Hallmarks of an Effective Self-Study Process

The purpose of program review within academic affairs is to examine, assess, and strengthen programs through self-study. The review is intended to enhance the quality of a program and to assist in determining a program's ability to respond to future challenges and opportunities; to evaluate strengths and weaknesses, and determine future priorities to aid in shaping the program's development plan.

The goal of a program review should be the articulation of agreed-upon action plans for further development of the program. The program review process should focus on improvements that can be made using resources that currently are available to the program. Consideration may also be given to proposed program improvements and expansions that would require additional resources; in such cases, the need and priority for additional resources should be clearly specified.

While data is required to document and support the review, the main focus should be forward–looking and aspirational rather than merely a set of data points and review of past performance.

The components of a self-

EFFECTIVE PRACTICES

In the past, program reviews often focused on the "status" of a program over the previous review period: Did the program make efficient use of resources, Was course content appropriate, Did faculty efforts in research represent sufficient quality and quantity?

While such concerns are important to address, academic program reviews should primarily be forward-looking, intent on determining the best strategic directions and most desired changes to improve the academic program and student success. Self-study committees/program review teams are encouraged to focus the program review process toward eliciting well-designed and agreed-upon action plans for the future development of the academic program.

An effective self-study process:

> Promises to have an impact beyond the review team visit. Highly effective self-study processes produce findings and recommendations that the unit, department, college, or university should address.

> Focuses on the purpose of improving teaching and learning

> Acknowledges on the plan created in the previous self -study, but is not bound to follow the same course.

> Clearly and concisely addresses each area, making use of data that already exists to support the findings.

> Explicitly addresses strengths and weaknesses to promote a focus on needed changes.

> Is a joint effort of all program members and participants – faculty, students, staff, and others contributing to the program.

The length of the self-study narrative should not be more than 20-25 pages (excluding appendices).

CORE CRITERIA

All programs should address the following core criteria in their self-study and review process: , and   .

Mission

The self-study should describe how the program is fulfilling its mission. There is a clear philosophy and focus on program level instruction, scholarly growth, and outreach activities. The program self-study discusses how goals and objectives are linked to the university mission and strategic priorities, and includes strategies for further developing the program.

The following statements serve as specific examples that a program might present in addressing this criterion:

> The program mission is clearly articulated and aligns with the college and university missions and strategic priorities.
> The program's decisions are mission-driven (e.g., curriculum, enrollment, faculty activity, research).
> The program meets university-wide curricular needs.
> The program strives to improve its standing within its academic discipline.

Program Quality

The self-study should provide information that reveals the program's efforts to develop and offer a high-quality education for students through a curriculum that is relevant, rigorous, current, and coherent. Materials should be included that systematically examine the quality of the curriculum, instruction, and support services in helping students achieve intended learning outcomes.

The self-study <u>must</u> include identified program-level student outcomes and assessment/achievement of those outcomes. IMPROVE reports may be used as documentation of participation in university-wide program outcome assessment, but some discussion of significance should be included in the narrative summary, as well as discussion of whether any curricular or program adjustments were made as a result of outcome assessment.

The self-study also includes descriptions of faculty contributions to quality, including teaching, research, and outreach excellence.

Specific examples of how a program addresses this criterion might include the following:

- The program's student learning outcomes and assessment results that inform changes in curriculum, pedagogy, instructional resources, and student services.
- The program's efforts to enhance student learning, promote research excellence, and serve constituents' needs.
- Advances made in academic advising of students in the program
- Innovations that enhance research and teaching effectiveness.
- Peer comparison that offers quality benchmarks.
- Interrelationships of the instructional program with other programs at IUP
- Progress made toward Writing Across the Curriculum status
- Activities and ways the program contributes to making the university a

The following examples could be included to address this criterion: