Academic Key Issues and Self-Study Guide

2021-2022

Northwestern | PROGRAM REVIEW

INTRODUCTION

This guide details the outline and expectations for the following program review deliverables: Key Issues and Self-Study. The Key Issues and Self-Study are separate documents that will both be included in the final set of materials provided to the review team, along with the Faculty Survey Results and Data Profile.

KEY ISSUES OVERVIEW

The Key Issues are an overview of the critical issues facing the Department, which will each be explored in more detail in the Self-Study. One of the Department's first steps in the program review process is to identify a list of Key Issues that it believes to be critical to the Department both now and over the coming years. The issues may take the form of known challenges that the Department currently faces or critical questions to consider and on which it would like feedback. It is important that the list of issues generated by the Department corresponds with the Department's strategic plan or will shape future strategic plans. While consideration should be given to new issues that have arisen since the previous review, it may be equally important to review recurring issues that the Department still faces and seeks to address. Emphasis should be placed on how critical the issue is to the Department's strategic direction, rather than how long an issue has existed.

The list of Key Issues is circulated with the Dean and central administration (President, Provost, Senior Vice President for Business and Finance, Vice President of Administration and Planning, Vice President for Research, Dean of The Graduate School, and Vice Provost for Administration) for their input. The Dean and central administration may provide feedback on the Key Issues or suggest additional Key Issues for the Department to consider during the Self-Study process. This feedback step ensures alignment among these parties on the areas of focus for the upcoming review. The Department should address any feedback provided on the Key Issues in the Self-Study. In some cases, Departments will be asked to provide a revised list of Key Issues. The Key Issues are identified early on in the process in order to guide the focus of the review. The analysis of each Key Issue will be the main focus of the Department's Self-Study report.

The Key Issues document should be one to three pages and contain five to ten issues. Key Issues can be in the form of bullet points or short paragraphs. Please refer to Appendix A for the suggested Key Issues framework and Appendix B for a list of discussion questions and suggested topics to guide Key Issues development.

SELF-STUDY OVERVIEW

The Self-Study, which analyzes the Key Issues in depth, is the Departmental narrative of its strategy, strengths, opportunities, and challenges. The strongest Self-Studies are candid and thorough, yet succinct. The Self-Study 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.

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
- Incorporates data in support of analysis and recommendations
- Identifies metrics to determine how success will be measured

