

## Frequently Asked Questions about Comprehensive Program Assessment

### **Can the focus of my Comprehensive Program Assessment be different from the focus last time?**

It is important to do a periodic Comprehensive Program Assessment, but each review does not need to have the same emphasis or answer the same exact questions. If you currently do not feel you need the same kind of feedback you received in your last Comprehensive Program Assessment, talk to your supervisor about changing the focus of the review this time. This may mean that you narrow or broaden the focus depending on what you did last time. You may also want to find an external reviewer who has a very different background from your last external reviewer. In addition, it is important that your Comprehensive Program Assessment reflect the current issues most important to Meredith and your current place/role in the institution.

### **Why is it important to consider how my department/program fits within the institution when doing a Comprehensive Program Review?**

The effectiveness of your department/program must be assessed within context of the entire institution. A high quality department/program at one institution may play a vital role in the ability of that institution to meet its strategic goals and to continue to grow and be viable whereas that same department/program at another institution may have only an ancillary role to the institution's mission. Without consideration of where you fit within and how you are contributing to the viability of Meredith College, you will be unable to recommend meaningful improvements in your department/program. It is important that you communicate the need for this institutional view in your self-study so that your review team understands that their report must consider the current mission, vision and values as well as internal and external pressures of the institution.

### **How is Comprehensive Program Assessment different from the annual assessment process that is documented in Continuous Improvement Reports (formerly IEPs)?**

Both annual assessment and Comprehensive Program Assessment are designed to encourage reflection and discussion about the strengths and weaknesses of your program for the purpose of program enhancement. Annual assessment is a continuous process to get feedback on how well you are meeting your outcomes, so you can make adjustments to your programs. Comprehensive Program Assessment is a periodic process which encourages you to reflect on *all* aspects of your program operations. Comprehensive Program Assessment also allows you to reflect on your mission and outcomes and on your overall annual assessment process so that you can make adjustments if your current process is not giving you the kind of annual feedback that is useful for decision making. In addition, Comprehensive Program Assessment allows you to get the perspective of an external reviewer, whereas annual assessment does not. One way to think about the difference is that annual assessment provides information that is useful for short-term planning, whereas Comprehensive Program Assessment provides the opportunity to engage in more long-term planning. The two are related. The issues that keep coming up in your annual assessment should be focused on in your Comprehensive Program Assessment and the results of your Comprehensive Program Assessment should provide direction for your annual assessment. To this end, you are asked to review all of your CIRs since your last Comprehensive Program Assessment and incorporate your thoughts and reflections of these in your self-study and you are asked to continue to

report program enhancements that follow from your Comprehensive Program Assessment in your CIRs for up to 3 years.

**Is Comprehensive Program Assessment at Meredith done separately from the review I have to do for my disciplinary accreditation?**

The Comprehensive Program Assessment schedule is designed to coincide with disciplinary accreditation or approval visits such that if you do have a disciplinary accreditation, then the self-study and visit that occur with that reaccreditation process will be the same as/substitute for the Comprehensive Program Assessment process at Meredith. If the reaccreditation cycle does not coincide with the 7-year cycle of Comprehensive Program Assessment adopted by Meredith, then consult with your VP and the director of Research, Planning and Assessment (RPA) to determine the best schedule for your Comprehensive Program Assessment.

**Can I rely on materials and processes produced by my professional discipline for Comprehensive Program Assessment if I do not have a disciplinary accreditation?**

Many times professional organizations will put out materials that are very useful for Comprehensive Program Assessment. You are encouraged to use these processes and materials whenever you find them useful. Your professional associations will be able to give you insight into how to make the Comprehensive Program Assessment process work for your particular program and the Comprehensive Program Assessment guidelines at Meredith are designed to be flexible enough to meet your individual disciplinary needs.

**Where can I find examples of other Comprehensive Program Assessments that have been completed?**

Prior to 2009-2010, Comprehensive Program Assessment documents were not considered open to other Meredith faculty and staff so even though paper copies of all reviews are in the Office of Research, Planning and Assessment you would need to get permission from the department head/director, the VP and the dean or AVP (when applicable) to view the documents. Action plans and reports, however, are posted [here](#). Beginning in 2009-2010, all Comprehensive Program Assessment documents are open to Meredith faculty and staff and will be posted electronically at on the RPA website.

**Where can I find a list of potential external reviewers?**

Probably the best way to find a reviewer that fits your needs is to ask others in your discipline/profession whom they would recommend. Given the budget, one important consideration will be travel costs so a good place to start is local or regional recommendations. In addition, many professional associations have lists of potential reviewers. These could be within disciplinary associations such as the American Political Science Association Departmental Services Program [http://www.apsanet.org/content\\_1459.cfm](http://www.apsanet.org/content_1459.cfm) or within non-profit educational or service organizations associated with higher education such as the AAC&U Sources and Experts [http://www.aacu.org/press\\_room/sourcesandexperts.cfm](http://www.aacu.org/press_room/sourcesandexperts.cfm) or the Council for Advancement of Standards in Higher Education Database of Users <http://www.cas.edu/>

**How can I keep our Comprehensive Program Assessment within budget and still have a high-quality, professional review process?**

Given that the budget for each Comprehensive Program Review is typically around \$1000, you will need to make some strategic decisions about how to fit within this budget and still have a high-quality review. Typical honorariums for external reviewers are about \$500. Hotel costs are typically about \$150 per night. Typical per diem meal costs are as follows: \$8.00 for breakfast; \$12.00 for lunch; \$20.00 for dinner. The Meredith College allowable limit on mileage reimbursement can be found at <http://www.meredith.edu/acct/procedures.htm> Think about which of these costs you could reduce. For example, you may decide to include only one external reviewer and/or limit the campus visit to one day. Local reviewers will cost less in travel expenses. In some cases you might have some departmental or divisional funds that could be added to this amount.