GUIDELINES
FOR INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL REVIEW OF CAREER SERVICES

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INTRODUCTION

In higher education, there is increasing emphasis and focus on assessment and accountability, which requires career services practitioners to use meaningful measures to demonstrate the quality and value of their services to students, administrators, faculty, alumni, employers, parents, and other constituency groups. Other key groups, such as accrediting agencies, are requiring evidence of ongoing quality enhancement initiatives and meaningful documented results as part of the oversight process.

Quality improvement initiatives can be externally driven, such as accreditation or certification processes; these entail an outside team of professionals using the organization’s criteria to collect evidence, and issue a pass/not pass decision based on that evidence.

Career services follows specific standards to assess its operations. The NACE Professional Standards for College & University Career Services:

- Represent current national expectations of excellence in professional career services practice.
- Have been designed to be reasonably attainable by all institutions of higher education.
- Are written broadly to reflect variations in career services provided by individual colleges and universities.
- Provide meaningful measures of program and service effectiveness to help meet assessment and accountability expectations.

The standards provide fundamental criteria that practitioners can use to judge the efficacy of administrative structure, leadership, resources, and operations. Thus, the standards provide a unique opportunity for self-regulation to meet accountability expectations for both programs and practitioners by encouraging self-assessment initiatives. As a quality enhancement initiative, self-assessment is internally driven, involves significant input from staff and multiple constituency groups, requires the honest and meticulous analysis of evidence, and results in a plan of improvement.

The ground rules for successful use of the NACE Professional Standards for College & University Career Services include:

- Implementing a process that is clearly focused on quality enhancement rather than pass/fail;
- Demonstrating commitment to continuous improvement of processes, programs, and services;
- Involving as many of the career services staff as possible in the self-assessment process;
- Building mutual trust among team members so that conflicts and differences of opinion can best be resolved in the best interest of the institution;
- Ensuring that ratings given for each criterion are fully substantiated by evidence and documentation;
- Identifying unit strengths and weaknesses, and developing a meaningful plan for improvement that can be communicated effectively to multiple constituencies.

While the evaluation process using the NACE Professional Standards for College & University Career Services is essentially a “snapshot” of how well a career services unit is doing at a single point in time, the focus should also be on future potential and what the unit can and should be doing to meet the current and future needs of constituent groups. Using the standards, the plan for improvement that emanates from the internal review process positions the career services unit to better realize that potential in very specific ways.

A well-planned and documented external review process adds significant credibility, accountability, and quality assurance for the internal review activities. The diverse perspectives of external practitioners can be helpful in validating findings and recommendations and offering new insights on the best direction for ongoing program improvement and the related documentation requirements.

The guidelines presented here are designed to give those interested in conducting an internal review and/or an external review practical help in preparing for and participating in a review. The guidelines contain recommendations for documents to gather, sample timelines, case studies, and more. This resource contains recommendations/guidance for both the campus group—that is, the office that is the focus of the external review—and for the external review team.

Developed by the NACE 2006-07 Career Services Professional Outcomes Task Force, the original guidelines were based on materials developed by leading practitioners with expertise in the external review process. The guidelines were reviewed, revised, and updated by a Board-appointed team in 2014.

NACE PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS AND PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS EVALUATION WORKBOOK

The Professional Standards for College & University Career Services and the Professional Standards Evaluation Workbook are available free to NACE career services members through the MyNACE section of the NACE website.

See naceweb.org/professional-resources/index.aspx.
GLOSSARY OF TERMS

**Assessment**
Evaluation processes that provide insights into improvement of programs and services. Assessment provides hard data to support clear and measurable goals and objectives, and demonstrates the departmental contribution to student learning and retention.

**Benchmarking**
Comparing your programs, services, and operational information with peer schools.

**Demographic Data**
Data collection that demonstrates participation levels of different populations in programs and services such as career fairs, classes, workshops, individual advising, and campus interviewing.

**External Review**
This review follows an internal review. It is typically done every five to 10 years by pulling together a team of colleagues external to your department/institution to review your internal review outcomes. The group could consist of several NACE colleagues and/or key faculty, administrators, employers, or even students. This process could take several full days or could spread out over six to 12 months, depending on campus protocols.