The suggested length for a Self-Study is 15-25 pages plus appendices. Please refer to Appendix A for the suggested Self-Study framework and Appendix B for a list of questions to guide Self-Study development.
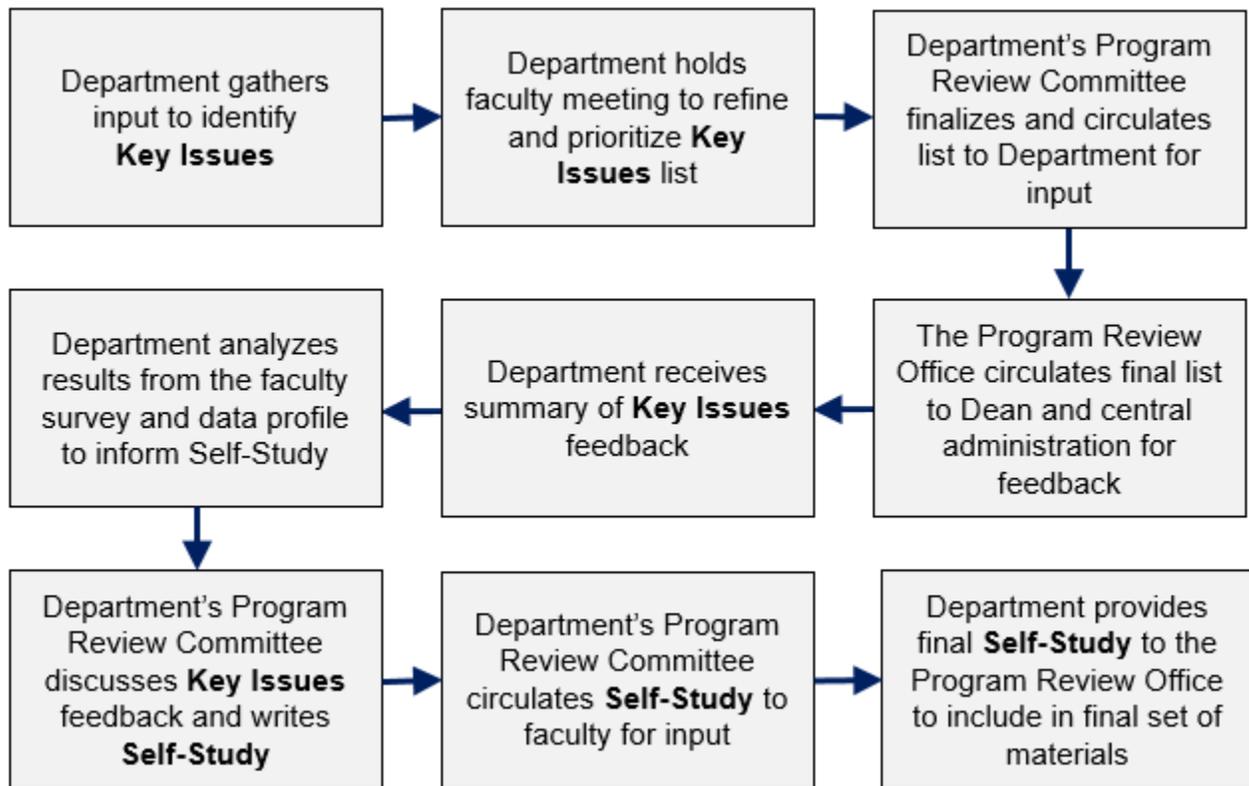
DEPARTMENTAL ENGAGEMENT

To develop the Key Issues and 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. Departments may use a variety of mechanisms to identify issues, including but not limited to:
- Analysis of Department data, including the Data Profile
- Faculty feedback, including the Faculty Survey Results
- Review of previous program review reports and implementation agreements
- Interviews with faculty and/or students conducted by the Department program review committee
- Working knowledge of issues that have been discussed in recent meetings or planning sessions

Once the Key Issues and Self-Study documents have been drafted, the drafts should be shared with the members of the Department for input. The goal is that the program review materials will represent the perspectives of the entire Department. In areas where there are diverse perspectives, notes should be added as to the nature of the different perspectives.

Departments have found many ways to engage faculty in this process. Based on feedback from prior reviews, please see a suggested process on the following page for engaging faculty in the development of the Key Issues and Self-Study.

SUGGESTED KEY ISSUES AND SELF-STUDY DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

Department gathers input to identify **Key Issues**	Department holds faculty meeting to refine and prioritize **Key Issues** list	Department's Program Review Committee finalizes and circulates list to Department for input
Department analyzes results from the faculty survey and data profile to inform Self-Study	Department receives summary of **Key Issues** feedback	The Program Review Office circulates final list to Dean and central administration for feedback
Department's Program Review Committee discusses **Key Issues** feedback and writes **Self-Study**	Department's Program Review Committee circulates **Self-Study** to faculty for input	Department provides final **Self-Study** to the Program Review Office to include in final set of materials

Key Issues Outline
Please see below broad categories in which Key Issues could be identified. Issues may be identified in some or all categories or in other areas. These categories are examples of the areas which the Department may explore – fundamental to the philosophy of Program Review is that the Department itself is best-positioned to determine what challenges it faces. The analysis of the Key Issues identified will serve as the main focus of the Self-Study.

A. Faculty
B. Research
C. Teaching and Learning
    i. Undergraduate Education
    ii. Graduate Education
    iii. Medical Education (if applicable)
D. Leadership and Governance
E. Departmental Support
F. Internal and External Collaborations

Example Key Issue 1:
Strategic Direction: It is necessary for the Department to consider one or more themes that unify the faculty and highlight the distinct research areas and talent of the faculty. **Identifying a strategic direction based on areas of research** is imperative to attracting talented faculty and students, earning Departmental funding, and functioning cohesively as a Department.

