

Academic Program Reviews:
Guidance for Undertaking the Self-Study Process

Columbian College of Arts & Sciences
George Washington University
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Introduction

An Academic Program Review (APR) in GW’s Columbian College of Arts and Sciences begins with the unit/program Self-Study. In this first step, the faculty members in departments and programs (hereafter “units”) have the opportunity to conduct a critical evaluation of their recent and current status, activities, and aspirations based upon their own experiences and an analysis of data supplied by the college and university. Because the College oversees many APRs each year, it asks that the Self-Studies share a basic format and address common questions. This facilitates planning at the unit level as well as at the college and university levels as well. This document lays out what CCAS expects to appear in the Self-Study.

The ***Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) Analysis and Strategic Plan section*** is by far the most important. This section provides the basic information that will inform external and internal review teams, deans, and the Office of the Provost regarding the issues the unit considers of greatest importance or concern and how it intends to address them as well as signaling the strengths of the program and what it is doing really well. Perhaps counter-intuitively, the first two sections are actually completed at the ***end*** of the Self-Study process as their content is based on information generated in the sections that follow them.

The Self-Study should not be the product of a single author; its composition should be the product of the unit’s collective input and deliberation. To this end, CCAS has designed the latter sections of the Self-Study template where possible to follow the typical committee structure of most units, to allow section-by-section drafting, committee-by-committee. If this structure is problematic for your unit, please reach out to Kim Gross, Vice Dean for Programs and Operations (kimgross@gwu.edu) and copy Amber Carter, Associate Director, Programs and Assessment (ambercarter@gwu.edu) to discuss the issue. In order to facilitate the APR Self-Study process, CCAS or Office of Academic Planning and Assessment (APA) will supply the unit/program with most of data highlighted (as demonstrated in Section “Supporting Documentation”).

Immediately following this introduction is a very brief checklist-style outline of APR sections. Thereafter follows a more detailed discussion of the data to be discussed and questions to be

considered in each section. Data will be supplied by the college or APA individually for your unit. Should you wish to analyze or represent the data differently in order to assist in your analysis of your unit, you may do so -- provided *the supplied data is represented and discussed* within the Self-Study.

Please keep in mind the audience and purpose of the Self-Study during the discussion and drafting processes. The Self-Study should contain sufficient detail and context to allow the external team of disciplinary experts from outside GW and the representatives of the College and Provost's office, who are likely not experts in your discipline, to understand the report and make meaningful recommendations. However, the report should also be as clear and concise as possible to facilitate detailed reading. To that end, large tables and long complex data sets may be included in appendices or as supplementary material, but for presentation within the text, summative graphs and pictorial representation are preferred.

Outline of the APR Self-Study

A) Executive Summary

B) SWOT Analysis and Strategic Plan

C) Mission Statement

D) Creative/Research Programs, Faculty Profile

- Overview and Summary of Measures of Productivity
- Analysis of Scholarly and/or Creative Activities
- Research and Graduate Education, Research and Undergraduate Education
- Additional Faculty Profile Information and Analysis

E) Undergraduate Program

- Introduction and Summary of Programs
- Analysis of Enrollment Data
- Analysis of Curriculum (include learning outcomes and curriculum maps)
- Program assessment summary and analysis
- Discussion of Program outcomes
- GTA use (if applicable)
- Instructor development
- Undergraduate advising and mentoring
- Analysis of current status, and future outlook

F) Graduate Program

- Introduction and Summary of Programs
- Analysis of Enrollment Data
- Analysis of Curriculum (include learning outcomes and curriculum maps)
- Program assessment summary and analysis
- Discussion of Program outcomes
- GTA use (if applicable)
- National PhD Rankings (if applicable)
- Instructor development

- Graduate advising and mentoring
 - Analysis of current status, and future outlook
- G) Online Programs (If Applicable)**
- (see above for relevant bullet points for graduate programs)
- H) Departmental Resources**
- Summary and evaluation of current departmental resources (staff, facilities), future outlook
 - University and School Service
- I) Supporting Documentation (see detailed guidance for more information)**

Detailed Guidance on APR Self-Study Sections

A) Executive Summary

Although this section appears at the start of the document, CCAS advises that you write this section last. The Executive Summary should summarize all key items for the reviewers, including:

- A brief description / overview of your unit;
- A brief description of your programs and resources, including a list of all programs and their size;
- List of programs or institutions that the unit benchmarks against.
- A brief overview of the scope of the unit's faculty, students and staff.
- A summary of the major conclusions of the Self-Study.

