

Preparing a Self-Study Report

Focus on mission, assessment, and strategic plan for future program development:

- Mission and goals of program; relationship to university mission and goals
- Assessment of program strengths and weaknesses
- Short term and long term strategic plans

Central questions that the self-study should address:

- What is the relationship of the program to NAU's mission and strategic goals?
- What is the quality of the program?
 - Evidence of teaching effectiveness and innovation
 - Faculty contributions to discipline or profession through scholarly, creative or professional activity
 - Assessment of student learning/success
 - Student/Alumni evaluations of program
- What does the program contribute to the region, state or local community?
- What are the program's strategic plans for the future?

Strive For:

- **Clarity & Brevity**-The self-study document should be well organized, readable and succinct.
- **Credibility**- The document should be candid and evaluative.
- **Evidence Based**- Claims and evaluations should be based on data; institutional data where available should be utilized; sources of other data reported should be provided so that quality can be assessed.
- **Forward Looking Perspective**- The report should be forward-looking and linked to college and university missions and strategic plans
- **Constructive**- The document should be focused on improvement, challenges and aspirations

Characteristics of a Useful Self-Study:

- **Responsiveness** The report should adhere to the outline and be thorough while succinct and readable. Address issues of program quality and weakness; ignore extraneous issues.
- **Documentation** The report should be data based. Valid internal and external peer comparisons are very helpful. Simplistic, selective, and out-of-context data summaries are useless or counterproductive. Data should be interpreted and evaluated, not just included in the document.
- **Tone** The report should be constructive in tone. Do not dwell only on problems, focus on successes, challenges, aspirations, and goals.
- **Objectivity** The report should be appropriately candid, introspective, and analytical and should feature an honest look at the unit's status and opportunities. The report must be credible to be useful.

- **Perspective** The report should be forward looking, consistent with departmental, college, and university strategic plans and planning, and neither an unconstrained “wish list” nor an exercise in self-congratulation. Address needs comparatively, with appropriate attention to priorities and sequencing.
- **Accuracy** Errors of fact should be avoided. The committee responsible for preparing the self-study report must work in concert with the head of the academic unit to ensure the accuracy of the statements contained in the document.
- **Brevity** The success of the program review is not proportional to the weight of the self-study.
- **Utility** Program reviews are time-consuming exercises. Therefore, every effort should be made to ensure that the full benefit of the process will be derived from the effort. Avoid posturing or the temptation to use either the self-study or the external reviewers to “leverage” the institution. These strategies detract from and thereby diminishing the value of the review. A thorough, accurate, and neutral self-study focused on the academic unit provides the best guarantee that university leadership will understand and appreciate the needs of the academic unit.

Suggested outline for self-study reports:

- Executive Summary
- Brief history of unit
- Brief summary of findings, recommendations, and actions resulting from previous program review
- Brief description of program(s) (Append catalog copy of programs)
- Assessment of student learning and curricular effectiveness (Append Assessment Plans & Reports)
- Program/Course Enrollment and Degrees Granted
- Contribution of program and faculty to liberal studies, interdisciplinary programs, and distance learning (as appropriate)
- Faculty & Faculty Efforts (faculty workload patterns; teaching effectiveness of program faculty; faculty engagement in advising; research, creative and professional activity of program faculty; sponsored research; university, professional and community service activity)
- Community, state and regional engagement
- Resources & Facilities
- Future Plans (in light of findings of self-study, what is the strategic plan within existing resources; programmatic initiatives the unit would like to pursue that would require additional resources)
- Self-Study Appendices
 - Faculty Data
 - Assessment Plan & Reports
 - Standard Data Report
 - Library Report
 - Unit Strategic Plan
 - Faculty Vita (academic units with a large number of faculty may choose to disseminate the faculty vitae in an electronic format)