**First-Destination Data**
Graduate outcomes data collected from graduating seniors, employers, and other sources.

**Internal Review (also referred to as a “self-study” or “self-assessment”)**
The internal review is a gathering of all forms of assessment information and data that measure operations, programs, and services against professional standards that have been promulgated by professional organizations such as NACE, the Council for Academic Standards (CAS), or accrediting agencies. The internal review results in a report that is used by the staff for their program and service evaluation. If an external review is undertaken, the internal review report is also used by the external review team. An internal review may take six to 12 months.

**Needs Assessment**
This survey is used to determine programs, workshops, services, and resources that students and employers desire.
Outcomes Assessment

- **Student Learning Outcomes** – Career services offices are providers of career education and job-search skills. Therefore, it is necessary to demonstrate that the clients are learning something. Assessing student learning is a critical component of the contemporary career services office.

- **Measure of Student Success** – Measuring the success of students in obtaining jobs, internships, externships, interviews, graduate school admissions, and/or defining career objectives is a critical task to demonstrate the definitive worth of the career services office.

Satisfaction Survey

This survey is important in the broad picture of assessment. It’s best to design satisfaction surveys for specific programs, addressing specific issues, rather than creating a broad survey that attempts to address your entire department at one. This type of survey is a very useful strategy with employers when surveying their satisfaction with services and candidate preparedness.
CAREER SERVICES: INTERNAL REVIEW PROCESS AND TIMELINE

The following provides a suggested timeline for conducting an internal review of your career services program. Using the *NACE Professional Standards for College & University Career Services Evaluation Workbook* as your guide, this timeline will help you structure the framework around which you will conduct your review.

An internal review is typically done prior to going through a formal external review of your program, but can also be done as a stand-alone process. A thorough internal review of an operation can take from 12 to 18 months in preparation for an external review team visit.

Major steps in the internal review process include:

- Assembling and training the internal review team.
- Understanding the internal review process.
- Understanding professional standards and evaluation guidelines.
- Gathering and analyzing relevant evidence for areas being evaluated.
- Having the internal review team assess the various components of your program. (This is performed using the *NACE Evaluation Workbook*.)
- Documenting the strengths and weaknesses of your program.
- Developing recommendations.
- Writing the internal review report.
- Preparing a plan of action.

Sample Internal Review 18-Month Timeline

**March**

**Appoint members of the internal review team:** In consultation with the supervisor and/or vice-president, the director of career services should appoint the members of the internal review team. Members should ideally include key individuals from career services, student affairs, academic affairs, administration, and finance as well as student leadership. A team of six to 10 members in size is optimal.

**Hold the initial meeting of the internal review team:** At the initial meeting, distribute copies of the *NACE Professional Standards for College & University Career Services Evaluation Workbook* and review the contents to acquaint the team members with the internal review process, timeline, and NACE standards. Establish team ground rules. Answer any questions that arise about timing and process. Develop an agreed-upon, regular schedule for meetings of the internal review team. Encourage team discussion; expect team members to disagree.
Brief career services staff on the process: Schedule a meeting for the internal review team to brief career services staff on the internal review process and timeline. The internal review team should explain to staff the importance of each staff member’s contributions to the internal review.

Identify data and documentation needs: Based on a comprehensive review of the various standards, determine what data and documentation resources need to be gathered and distributed to the internal review team to facilitate the review process. Develop a formal repository of substantiating documentation that will later be used for the external review process. Both qualitative and quantitative data should be collected and analyzed.

Examples of evaluative evidence might include program documents, staff activity reports, publications, administrative documents, student activity/event reports, and research and evaluation data. Quantitative data examples might include questionnaires or program/event evaluation response summaries, demographic data, needs assessments, follow-up studies, and institutional research reports. Qualitative data examples might include focus group information, client satisfaction surveys, and open-ended response summaries from interviews and evaluations.

