SELF-STUDY GUIDELINES

All programs in the Department are usually reviewed simultaneously. Development of the self-study document should be a collaborative effort involving all members of the Department. Participation of students and alumni provides a perspective that is often helpful and therefore their participation is strongly encouraged.

Prior to their self-study, Departments review their mission statement, student learning outcomes, assessment plans, and course outlines, and revise them, if needed. Departments also decide how they will organize their self-study and provide a brief written summary to their Dean, along with their mission statement and student learning outcomes.

To facilitate preparation of the self-study report, departments will be provided with the Self-Study Outline in electronic form. The final self-study report should be submitted in hard copy to the Dean, the Provost, the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment, and the external reviewer. The cover page of the self-study report should list the names of all faculty involved in preparing the report.

Each May, the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment (IR&A) provides departments with a Statistical Information Packet containing five-year statistics on students, faculty, courses, etc.; this information will be helpful in preparing the self-study report. On request, IR&A can provide much of this information in an Excel spreadsheet. Additional information, such as the results of student learning outcomes assessment, will come from the department. Professional associations are a good source of information on trends in the discipline.

Program Review Options

Coordination of Program Review and Accreditation. To the extent possible, every effort will be made to coordinate program review with accreditation self-studies and visits. The way in which this will happen will depend on a number of factors, including the following:

1. For some departments, program review can be a step in preparing for accreditation. In this case, some flexibility in the program review outline can be worked out, if needed.
2. If a department has multiple programs with different accrediting bodies and is going through a transition period or is proposing new degree programs, program review may be helpful in clarifying how programs complement each other and/or the department’s readiness to mount a new degree program.
3. If the accreditation self-study does not address all topics in the program review self-study outline, departments will be asked to address those topics in a mini self-study document. Revised course outlines, an assessment plan, and a concluding five-year plan and memorandum of understanding will still be required.
4. If the accreditation self-study addresses all topics in the program review self-study outline and covers all programs in the department, it may be possible for it to serve as a substitute for program review. Revised course outlines, an assessment plan, and a concluding five-year plan and memorandum of understanding will still be required.
Focused Program Review. Departments that have previously completed program reviews and, through annual reports, etc., demonstrate continuous improvement, have the option of proposing a focused program review. This option gives the Department the opportunity to focus its self-study efforts on a special topic that will assist it in enhancing its programs, and to identify an external reviewer with special expertise in that area. Examples of focused reviews might be a major curriculum revision, or design and implementation of a comprehensive assessment plan. If this alternative does not involve all programs in the department, the program not involved will do a traditional self-study. Departments wishing to explore this option should first discuss it with their Dean. If there is mutual agreement to this approach, the Department should prepare and submit to the Dean for review and approval, a detailed description of the design for its self-study. Revised course outlines, an assessment plan, and a concluding five-year plan and memorandum of understanding will continue to be required of departments that elect a focused program review.