The Executive Summary should provide the readers with sufficient information to enable them to understand the SWOT analysis and strategic plan section.

B) SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) Analysis and Strategic Plan

The SWOT Analysis and Strategic Plan section should be the penultimate section authored by the unit. These sections should be written after a careful review and discussion of the data and an analysis of your unit's programs and resources. That review and discussion will explore the strengths and weaknesses with regard to matters over which your unit has control, opportunities that are potential areas of growth or development of your unit, and threats that currently or potentially could impact negatively on your unit but which are external to your unit and its control. The SWOT analysis should give clear context and lead to a prioritization of how the identified issues can be addressed.

The SWOT Analysis should include highlights of the evaluation of all goals for student learning, faculty scholarly / creative productivity, and service to the discipline, the university, and the community, as applicable. *Discuss specific strengths, immediate and future opportunities and challenges, and areas for potential improvement.* The evaluation should consider any trends in the data and factors that may account for those trends. Most important, it should be honest.

Following the SWOT analysis is the “Strategic Plan” section -- the unit’s plans for the next five years for developing its strengths, meeting challenges and opportunities, and addressing the areas identified for improvement. It should include a prioritized list of issues to be addressed. For each issue identified for improvement, please provide the following:

- Specific goals and objectives;
- Actions to be taken in order to achieve the stated goals;
- A schedule for implementation of the actions to be taken; and
- Measures of effectiveness for each of the actions.

As required by our Middle States accreditation, it is imperative to explain how the strategic plan for your unit aligns with institutional strategic priorities at the college and university level.

C) Mission Statement

Provide the unit’s mission statement. Include information on how the unit’s mission and activities align with the goals of the school and the university. One can include, for example, contributions to past strategic plans, to the current university initiatives, and to other plans such as the university diversity, equity and inclusion plan. Also describe how the unit’s mission fits into the field or discipline as a whole.

D) Creative/Research Programs, Faculty Profile

The university serves as a center for intellectual and creative inquiry. In this section, you should describe how your unit is advancing knowledge in your discipline and / or contributing to improving local / national / global conditions.

Overview. Give an overview of your full-time faculty, and describe your unit’s areas of strength in scholarly or creative productivity. Include a table of all full-time faculty members indicating their current rank, hire, and tenure and promotion dates, as appropriate. If members of your faculty are clustered into research foci or groups, it is useful to indicate research areas.

Summarize Measures of Productivity. Summarize the unit’s creative or scholarly activities over the last five years. For many units this will include publications, fellowship/grant applications, fellowships/grants awarded and research expenditures. Use any other data you think is relevant to indicate the quality and quantity of scholarly productivity. Academic Analytics Data is available to help with this analysis.

Scholarly and/or Creative Activities. Analyze the current status and future outlook of your unit’s creative and research activities and faculty profile.

Questions to consider:

- What are the unit’s primary research or creative activities strengths? How do they fit within the context of the broader college or university? How do they correspond to current trends in the field or discipline? If appropriate to your analysis, what does Academic Analytics summary data say about the unit’s strengths?

- How does the unit's scholarly and/or creative activities align with current themes emerging from the university's strategic framework?
- Describe any collaborations among faculty within the unit, with other GW units or schools, and with individuals or groups outside GW. Does the unit have any existing affiliations with organizations outside GW such as research / creative entities or governmental agencies? Are there additional agencies or entities with which the unit might develop collaborative partnerships?
- Comment on the venues in which members of your unit's faculty are publishing their scholarship. Are there ways to improve the impact of faculty publications?
- To what extent do your faculty members translate their scholarly research for the broader community? To what extent do your faculty members engage in outreach efforts?
- What cross-disciplinary and/or interdisciplinary research is either underway or being considered? Is any applied, translational, or policy research underway or being considered?

Research and Graduate Education

Questions to consider:

- How is faculty research integrated into the graduate curriculum?
- Which faculty direct graduate student research and in what disciplinary areas? (Provide a copy of any unit guidelines for faculty directing graduate student research.)
- Cite examples of outstanding graduate student research (especially publications).

Research and Undergraduate Education

Questions to consider:

- How has faculty research been integrated into your *undergraduate* curriculum?
- Which faculty are directing undergraduate student research and in what subject areas? Cite examples of outstanding undergraduate research.
- Have your undergraduates been involved in school, university-wide, or external initiatives to support undergraduate research (e.g., GW Undergraduate Research Award, Luther Rice, NSF's REU program). Again, if so, in what subject areas?