Example Key Issue 2:
Strengthen the Graduate Student Program: Thinking about departmental strengths and weaknesses, particularly in the context of the changing field, how can we further improve our graduate student placement in the current academic job market? Considering the job market, quality of training, and availability of funding, what is the appropriate cohort size?

Example Key Issue 3:
Faculty Diversity: Improve the diversity of our faculty in terms of women and underrepresented minorities. *Increasing faculty diversity is necessary for the Department. The Department will work with Dean to improve the pipeline and ensure diverse faculty are recruited and retained. The goal to diversify the faculty integrates well with the desire to increase diversity in both the undergraduate and graduate student bodies.*

Self-Study Outline
The outline is provided to ensure key elements are included in the first iteration of the Self-Study, but the Department should determine the organization of the Self-Study that works best for them.

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.

II. Strategic Direction
    This section includes a description of how the field is expected to change and how the 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. This section can also explore the Department's response to external factors (e.g., COVID-19).
    A. Academic Focus
    B. Key Differentiators and Positioning With Respect to Peers

III. Brief Response to Previous Program Review Issues (if applicable)
    This section should briefly address the Key Issues from the last program review and the action steps taken as a response. The purpose of including this section is to address any outstanding issues and acknowledge the prior review. For some Departments, discussing the prior review is integrated into the history and/or vision of their Department. For others, it may be 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.

APPENDIX A: KEY ISSUES AND SELF-STUDY OUTLINES

IV.   <u>In-Depth Analysis of Key Issues</u>
      This section comprises the majority of the Self-Study. Analyze in detail 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 and central administration, and
      outlines plans to address the issues and move the Department forward.
      - A. Faculty
      - B. Research
      - C. Teaching and Learning
         - i. Undergraduate Education
         - ii. Graduate Education
         - iii. Medical Education (if applicable)
      - D. Leadership and Governance
      - E. Departmental Support
      - F. Internal and External Collaborations

V.   <u>Notes on Preparation of the Self-Study</u>
      Briefly 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 were 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.

      - A. Process of Self-Study Preparation and List of People Involved
      - B. Description of How Faculty were Engaged

VI.   <u>Appendices</u>
      The appendices should include any information that is not already included in the Data
      Profile, but would be helpful to the reviewers or is referenced in the Self-Study.

      The asterisk denotes required appendices; include others as appropriate.
      - A. List of Faculty by Areas of Research and Rank*
      - B. Faculty Vitae*
      - C. Organizational Chart
      - D. Strategic Plan/Roadmap
      - E. Hiring Plan
      - F. Communication and Marketing Materials
      - G. Descriptions of Research Centers/Major Grants
      - H. Undergraduate and Graduate Degree Requirements
      - I. Graduate Student Handbook
      - J. Postdoctoral Fellows List

APPENDIX B: DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

The following outline and questions are provided to guide the discussion and development of the Key Issues and Self-Study. The outline is intended to highlight the key items that could be included in the unit's analysis, but each unit may organize their assessment uniquely.

I. Faculty
    - Describe the faculty composition of the Department, including distribution across disciplines.
    - 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 any goals for gender, racial, and ethnic diversity. How does the Department monitor and assess progress toward these goals?
    - Describe the 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 faculty publications, citations, research funding, honors and awards, and editorships are tracked and evaluated. How are faculty who receive distinguished academic awards and honors nominated, recognized, and publicized?
    - Describe how junior faculty are formally and informally mentored in the Department.

II. Research
    - How has research in the Department changed in scope and focus over the last five years? Briefly describe major research initiatives underway (for sponsored projects, refer to the specifics of particularly substantial projects). How do these projects relate to or affect the strategic vision for the next five years?
    - Describe research collaborations with other Departments, centers or institutes, or external groups.
    - Compare the Department to the top programs nationally. What are the distinguishing features of those programs? What most impacts the Department's relative position?

