Program Review Self-Study Guidance
Academic Departments

The self-study is the department’s opportunity to present its strategy, accomplishments, and challenges. It should be informative to the external reviewers who are experts in the field, but also accessible to internal reviewers who may not have as much experience in the field. To develop the self-study, many departments choose to form a program review committee of faculty. It is encouraged to engage a wider representation of faculty members, particularly junior faculty, to contribute to a shared vision for the department.

The most useful self-studies are candid and thorough, yet succinct. The suggested length for a self-study is 15-25 pages plus appendices. Below are guiding principles and an example outline to help in the development the self-study. Additional descriptions and guiding questions for each section of the outline are available in the following section.

The outline is provided to ensure key elements are included in the first iteration of the self-study, but the department should feel free to determine the organization of the self-study that works best for them. In some cases, the Program Review Office will provide suggestions on additional areas to focus on once the self-study has been provided. As part of the standard review process, this self-study will be shared with external reviewers, internal reviewers, the President, the Provost, the Dean of the School, the Dean of the Graduate School, the Vice President for Research and the Program Review Council. (In addition to the self-study, this audience also receives the department’s key issues, data profile and faculty survey results.) Each self-study will be unique to the department, but a strong self-study does the following:

- Provides a concise current state assessment of the department’s strengths and opportunity areas
- Focuses on the analysis of the identified key issues
- Outlines recommended next steps for the department
- Utilizes data in support of analysis and recommendations
- Identifies metrics to determine how success will be measured
Program Review Self-Study Outline

I. Department Overview and Governance

II. Strategic Direction
   a) Academic Focus
   b) Key Differentiators and Positioning With Respect to Peers

III. Current State of the Department
   a) Faculty
   b) Research
   c) Teaching and Learning
      i. Undergraduate
      ii. Graduate
   d) Collaborations and Partnerships

IV. Analysis of Key Issues
   a) Issues Identified/Actions Taken in Response to Previous Review
   b) Analysis of Current Issues and Challenges

V. Notes on Preparation of the Self-Study
   a) Process of self-study preparation and list of people involved
   b) Description of how faculty were engaged

VI. Appendices (the asterisk denotes required materials; include others as appropriate)
   a) List of Faculty by Areas of Research and Rank *
   b) Faculty Vitae*
   c) Strategic Plan/Roadmap
   d) Organizational Chart
   e) Hiring Plan
   f) Communication and Marketing Materials
   g) Descriptions of Research Centers/Major Grants
   h) Graduate Student Handbook
   i) Postdoctoral Fellows List
Program Review Self-Study Framework

I. Department Overview and Governance

This section covers the department’s history, vision, and mission. Provide a concise overview of the critical elements and approaches that structure the discipline(s) or field(s) represented in the department. Explain how the department’s structure and activities relate to these elements and approaches.

- Describe the major areas of scholarly concentration (within and across the disciplines) represented in your department. Call attention to any past conditions or events that are critical to understanding the department’s present situation and future.
- What is the administrative structure of the department? How are faculty members involved in the governance of the department?
- What are the typical lengths of service for leadership and administrative roles undertaken by faculty members?
- What are the formal processes used for gathering regular feedback from all stakeholders (faculty, students, alumni, etc.)?
- How does the department create time, space, and events for the faculty to interact in more informal ways?

II. Strategic Direction

This section includes a description of how you expect the field to change and how your department will respond to these changes to achieve or enhance academic distinction and leadership. The academic focus of the department should be addressed in this section. Consider the department’s set of guiding principles, focus areas, goals, and/or initiatives that help define the identity and direction of the department.

- Does your department have a current roadmap/strategic positioning plan? How much of the plan is defined by programmatic elements and how much by hiring and retention strategies?
- When was this plan created (or last updated to reflect new priorities)?
- How does the plan address or anticipate new developments or directions in the discipline/field?
- How was the faculty involved in the development of the plan? Are individuals assigned responsibility for the implementation of specific aspects of the plan?
- Does the department regularly review peer data? Which data and which peers are used? Who do you consider to be current and aspirational peers?
- Using existing resources, what specific steps do you plan to take to improve the quality of the department for the future?
III. Current State of the Department

This section focuses on how faculty are organized in your department, in terms of composition, research, and teaching. Provide a description of the strengths and distinguishing features of your department.

A. Faculty

• Describe the faculty composition of your department.

• What faculty retirements and new hiring can be anticipated in the next five years? What strategies will the department use to effectively capitalize on these new hires?

• Describe your goals for gender, racial, and ethnic diversity among the faculty, and how do you monitor and assess your progress in meeting these goals?