Additional Faculty Profile Information

Questions to consider:

- Describe your experience in retaining existing faculty and recruiting new faculty, if applicable.
- Which changes in faculty do you anticipate over the next five years, if any?
- Describe the unit's current level of diversity. Describe the unit's goal for achieving faculty gender, racial, and ethnic diversity. Use comparative data, as possible, to put the current level of diversity into context.

- Discuss your unit's reliance on part-time and / or contract (as opposed to tenured or tenure-track) faculty. If part-time faculty are teaching doctoral-level courses, what are their qualifications?
- What proportion of your courses / students are taught by full-time and course-by-course faculty each semester?
- In terms of faculty profile and composition, what are some of the unit's strengths and what are areas of concern?

E, F, G Questions for the sections on Undergraduate, Graduate, and Online Programs
For each section include the following:

Introduction: Provide a brief introduction to and summary of your program(s). Include a description of current programs, with a list of new programs and retired programs over the last five years.

Analysis of enrollment data: Describe any increases or decreases that are apparent in your five-year enrollment figures for undergraduate / graduate programs, and GPAC courses. Note factors (e.g., addition or deletion of courses, faculty sabbatical leaves or retirements, changing demand for the program) that may account for variations in the enrollments. Note external factors (national trends in enrollment in the field, where available) that may account for variations in enrollment.

Questions to consider:

- Is the unit satisfied with what the data say about enrollments?
- What plans might be underway to address enrollment growth or decline?
- How diverse is your student body? What measures are in place to support and retain a diverse student body? What measures are in place to support and retain students overall?

Additional questions for graduate programs:

- Describe any changes in the overall quality of master's or doctoral students over the last five years. To what do you attribute these changes? If there are declines in the quality of the graduate students, what if anything, have you done or do you believe could be done to address this issue?

Curriculum: Summary and analysis of the curriculum for your various programs. You will need to include the learning outcomes and a curricular map for (each of) your program(s) as part of discussing your curriculum and program assessment. Your discussion here may draw on the discussion under program assessment. Curricular mapping is required for every program covered by the APR. Please see the Office of Academic Planning and Assessment website for information on [curricular mapping](#). (Note. This is a good moment to review your Bulletin course descriptions – refer to supplied Bulletin section for course descriptions. Should any course descriptions be out of date this is a good moment to revise them.)

Questions to consider:

- As your discipline, the external environment, and unit resources have changed over the last five years, how has the unit responded to new challenges and new opportunities?
- How does curriculum reflect best practices in your discipline and adequately prepare students to succeed at the next career or educational step?
- Over the last five years, what significant curriculum changes have been planned and implemented?
- What changes are planned or underway to support the university's strategic initiatives?
- What changes have occurred in degree requirements, courses offered, internships, or other elements that define the learning expectations and experiences of students in each program?
- What career path expectations does the doctoral program have for its graduates upon earning their degrees?
- How have you used measures such as student surveys, alumni placement, alumni satisfaction, alumni gifts, employer ratings, intern supervisor ratings, and student research and conference presentations to review and inform the curriculum? Please provide specific examples, when possible.

Program Assessment: Summarize the major efforts to assess the program in the past five years. Units should use their past five years of annual assessments of student learning as the foundation for this section. This section should include the following:

- A list of each degree program's major learning goals or outcomes. Note any changes in learning outcomes that have been made over the past five years. Are these learning outcomes still reflective of what you believe students must learn in the program to be successful post degree? If you believe changes are necessary please update your learning outcomes and curriculum mapping in Courseleaf and discuss these changes in the report.
- Assessment Plan: List the direct and indirect methods used to assess each learning outcome and the last time the learning outcome was assessed, and the schedule for when each assessment occurs. What is your overall evaluation of the department's progress on assessing student learning? If there are learning outcomes that have not been assessed in the past five years, what processes or plans can you implement to ensure that they are assessed?
- Assessment Activities: What learning outcomes were evaluated and what measures were used to assess the outcomes? What action plans resulted? Have these changes been re-assessed?
- Reflect on the past five years' reviews of student learning and the changes made in the curriculum and teaching to evaluate how well your program is achieving its mission and providing quality academic programs and opportunities for its students. Cite the three most important changes made in each degree program in response to the annual assessments.

- What is your overall evaluation of the improvements of the past five years in each degree program?
- What is currently the most important aspect of each program where the students could be doing better, and how is the faculty planning to improve student learning?
- What do the Graduating Senior Survey / Graduate Student Graduation Survey tell you about the students' responses to the program? Are there any areas of specific (dis)satisfaction? If so, how do you plan to address these issues?