APPENDIX B: DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

III. Teaching and Learning
- Describe how teaching responsibilities are assigned. Does the Department set expectations for teaching at each level (intro-level, upper-level, graduate) by faculty rank? Are there any issues which prevent the desired balance?
- Describe the Department's most recent curriculum review. When was the curriculum last reviewed and what changes were made?
- Describe student learning outcomes in terms of desired competencies and skills at different levels (e.g., first year students versus seniors; majors versus minors versus course takers, etc.). How are learning objectives communicated to different audiences? How are the learning outcomes assessed? What, if any, changes have been made (or are planned) in the curriculum and/or instruction to improve and enhance learning? (Please visit Northwestern's assessment website for additional resources on learning outcomes and assessment).
- 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 the Department? What are the processes used for improving teaching within the Department? How does the Department recognize outstanding teachers, and how can others learn from their teaching?
- 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?
- How does the Department most successfully encourage global engagement at the undergraduate and graduate levels?
- Describe other academic experiences supported by the Department, such as student research, internships, and job shadowing programs.

A. Undergraduate Education
- Describe the rationale for requirements for majors and minors. What learning objectives, if any, may be met by courses outside the Department's offerings?
- Describe the sequencing and scheduling of courses for the major and minor. What courses are offered within the major and minor? What courses are offered outside of the major/minor? How does the Department attract majors and minors? How does the Department attract non-majors and minors?
- How are educational innovations supported within and beyond the classroom (e.g., service learning, online learning)? Describe any kind of educational technology strategies being used or considered.
- How does the Department support other educational opportunities, including departmental honors, undergraduate theses, internship credit, internships, and research or study abroad opportunities?
- Describe the ratio of core or required courses to elective courses. What is the prevalence of dual degree programs? How often does the Department perform a comprehensive curriculum review? How does the Department ensure course material remains current?
- Describe the Department's goals for gender, racial, and ethnic diversity. How does the Department monitor and assess progress toward these goals?
- Describe the Department's approach to academic support services. How is the effectiveness of advising assessed? What support mechanisms are in place to facilitate and promote the academic success and retention of students who may need additional assistance?
- What are the formal and informal opportunities for interactions between faculty, staff, and students?

APPENDIX B: DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

B. Graduate Education
- Discuss any perceived barriers to recruiting the best students. What is the win/loss ratio of students? What is the process and timeline required for recruiting graduate students?
- Describe the Department's goals for gender, racial, and ethnic diversity. How does the Department monitor and assess progress toward these goals?
- Describe the rationale for and sequence of the curriculum for graduate students.
- What kind of funding is used to support graduate students (grants, fellowships, teaching assistantships, scholarships, etc.)? How successful are students in competing for external funding? How is funding sustained throughout a graduate student's career? How are funding decisions made? How does funding compare to peers?
- What is the average time-to-degree for graduate students?
- 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.)?
- What mechanisms exist to track and assess students' progress, including exit strategies for underperforming students?
- What professional development opportunities are available to students?

C. Medical Education
- How successful has the Department been in recruiting students who are members of the AOA and/or who graduated from the top 25 medical schools?
- How successful have Northwestern University medical students been in obtaining residencies in their desired specialties? At which institutions are they being placed?
- What has been the assessment of the Department's residency program by the specialty's Residency Review Committee? How many applications have there been over the past five to seven years (and for how many positions)? How successful have the residents been on the certifying exams?

APPENDIX B: DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

IV.   <u>Leadership and Governance</u>
- 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? How is service shared and distributed?
- What are the formal processes used for gathering regular feedback from all stakeholders (faculty, students, alumni, etc.)?
- What is the succession plan for leadership?

V.   <u>Departmental Support</u>
- What is the Department's administrative support structure? How does this structure support the Department's faculty, students, and programs?
- Are there opportunities to streamline processes or leverage existing resources?

VI.   <u>Internal and External Collaborations</u>
- 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?
- What strategic relationships/collaborations exist between the Department and other entities external to the University? Are there other relationships that should be pursued that would strengthen the Department's research efforts?