• What are the processes for evaluating teaching within the department (e.g. teaching observations, CTEC analysis)? Do CTECs give an accurate picture of teaching performance in your department? What are the processes used for improving teaching within the department?

• Describe your efforts to foster and promote intellectually-rewarding collaborations among faculty within the department and across related departments at the university as well as across the broader academic community.

• Describe how you track and evaluate faculty publications, citations, research funding, honors and awards, editorships, etc. How do you nominate, recognize, and publicize faculty who receive distinguished academic awards and honors?

B. Research

• How has research in the department changed in magnitude and focus over the last five years? Briefly describe major research projects underway (for sponsored projects, you may want to refer to the specifics of particularly substantial projects). How do these projects relate to or affect your strategic vision for the next five years?

• Compare yourself to what you believe to be the top programs nationally. What are the distinguishing features of those programs? What most impacts your relative position?

• Describe research collaborations with other departments, centers or institutes, or external groups.

C. Teaching and Learning

This section delves into how teaching and learning function throughout a department through undergraduate and graduate programs.

i. Undergraduate

• Describe how teaching responsibilities are assigned. Does the department set goals for teaching at each level (intro-level, upper-level, graduate) by faculty rank? Are there any issues which prevent the desired balance?
• Describe the learning outcomes you seek to develop in students in terms of how they are communicated to different audiences, their relation to the curriculum, and the assessment/analysis of outcomes.

• How does the department most successfully engage students beyond the classroom? How does the department most successfully engage the campus, alumni, and the community at large?

• Describe the rationale for requirements for majors, minors, and graduate students. What learning objectives, if any, may be met by courses outside the department’s offerings? How do you support educational innovations within and beyond the classroom (e.g., service learning, online learning)? Describe any kind of educational technology strategies being used or considered.

• Describe the ratio of core or required courses to elective courses. What is the prevalence of dual degree programs? How long has it been since the department has done a comprehensive curriculum review?

• Describe any goals—at the undergraduate and graduate level—for gender, racial, and ethnic diversity. How do you monitor and assess your progress toward these goals?

• Describe the department’s approach to academic support services. How do you assess the effectiveness of advising? What support mechanisms do you have in place to facilitate and promote the academic success and retention of students who may be struggling?

• What are the formal and informal opportunities for interactions between faculty, staff, and students?

  ii. Graduate

• What is the process and timeline for recruiting graduate students? Discuss any perceived barriers to recruiting the best students. What is the win/loss ratio of students?

• What kind of funding is used to support graduate students (grants, fellowships, teaching assistantships, scholarships, etc.)? Do students compete for external funding? How is funding sustained throughout a graduate student’s career? How are funding decisions made? How does funding compare to peers?

• Describe the placement of graduates in the context of market factors impacting placement.

• How are students admitted to the master’s and doctoral programs? What are the culminating experiences for graduate students (thesis, exams, dissertation, etc.)?

• To what degree are students able to take advantage of professional development opportunities?

D. Collaborations and Partnerships

• List and describe any of the department’s collaborations and external partnerships not already discussed. How do they further support the mission of the department?
• How does the department engage with its alumni network, e.g. corporate partnerships or alumni career panels?

IV. Analysis of Key Issues

A. Issues Identified in Prior Program Review

This section will address the key issues from the last program review and the action steps taken as a response. For some departments, discussing the prior review is integrated into the history and/or vision of their department. For others, it is useful to create a chart detailing the recommendations, the status of the recommendations, and where the document addresses the action steps taken towards resolving these items.

B. Analysis of Issues in Current Review

Describe the key issues that have been identified in the current program review cycle. The analysis of the key issues uses data, incorporates feedback on issues from the Dean’s Office and Central Administration (President, Provost, Vice President for Research, Dean of the Graduate School, and Vice President for Administration and Planning) and outlines plans to address the issues and move the department forward.

V. Notes on Preparation of the Self-Study

• Describe the process used to complete the self-study, including a list of who was responsible for the contents of the final report and how faculty was engaged to provide feedback. As previously mentioned, departments are strongly encouraged to create a program review committee to lead the development of the self-study.

VI. Appendices

The appendices should include any information that is not already present in the Data Profile, but would be helpful to the reviewers or is referenced in the Self-Study. The department typically provides curricula vitae for all faculty. It is useful to the Review Team to have a listing and description of the role of each professor of instruction as well as the positions of each tenure-track faculty member in central departments or university committees. The asterisk denotes required materials; include others as appropriate.

List of Faculty by Areas of Research and Rank*

a) Faculty Vitae*
b) Strategic Plan/Roadmap
c) Organizational Chart
d) Hiring Plan
e) Communication and Marketing Materials
f) Descriptions of Research Centers/Major Grants
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