Program outcomes: In addition to meeting learning goals, programs typically have other outcomes that they would like to meet. These may include goals such as student satisfaction or they may include goals about student employment or graduate school attainment. Most programs also have goals around retention and graduation. Reflect on your goals and student outcomes.

Questions to consider:

- What are the goals that you have for the program?
- For both undergraduate and graduate students, include outcomes (employment, graduate school) data for graduates over the past five years as available. Indicate whether employment is in academic institutions, government, or industry, or is independent in nature.
- As you consider these results, how well is the curriculum preparing students for employment?
- What other data (surveys, feedback mechanisms, etc) do you have for tracking your goals? What have you learned from these data and how have you used the information to improve your program?

Additional questions for graduate programs:

- What is the retention rate for master's and doctoral students over the past five years?
- If applicable, what is the average time-to-degree for doctoral students?
- If applicable, is there a viable employment market for new Ph.D.s in the discipline? For those pursuing an academic path, provide samples of the institutions, academic titles, and types of positions graduates attain.

GTA Use: If applicable, discuss your unit's use of GTAs within your programs.

Questions to consider:

- How does your unit prepare GTAs to be effective instructors? Describe the criteria used to determine a GTA's readiness to perform specific instructional activities. Describe the training and supervision/feedback provided for GTAs, including any workshops or tutorials provided specifically for GTAs.
- Describe the methods (e.g., separate course evaluations, observation by faculty) used by your unit to evaluate the performance of your GTAs and to give them feedback.
- Assess the methods used to assess the reliability of grading (particularly more subjective grading such as grading of essay questions or papers) done by GTAs. Include examples of unit rubrics used for grading essay questions or papers.

National Ph.D. Rankings (if applicable):

Cite any external evidence that describes or ranks the quality of the unit's doctoral program(s) with respect to national standards of excellence in your discipline. Evidence that is as objective as possible, and not totally subjective, should be noted (e.g., NRC data, other rankings, citation index data).

- Describe aspects of the unit's Ph.D. program that may not be available at competing institutions. What makes your program stand out?

Instructor Development: As faculty are the heart of any institution (serving as teachers, mentors, and scholars, shaping the curriculum, and creating a climate for learning), the self-study needs to explore how they contribute to the learning process.

Questions to consider:

- How does your unit coordinate the efforts of faculty of all types (regular and temporary part-time (TPT) faculty) to ensure that students have a coherent, high quality, educational experience, meeting appropriate course and program learning outcomes?
- What support mechanisms are in place to encourage and enable best practices and the use of modern pedagogies in the classroom?
- How are data from student surveys and course evaluations used to help instructors improve their effectiveness in supporting student learning? What processes are in place, either formally or informally, to address substandard teaching from active status and limited service faculty?
- How are course evaluations, unit syllabi reviews, class observations, or other techniques used by the program to monitor consistency across sections?
- (For doctoral programs) Are faculty resources adequate for carrying out the doctoral program at a level of high quality?

Advising and Mentoring:

Questions to consider:

- How are students guided through the program?
- At the undergraduate level, how are potential majors identified, recruited into the program, and mentored through it?
- How regularly do faculty advisors and students meet?
- At the graduate level, who is primarily responsible for academic advising?
- Are additional mentoring / buddy systems in place beyond the student's research advisor?
- How do students respond to the graduation survey questions related to advising and guidance within their program? How satisfied are students with this advising? Are there improvements which can be made?

Analysis of current status, and future outlook: In the context of the information given on the program(s), identify patterns, areas of strength, and areas for further development. Are there additional opportunities for growth and strengthening of each program?

H) Departmental Resources:

Staff: Provide the number and levels of all administrative and technical staff assigned to the unit.

Facilities:

- *Space:* Assess unit facilities in relation to programmatic goals, considering the amount, types, and overall adequacy of space.
- *Equipment:* Describe specialized equipment used by the unit for instructional and / or research purposes.

Evaluate the sufficiency and quality of the above. Are the resources available sufficient to support the future plans outlined above?

University and School Service: Provide a summary listing full-time faculty service to (1) the university (e.g., Faculty Senate, IRB) and (2) to your College (e.g., undergraduate advising, teaching initiatives, committees) over the past five years.

Other Pertinent Information: Include any additional information that you think may prove useful in conducting the academic program review.

I. Supporting Documentation

Note: Items with an asterisk (*) should be attached as an appendix and/or shared via Box with the internal and external reviewers. Those *without an asterisk (*)* are for your information as you compile the self-study but should not be included in the material shared with outside reviewers. Items marked [CCAS] will be provided by the College, items marked [APA] will be provided by the Office of Academic Planning and Assessment. All other items should be compiled by the unit. Please contact Amber Carter (ambercarter@gwu.edu) or Karen Frosliid Jones (k.frosliidjones@gwu.edu) if you need assistance with any of the items.