April-May

Review components of career services and collect data: With consideration for what constitutes a manageable amount of subject matter, assign functional areas within the Standards document for review by individual team members. Individual team members rate each and every criterion for the areas assigned. At subsequent meetings, review each individual’s scores. If there is disagreement about the ratings, obtain additional documentary evidence, as possible, to support informed decision making, and discuss until the team reaches consensus. Keep a record of pertinent comments for later review. The review process for each criterion is not complete until relevant data and documentation are available to support the raters’ judgments. Continue this process until all standards within the relevant functional areas are scored.

June-July

Write a draft of the internal review report: The appointed person or persons drafts a detailed report for review by the entire internal review team. Internal review team members provide their suggested changes to those writing the report. The person requesting the review should determine who will receive a copy of the full report.

August

Finalize and distribute the final internal review report: The revised report is reviewed by the entire internal review team, finalized, and then distributed to the director of career services and others identified as needing the findings. The director of career services shares the report and discusses key findings and implications with the entire career services staff.
September-January

**Conduct an action planning process**: Using the internal review report, career services staff members identify action items that could be realistically undertaken in response to standards that were identified as needing improvement.

January-July

**Implement action items**: Document the implementation of action items to bring the office into full compliance with NACE Standards. Discuss key items and implications with the entire career services staff as part of the overall preparation for the external team visit. Submit a copy of the internal review report and subsequent related action item documents to the external review team prior to the team’s visit.

October/November

**External review team visit to campus**: See External Review Process and Timeline for details.
CAREER SERVICES: EXTERNAL REVIEW PROCESS AND TIMELINE

The following represents a suggested timeline for conducting an external review of a career services program. It is designed to be used following an internal review using the NACE Professional Standards for Colleges & University Career Services Evaluation Workbook. This timeline will assist in structuring the framework for conducting the external review.

Major steps in the external review process include:

- Setting goals for the external review.
- Preparing a timeline/Gantt chart.
- Identifying financial resources.
- Selecting the external review team.
- Gathering materials and data for review by the team.
- Identifying groups and individuals to meet with the review team.
- Preparing an agenda for the external review team’s campus visit and making relevant arrangements.
- Hosting the review.
- Reviewing the external review report.
- Re-evaluating the career center’s strategic plan.
- Preparing a plan of action.

Sample External Review Recommended Timeline

January/February (9 months in advance of external team visit)

Set goals for the external review: In consultation with the vice president for student affairs (or appropriate administrative supervisor), establish goals for the external review. Goals can vary depending on the motivation for the review. Is the review a periodic evaluation of the department? Does a new direction need to be set due to a change in personnel or organizational structure? Are there perceived operation problems that need to be addressed? Are there other issues that need to be addressed?

February/March (8 months in advance of external team visit)

Prepare a timeline: Put together a timeline identifying the ideal progression of events for the review. Things to consider include the career services calendar; institution schedule; availability of students, administrators, employers, and others meeting with the team; and the review team availability. Be prepared to be flexible.
March/April (7 months in advance of external team visit)

Identify financial resources: Identify the financial resources available to fund the review. The external review team may cost between $2,000 and $10,000 (representing honoraria plus travel). The “going rate” for an experienced consultant—the “lead reviewer”—is about $1,000 to $1,500 per day.

May/June (5 months in advance of external team visit)

Select the external review team: Determine how many reviewers are needed and who they should be. Typically one to four reviewers are selected, with one or two directors from peer institutions or those you aspire to model. The team may also include employers, students, alumni, faculty, and representatives from student affairs or other areas of the institution. A lead reviewer may be selected who will ultimately be responsible for developing the approach the team takes and writing the final report. A formal contract will need to be prepared (it may need review by university counsel) and sent to the review team members.

The external review team members need to be perceived as bringing credibility to the process. They need to be analytical, experienced in the career services field, and have a broad understanding of colleges/universities. In addition, they must be counted on to ask challenging questions about relationships among departments. Finally, they need to be discreet and impartial.

June/July (4 months in advance of external team visit)

Gather materials for review by the team: Typically, the external review team will request a variety of materials to review well in advance of the campus visit. The requesting administrator and/or the career services director will need to work with the team to see what materials are needed. This guide includes an “External Review Team: Checklist of Documents,” page 27. The checklist is not exhaustive, but serves as an example of the types of materials that are used in the typical external review.

July/August (3 months in advance of external team visit)

Identify groups and individuals to meet with the external review team: The external review team should have input in the selection of people with whom to meet. The team needs to see the list in advance; generally, the team will offer suggested additions to the list.

Individuals and groups that might meet with the reviewers include:

- Vice president/chancellor for division to which career services reports
- Immediate supervisor of the career services director
- Division assessment person (if one exists)
- Career services director
- Career services professional staff (without the director)
- Career services support staff (without the professional staff)
- Representative deans and faculty
• Key departments where collaboration takes place or might be needed (e.g. counseling center, advising, alumni)
• Students
• Employers
• Alumni

August/September (2 months in advance of external team visit)
Prepare agenda, send supporting documents to the external review team, and make arrangements: Generally, the requesting administrator and/or director will set the tentative agenda for the campus visit and request input from the external review team. The visit usually lasts from one-and-one-half to three days. The reviewers typically meet as a team, but could consider splitting up in the interest of time and their areas of expertise. The visit usually starts and ends with the requesting administrator (e.g., vice president for student affairs). The career services director should also meet with the team at the beginning and end of the visit.

It is helpful for the external review team to have unscheduled time to walk around, get a feel for the campus, and talk informally with students and others. The team will need to have some time to meet in private, preferably at the beginning and end of each day, to discuss observations and concerns, decide if there is a need to alter the schedule, and possibly to begin writing up their observations. The team will also need scheduled time at the very end of the visit to decide who is going to write which sections and share information that will be included in the other reviewers’ sections. If the lead reviewer will be drafting the entire report, this debriefing time is especially important.

October/November
Host the review: Be sure that all arrangements have been made for travel, car rental, airport pick-up, hotel, and so forth. All schedules, meetings, and parties involved should be confirmed. Be sure that the external review team members can easily get from one meeting to another in a timely fashion. Student or staff escorts can be arranged.

October/November (Immediately following external team visit)
The external review report: Reports are generally six to 25 pages in length, with the average about eight to 12 pages. The requesting administrator may have some expectations of the report, i.e. length, content, areas to address, deadlines, which should be communicated early in the process. Any deadlines should fit with the report writer’s schedule. Typically, the report should be expected within two to three weeks of the visit. The report should address the issues and/or concerns from the internal review.

The report may be written by the lead reviewer and sent to the external review team for input and comments, or may be written in sections by team members with the lead reviewer doing the introduction, summary, and editing. The format may follow the NACE Standards, particularly if those standards were used for the internal review and external review campus visit. It may be
categorized into topical areas or strengths and opportunities for improvement. The report can take the SWOT approach (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) with observations and recommendations. The institution may have specific requirements for areas to be evaluated, e.g.:

- Background (institution, division office)
- Resources (financial, human, facilities, technology)
- Current status (benchmarks, strategic planning)
- Operations (major office functions)
- Outcomes/assessment plan
- Materials (publications, collateral, marketing pieces)

Any personnel issues or other sensitive matters (salary, very negative comments) should not be included in the report, but should be addressed in person at the end of the visit, by phone, or in a separate letter.

It should be clarified in advance as to whom the external review team is accountable to for the visit and the report. A final copy of the report will be sent to that individual who will then share it with others. The career services director is sometimes provided with an advance copy of the report to review only for factual errors; this may be problematic if the director disagrees with the content or recommendations. The career center director or designee generally responds only to facts that may be incorrect, not to the reported findings.

**November/December** (Following external review team visit)

**Prepare a plan of action:** Once the external review report is received and reviewed, the career services director or lead administrator needs to prepare a plan of action to address the issues and concerns raised by the review team. The director/lead administrator may want to include the career center’s professional staff in this process. This is an excellent opportunity for the career services office to identify new directions, opportunities for new services, new collaborations, areas of need, justification of requests for resources (financial, human, facility, technical), and so forth.
CAREER SERVICES: CHECKLIST FOR EXTERNAL REVIEW DOCUMENTS

Following is a list of materials and information that can be provided to the external review team to give the team an overview and detailed background necessary to evaluate the career services office effectively.

