec 13, 2025
	+ Note review dates can occur between Jan 13-Feb 13, 2025
* Draft of APR Self Study Report provided to APR Fellow for review Dec 5, 2025
* Final APR Self-Study Report sent to Office of Academic Programs and Planning December 20, 2025
* External Review visits take place between Jan 13-Feb 13, 2026
	+ External review report due two weeks after visit
* Department Memo to APP two weeks after receipt of external review report received
* CAS Dean Memo to CAS Departments one week after receipt of Department Memo
* Memo meeting with Dean, CAS organizes
	+ Finalized Department Memo and Dean’s Memo due to APP 2 business days following CAS Deans and Department meeting
* Meeting of Department Chair with Provost, CAS Dean, Graduate School Dean (when graduate programs exist in the Department), and APR Team
	+ Scheduled based on Department Memo submission date must occur by April 30, 2026
* Action Plan due 2 weeks after meeting with Provost
* Action Plan implementation and monitoring phase begins
* First Action plan monitoring report due May 1, 2026
* I have reviewed the APR LOU and added program-specific questions as determined by our steering committee.
* I have reviewed the APR LOU and not added program-specific questions as determined by our steering committee.

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Department Chairperson’s Signature Date