Mission Statement Section

- Unit's mission statement*
- Examples of current strategic initiatives at GW
 - <https://strategicframework.gwu.edu/>
 - Diversity, Equity and Inclusion: <https://provost.gwu.edu/diversity-program-review-team#ActionPlan>

Scholarship, Research and Creative Works

- List of creative works and / or publications for the whole unit over five years, highlighting those involving students. This **must** be separated according to publication type: peer reviewed journals; non-peer reviewed publications; books; book chapters; encyclopedia entries; others. You may add separate categories appropriate to your discipline. If you have any questions about publication classification, please reach out to the Vice Dean kimgross@gwu.edu. In addition, provide a list of the top outlets in your discipline, and your major publication venues, with notes on their type (e.g., specialist, general, applied) and impact factors, etc.*
- Submitted grants [CCAS] / fellowship applications for whole unit.*
- Awarded grants [CCAS] / fellowships for whole unit*
- Research expenditure over the last five years [CCAS]*
- Department Summary from Academic Analytics (if appropriate) [CCAS/APA]

Faculty Profile

- Faculty CVs: Please note, these do not have to conform to a specific format; include an up-to-date academic CV for every regular professor within the unit that can be made available to the team members.*
- Faculty totals by rank, race/ethnicity and gender for the past five years*
- AAUDE data, as available, for faculty composition for a comparable CIP code for the past five years.[APA]

Enrollment

- Number of students completing each program over the last five years. Overall and by race/ethnicity and gender.*[CCAS]
- Number of majors / students in each program over the last five years. *[CCAS]
- For overall enrollments by course level, faculty status, and GPAC course enrollments (for undergrad) for the last five years. Summary of credit hours taught by the unit over the last five years.* [CCAS]
- IPEDS data on five-year trends in completions by CIP code.* [CCAS]
- AAU data on enrollments by CIP code and race/ethnicity over five years. [APA]
- Data from AAU on doctoral program completion rates and time-to-degree, categorized by CIP, when available. [APA]
- AAU enrollment data which includes detailed breakdowns by race, gender, CIP code, and student level (including undergraduate, graduate, and professional degrees) when available. [APA]
- For Graduate Programs: Five years of applicants, admits and registrants by program, if available. [CCAS]

Doctoral Programs Specifically

- The last five years of named Ph.D. graduates in tabular format, with advisor, dissertation title, and current employment.*[CCAS]

- Five years of named Ph.D. matriculants, in tabular format, from the five-year period prior to the beginning of the self-study period, recording their current status. Did they complete the program? If they left the program, why did they leave? Where are they now?

Curriculum

- Course evaluation form used by unit *
- Course evaluation results: <https://survey.gwu.edu/process-administrators>
- Undergraduate and graduate student survey data related to the quality of the academic experience. (See Student Graduation Survey results: <https://survey.gwu.edu/graduate-student-graduation-survey>) [CCAS]
- Destination survey data, if available.
- Bulletin descriptions of programs <https://bulletin.gwu.edu/> [CCAS]
- Memo: Federal regulations and Middle States require that academic units review the assignment of credit hours on a regular basis. By the completion of the program review, include a memo affirming that you have reviewed required courses to ensure that they are meeting credit hour proper standards. (See the [assignment of credit hour policy](#).) Meet with Karen Froslid-Jones for suggestions or assistance with this review.

Program Assessment

- Latest assessment plan, to include all learning outcomes, the assessment methods used for each outcome (including the criteria used for determining whether the learning outcome is met), and the schedule for when each assessment method has been implemented and will be implemented.
- Five years of Program Assessment Reports (downloaded as .pdfs)[CCAS]
- Five years of unit annual reports (supplied as .pdfs) [CCAS]
- A summary of learning assessments completed over the last five years (can be developed using five years of Program Assessment Reports).*

Program Outcomes

- Undergraduate employment outcomes. <https://survey.gwu.edu/undergraduate-employment-and-education-outcomes>
- Graduate employment outcomes
- Survey data on satisfaction with program, faculty advising if available
- Graduate student time to degree, compared to AAU students where data is available.

Department Resources

- Summary table of full-time faculty service.

Assignment of Credit hour review

- Credit hour policy https://provost.gwu.edu/sites/g/files/zaxdzs5926/files/2023-04/assignment-credit-hours_revised-11-17.pdf
- Summary of student survey question on hours spent on course outside of class