Typically, these materials are requested by the external review team and sent to the team members well in advance of the campus visit.

The Visit Documents

- **Charge or goal for the visit**
  *(This should come from whoever is asking for the visit, perhaps the vice president or vice chancellor, and will indicate the outcomes and products that are expected.)*

- **Contract or Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)**
  - Identifying the team
  - What services will be provided
  - Stipend
  - Other relevant points warranting an MOU

- **Tentative agenda for review visit** *(Allow for input and suggestions from review team)*

- **Accommodation information** *(This may be required if the review team visit is more than one day)*

- **List of potential individuals to meet with the reviewers:**
  - Institution/college leadership
  - Office professional staff and support staff
  - Representative deans and faculty
  - Key department contacts where there are or could be collaborations
  - Students
  - Employers
  - Alumni
  - Other constituencies, e.g., community members
Background Documents
What the external review team needs to know about your campus

- **Institution Overview**
  - Role and mission statement
  - University strategic plan
  - Administrative organization chart
  - Enrollment profile
  - Benchmarks
  - View book or catalog
  - Annual report and other relevant documents
  - Relevant website references

- **Division Overview**
  - Vision statement
  - Strategic plan
  - Statement of diversity
  - Division organization chart
  - Basic costs of attendance – Institution and peer group institutions
  - Allocation of student fees

Career Services Office Documents

- **Results of Internal Review**

- **Overview/Department Profile**
  - Department mission, vision, goals, objectives, and/or guiding principles
  - Brief history
  - Strengths/successes
  - Difficulties/challenges
  - Operating procedures and policies
  - Strategic plan
  - Annual report
  - Institutional effectiveness report
  - Operating policies and procedures
  - Recommendations/findings from most recent external review

- **Specific Assessments**
  - Assessment plan
  - Student learning outcomes
  - First-destination reports
  - Student awareness and usage data
  - Satisfaction surveys
• Statistical reports, assessment data
• Other career services survey results

• **Resources** (Human and Financial)
  • Department organization chart
  • Job descriptions for all staff members
  • Resumes of non-exempt staff
  • Budgets/financial overview
  • Summary of technology resources
  • Office floor plan

• **Publications/Marketing**
  • Campus information and promotional brochures
  • Office publications and brochures
  • Marketing materials produced by the office
  • Educational materials produced by the office

**Post-Review Documents**

• **Final external review team report** (Review and share with appropriate constituencies)

• **Response/action plan**
  
  Developed by the career services director, lead administrator, or designee, the plan may include a variety of items, including long- and short-term goals based on the external review report’s recommendations, resources required to achieve goals, assessments to measure results and/or progress against goals, and a timeline for accomplishing goals.
CASE STUDY #1

- Public institution (state system)
- Diverse student population (15,000)
- Comprehensive doctoral degree granting institution
- Six colleges: College of Liberal Arts & Sciences, College of Business, College of Education, College of Visual & Performing Arts, College of Engineering, College of Graduate Studies
- Comprehensive career services office (full-time staff: two professional staff, one support staff)

TIMELINE:

January/February
- The vice president of Student Services & Campus Life informs all directors within the division that the division will engage in a year-long assessment process. For career services, it is determined that the CAS and NACE Standards will be used to complete both an internal and external evaluation. It is expected that the internal evaluation will be completed during the first half of the next academic year and that the external evaluation will be completed by the end of the next academic year.
- The director develops a plan for the internal review along with a timeline for the internal and external review processes.
- The director builds an internal review “team” consisting of faculty, the student services director, career services staff, and the alumni services director.
  - The director initially presents CAS/NACE Standards to the career “team.”
  - The director presents the plan for review and presents the timeline.
- The team is presented to the VP.

May/June
- CAS/NACE Standards workshops are conducted.
- All internal evaluation teams are asked to attend.
- An overview of the assessment process and working documents are presented to the teams.

