



Cornell University Faculty Committee on Program Review

CHOOSING AN EXTERNAL REVIEW TEAM (ERT)

Deans are ultimately responsible for assuring that the external review team is credible and will have the lead role in choosing who will be on the team. Credibility is established by choosing scholars whose expertise matches the work of the department being reviewed, whose accomplishments and perspective are widely respected nationally and internationally, and who have sufficient distance from the department to enable them to give a frank and unbiased assessment. To achieve these goals, the FCPR has established the following procedures for selecting external reviewers.

- The department will identify the areas (i.e., sub-specialties) that should be represented by reviewers on the team.
- The dean will ask the department to suggest names of potential reviewers for each of the areas (sub-specialties). Ability to review undergraduate and graduate education programs and extension/outreach programs, where appropriate, in addition to research should be considered in nominating potential reviewers. The department should provide a brief description of the qualifications of each reviewer and disclose potential conflicts of interest.
- The dean will develop an independent list of potential reviewers that represent highly qualified people appropriate to the areas identified by the department. This list will be formed from suggestions of chairs of leading departments in the field, editors of leading journals, presidents of professional societies, and/or prominent scholars in the field. Department chairs and other knowledgeable people at Cornell and elsewhere may help identify such referees. The department will be given the opportunity to object to any of these candidates and should identify potential conflicts of interest. Departmental objections should be justified.
- The dean should insure him/herself that any past or present connections of potential reviewers with the department do not compromise the objectivity of the review. This may be accomplished by examination of CV's (e.g., avoiding any nominees with recent degrees from the department being reviewed), information from department faculty members (e.g., that a nominee is a collaborator or mentor of someone in the department), and, ultimately, by asking nominees when they are invited to serve whether they are aware of any connections with the department that might unduly influence their review. In general, individuals with active research or education collaborations with department members should not be on the list. Faculty members at Weil-Cornell are part of Cornell and should not be on External Review Teams.
- Reviewers should be recognized scholars in their field and usually should be full professors at peer institutions. Junior faculty who have special expertise or who have become distinguished early in their careers may be appropriate. An expert from a non-degree-granting institution may be appropriate in some cases.
- The dean will determine the composition of the ERT and will rank the order of invitation within each category. The dean may work with the department chair in prioritizing invitations and may delegate the invitation process to the chair. Ordinarily a review team will include equal numbers from the dean's and the department's lists. Balancing the ERT membership for gender, ethnic, and age diversity also needs to be considered.
- FCPR approval is not required prior to selection of the ERT.