July
- The team begins discussing the standards and internal review.
- The team chooses which CAS/NACE Standards they will be responsible for evidence collection.
- The director and team discuss and identify supporting department data and documentation that will be collected for each standard: demographic data, first-destination data, satisfaction surveys, evaluations, benchmarking information, student learning outcomes, needs assessment and brochures, forms, policies, procedures, job descriptions, organization charts, annual reports, and strategic planning documents along with broader campus documents.
August-November
- Weekly team meetings are held and status updates are given.
- The team collects and reviews evidence.
- The director and team identify areas where additional evidence is needed and develop instruments to collect data.
- The director develops a list of individuals for the external review team and solicits their commitment.

December
- The director and internal review team complete the internal review.

January
- The director and career services staff spend a retreat day evaluating and discussing results of the internal review and the implications.
- The director sends background information and the internal review results to the external review team.

February
- The director convenes the external review team.

February/March
- The external review team conducts a conference call to discuss CAS/NACE items and to review results of the internal review.

April
- The external review team visits campus to conduct two days of comprehensive interviews. Interviewees include Senior Student Services & Campus Life staff; Student Services & Campus Life directors, faculty, and students; the director of alumni services, career services staff, counseling center staff, and academic advising center staff.

May
- The director receives the final report from the external review team and meets with the team via conference call.
- The director presents the final report to the VP and career services staff.

June
- The department retreat is spent developing an action plan based on recommendations presented in the external review.
HIGHLIGHTS OF OUTCOMES:

- The president encourages career services to play a greater role in experiential education (internships).
- The community services component is separated from career services.
  - Career services is moved from the Division of Student Services & Campus Life to Academic Affairs and reports to the vice president for Academic Affairs (provost).
  - The director is given a seat at Dean’s Council and Academic Council meetings.
  - The associate provost initiates discussions to develop a closer working relationship between career services and the academic advising center.
CASE STUDY #2

- Private institution
- Diverse student population (6,000)
- Comprehensive master’s degree granting institution
- Three colleges: College of Arts & Sciences, College of Business Administration, College of Education
- Comprehensive career services office (eight full-time staff: five professional staff and three support staff)

TIMELINE:

May
- The vice president of the Student Affairs Division notifies the career services director that the career center is required to undergo a review using the CAS and NACE Standards. The review must be completed by the following May.
- The director requests goals and specific outcome expectations of the review from the vice president.

June
- The director develops a plan for the internal review along with a timeline for the internal and external review process.

July
- The director presents the CAS/NACE Standards to career services staff.
- The director presents the plan for the internal review and presents the timeline for the internal and external reviews.
- The staff begin discussion about the standards and the internal review.
- The staff choose which CAS/NACE Standards they will be responsible for in terms of data collection.
- The director and staff discuss and identify supporting department data and documentation that will be collected for each standard, such as demographic data, first-destination data, satisfaction surveys, evaluations, benchmarking information, student learning outcomes, needs assessment and brochures, forms, policies, procedures, job descriptions, organization charts, annual reports, and strategic planning documents along with broader campus documents.

August-November
- Data are collected.
- Status updates are given at weekly staff meetings.
- The director and staff identify areas where more data are needed and develop instruments to collect the data.
- The director develops a list of individuals for the external review team and solicits their commitment.
- The director writes a supplemental response to each standard and organizes supporting documentation.
December
• The director and staff complete the internal review.

January
• The director and staff spend a retreat day evaluating and discussing results of the internal review, the implications, and options.
• The director sends background information and internal review results to the external review team.

February
• The director convenes the external review team.

February/April
• The external review team meets three times; conducts surveys; reviews data; and meets with faculty, students, employers, staff, and the director as needed.

May
• The external review team meets with the director and presents its report.
• The director meets with the head of the external team, associate vice president, and vice president to review the report.
• The director presents the report to staff.

June
• The department retreat is spent developing an action plan based on recommendations presented in the external review report.

HIGHLIGHTS OF OUTCOMES:
• The department expanded internship support and resources for students and added an internship fair.
• The career center and academic advising have moved into new facilities adjacent to each other; there is a shared reception area.
• The career center staff participate in the institution-wide “Advisers Academy,” which provides professional development and training for all campus advisers. (The career center director also presents at the academy now.)
• The Student Affairs Division budget includes a request for new funds to support a new testing officer position, which will allow standardized testing to be separated from the career center for the first time in 10 years.
EXTERNAL REVIEW TEAM: QUESTIONS FOR CAMPUS

Listed below are some questions the external review team may want to ask the campus contact before beginning the external review process.

These questions will give the external review team a foundation for the type of review it will be performing and the expectations of the campus.

1. Why are you doing this assessment?

2. What are you assessing?
   - Benchmarking
   - Satisfaction
   - Outcomes
   - Needs
   - First-Destination Data
   - Demographic Data

3. How will you assess?
   - What standards will you use (NACE and/or CAS)?
   - What methods are you following?
   - How will data be collected?
     - Will it be quantitative data?
     - Will it be qualitative data?

4. What is your timeline for this assessment?

5. Who else will be involved in the assessment process?

6. How will results be communicated and to whom?

7. What deliverables will you want in the report? What format should the report follow?

8. How will results be used and analyzed?
EXTERNAL REVIEW TEAM: PROCESS AND TIMELINE

The following represents a suggested timeline for an external team conducting a review of a career services program. It is designed to be used following the completion of an internal review by the career services office using the NACE Professional Standards for College & University Career Services Evaluation Workbook. This timeline will assist in structuring the framework for conducting the external review.

The purpose of the external review is to provide an external perspective regarding the quality and effectiveness of the office’s programs, services, resources, processes, and operations, while at the same time, assuring an objective and unbiased assessment.

Major steps in the external review process include:

- Identifying members of the external review team.
- Examining the internal review report and any additional supporting documents/data.
- Engaging in additional information-seeking, as necessary.
- Identifying groups and individuals the external review team would like to meet with during the campus visit.
- Preparing the agenda for the external review team’s campus visit and making travel arrangements.
- Conducting the campus visit.
- Preparing and submitting a preliminary report.
- Preparing a final report; the report includes relevant recommendations.

The external review team lead will need to put together a tentative timeline/agenda identifying the ideal progression of events for the review. Things to consider include the career services calendar; institution schedule; and availability of career services team members, students, administrators, faculty, employers, and the external review team members.

Sample External Review Recommended Timeline:

**May/June** (6 months in advance of external review team visit)

**Identify members of the external review team:** In consultation with the director of career services or the lead administrator, identify members of the external review team. Considerations should include the number of team members deemed appropriate, previous external review experience of the individuals, travel expenses, honoraria fees, availability, and flexibility. External review team members need to bring credibility to the process and must be discreet and impartial.
August/September (2 months in advance of external review team visit)

Examine the internal review report and any additional supporting documents/data: Request that members of the review team be sent copies of the scoring sheets used in the self-study process from the NACE Professional Standards Evaluation Workbook. Additionally, request any reports generated as a result of the internal review process, supporting substantive resource documents, action plans and accompanying implementation documentation, and qualitative/quantitative results. External review team members should familiarize themselves with all documents/data before the campus visit.

August/September (2 months in advance of external review team visit)

Prepare campus visit agenda and make travel arrangements: Working with the director of career services or lead administrator, identify groups and individuals the review team would like to meet with during the campus visit. The external review team should have input in the selection of people with whom to meet. The team needs to see the list in advance; generally, the team will offer suggestions for additions to the list.

Individuals and groups that might meet with the reviewers include:
- Vice president/chancellor for division to which career services reports
- Immediate supervisor of the career services director
- Division assessment person (if one exists)
- Career services director
- Career services professional staff (without the director)
- Career services support staff (without the professional staff)
- Representative deans and faculty
- Key departments where collaboration takes place or might be needed (e.g. counseling center, advising, alumni)
- Students
- Employers
- Alumni

Working with the director of career services or lead administrator, determine the content and format requirements of the external review report.

October/November

Conduct campus visit:

Typically the campus visit is done over a one-and-one-half to three-day period through a series of selected meetings and review sessions. If the external review follows an internal review, the campus visit is an opportunity for the external review team to confirm or dispute the conclusions of the internal review report and review any progress made toward remedial action items derived through the internal review. If there has not been an internal review, then the external review team conducts its campus visit to assess the career center operation without regard to any other assessment.
The external review team writes up a preliminary report based on its review and presents this information at a campus meeting of relevant stakeholders at the end of the site visit, if time permits.

**October/November (immediately following site visit)**

**Prepare final report with recommendations:** The external review team prepares a comprehensive final report of the entire career services operation using the NACE and/or CAS standards as the framework for the report. Additionally, team members identify additional strengths and recommendations for quality enhancements to further bring the career services operation into compliance with the NACE Standards.

The final report should be distributed to the director of career services or to the lead administrator who requested the review.

The external review report should:
- Describe the external review team’s process and findings.
- Note discrepancies and/or agreeable notations between the internal review findings and the external review team’s findings.
- Identify opportunities for quality enhancements in terms of programs and services.
- Identify possible strategies to achieve enhancements.
- Note the resources needed to implement strategies (personnel, facilities, finances, technology, and so forth).
- Recommend a timeline for addressing issues.
- Include external review team member names and contact information.
EXTERNAL REVIEW TEAM: CHECKLIST OF DOCUMENTS

Following is a list of materials and information that can be provided to the external review team to give the team an overview and detailed background necessary to evaluate the career services office effectively.

Typically, these materials are requested by the external review team and sent to the team members well in advance of the campus visit.

The Visit Documents

- **Charge or goal for the visit**  
  *(This should come from whoever is asking for the visit, perhaps the vice president or vice chancellor, and will indicate the outcomes and products that are expected.)*

- **Contract or Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)**
  - Identifying the team
  - What services will be provided
  - Stipend
  - Other relevant points warranting an MOU

- **Tentative agenda for review visit** *(Allow for input and suggestions from review team)*

- **Accommodation information** *(This may be required if the review team visit is more than one day)*

- **List of potential individuals to meet with the reviewers:**
  - Institution/college leadership
  - Office professional staff and support staff
  - Representative deans and faculty
  - Key department contacts where there are or could be collaborations
  - Students
  - Employers
  - Alumni
  - Other constituencies, e.g., community members

Background Documents

*These address what the external review team needs to know about the campus.*

- **Institution Overview**
  - Role and mission statement
  - University strategic plan
GUIDELINES FOR INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL REVIEW OF CAREER SERVICES

- Administrative organization chart
- Enrollment profile
- Benchmarks
- View book or catalog
- Annual report and other relevant documents
- Relevant website references

• Division Overview
  - Vision statement
  - Strategic plan
  - Statement of diversity
  - Division organization chart
  - Basic costs of attendance – Institution and peer group institutions
  - Allocation of student fees

Career Services Office Documents

• Results of Internal Review

• Overview/Department Profile
  - Department mission, vision, goals, objectives, and/or guiding principles
  - Brief history
  - Strengths/successes
  - Difficulties/challenges
  - Operating procedures and policies
  - Strategic plan
  - Annual report
  - Institutional effectiveness report
  - Operating policies and procedures
  - Recommendations/findings from most recent external review

• Specific Assessments
  - Assessment plan
  - Student learning outcomes
  - First-destination reports
  - Student awareness and usage data
  - Satisfaction surveys
  - Statistical reports, assessment data
  - Other career services survey results

• Resources (Human and Financial)
  - Department organization chart
  - Job descriptions for all staff members
  - Resumes of non-exempt staff
  - Budgets/financial overview
  - Summary of technology resources
  - Office floor plan
• **Publications/Marketing**
  o Campus information and promotional brochures
  o Office publications and brochures
  o Marketing materials produced by the office
  o Educational materials produced by the office

**Post-Review Documents**

• **Final external review team report**
  *The review team will want to complete the report immediately following the visit. The lead reviewer will ensure that the entire team has input into the final report.*