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. 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 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 the Associate Dean for Assessment and Academic Support (caas@gwu.edu) to discuss the issue. In order to facilitate the APR Self-Study process, CCAS will supply the unit/program with all data highlighted in red.

Immediately following this introduction is a very brief checklist-style outline of APR sections. Thereafter follows a more detailed discussion of the questions that should be considered in

each section. Data shown in red will be supplied and pre-populated by the college individually for your unit within the template supplied. 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** (see later notes for full explanation)

C) **Research Programs and Faculty Profile**
   a. Overview
   b. Current standing of research program
   c. Analysis of current status, and future outlook

D) **Undergraduate Program**
   a. Overview
   b. Curriculum
   c. GTA use
   d. Program assessment
   e. Instructor development
   f. Undergraduate advising and mentoring
   g. Analysis of current status, and future outlook

E) **Graduate Program**
   a. Overview
   b. Curriculum
   c. Program assessment
   d. Instructor development
   e. Graduate student advising and mentoring
   f. Analysis of current status, and future outlook

F) Online Programs (If Applicable)
   a. Overview
   b. Curriculum
   c. Program assessment
   d. Instructor development
   e. Online student advising and mentoring
   f. Analysis of current status, and future outlook

G) Departmental Resources
   a. Summary of departmental resources
   b. Evaluation of current resource status, and future outlook

H) Appendices
   a. Publication list for whole department for the last five years
   b. Five years of named Ph.D. graduates in tabular format (in the five years of the APR time range), with advisor, dissertation title, and current employment
   c. Five years of named Ph.D. matriculants in tabular format for the five years prior to the self-study window; please update on their status – did they complete the program? Where are they now?
   d. Submitted grants / fellowship applications for whole unit for the last five years
   e. Awarded grants / fellowships for whole unit for the last five years
   f. ~~Research expenditure over the last five years~~
   g. Copy of the course evaluation form(s) used by the unit

I) Supplementary Material
   a. Undergraduate and graduate student survey data for the last five years
   b. Faculty CVs: Please note, these do not have to conform to any 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. These do not have to contain a full publication list, but the publications list does not have to be separated from the CV if it is already incorporated.
   c. Five years of Taskstream Assessment Reports (downloaded as .pdfs)
   d. Bulletin extract for the unit
   e. Raw data for production of plots on teaching / enrollments, etc.

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;
- A brief overview of the scope of the faculty: the number of faculty at each rank and type and an indication of the areas of scholarly work of the faculty; and
- 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) **Creative and Research Programs and 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.

a. **Overview:** Give an overview of your faculty, and describe your unit's areas of strength in scholarly or creative productivity. Include a table of all 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.

b. **Summarize Measures of Productivity** over the last five years, such as:
   i. Publications
   ii. Fellowship / Grant applications
   iii. Fellowships / Grants awarded
   iv. Research expenditure
   v. Any other data you think is relevant to indicate the quality and quantity of scholarly productivity.

c. **Analyze the current status and future outlook** of your unit's creative and research activities and faculty profile.

   Scholarly and/or Creative Activities
   Questions to consider:
   - What are the unit's primary research 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?
   - Discuss the progression of the faculty's primary scholarly and / or creative activities. Is the unit becoming more focused or diverse in its interests?
   - 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 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).
- List doctoral dissertations and their faculty advisors for the past five years and the current position of the student, in the appendices.

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., Gamow, Luther Rice, NSF's REU program). Again, if so, in what subject areas?

National Ph.D. Rankings (if applicable)

Questions to consider:

- 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?

Faculty Profile

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 goal for achieving faculty gender, racial, and ethnic diversity.
- Discuss your unit's reliance on part-time and / or contract (as opposed to tenured or tenure-track) faculty.
- What proportion of your courses / students are taught by full-time and course-by-course faculty each semester?
- If part-time faculty are teaching doctoral-level courses, what are their qualifications?

D, E, and F) <u>Undergraduate, Graduate, and Online Programs</u>

- **Introduction:** Provide a brief introduction to and summary of your program(s). Include:
    i. Plots of enrollments in the key courses for the last five years (e.g., GPAC courses, capstone class).
    ii. Number of graduating seniors / graduate students completing each program over the last five years.
    iii. Number of majors / students in graduate program over the last five years.
    iv. Student placement data – where are the program graduates' next destinations? (Note: For doctoral degrees, you will be supplied with five years' of admitted and graduating students' names. For each student provide dissertation topic, dissertation advisor, and current position.)

- **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.

  Questions to consider include:
    - Is the unit satisfied with what the data say about enrollments?
    - What plans are underway to address enrollment growth or decline?
    - How diverse is your student body? What measures are in place to support the recruitment and retention of a diverse student body?

  Using data from the undergraduate / graduate student graduation surveys and other available data, describe the types and levels of positions obtained by your graduates.

  Questions to consider:
    - How well is the curriculum preparing students for employment?

  Additional questions for graduate programs:
    - What is the average time-to-degree for doctoral students?
    - What is the retention rate for master's and doctoral students over the past five years?
    - Describe any changes in the overall quality of master's or doctoral students. To what do you attribute these changes?
    - If there are declines in the quality of master's or doctoral students, what has the unit done or what plans are underway to address this issue?
    - If applicable, is there a viable employment market for new Ph.D.s in the discipline?

- Include placement data for graduates over the past five years. What has been the placement of graduates in the program? Indicate whether employment is in academic institutions, government, or industry, or is independent in nature.
- For those pursuing an academic path, provide samples of the institutions, academic titles, and types of positions graduates attain.

- **Curriculum:** Include the learning outcomes and a curricular map for (each of) your program(s). Refer to the supplied Bulletin section for course descriptions. (Should the Bulletin course descriptions be out of date – please remedy this.) Curricular mapping is required for every program covered by the APR. Please see the addendum for more information on curricular mapping.

  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?

- **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.

- **Program Assessment:** Summarize the major efforts to assess the program and GPAC courses 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.
  - What measures were evaluated? What action plans resulted? Have these changes been re-assessed? Provide a summary and review of how well students have achieved the learning goals, outcomes, objectives and / or competencies defined by each degree program on its own or in accordance with its professional accreditation group and any changes made in response to each year's findings. (The number of learning outcomes may range from as few as three to as many as 12-15 depending on accrediting agency requirements.)
  - 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?
  - Where programs are offered both in traditional classroom settings and online, how do the assessment outcomes of the two modes compare?
  - Where programs are offered both in traditional classroom settings and online, how do the enrollments in the online version compare with or impact upon those for the face-to-face offering, and vice versa?

  Yearly assessment reports for each degree program should be included in an Appendix.

- **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?

Include a copy of the unit's course evaluation form in an appendix.

- **Advising and Mentoring:**

  Questions to consider include:
  - 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 the program?

G) 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.

Appendices

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a) 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 Associate Dean caas@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.

b) The last five years of named Ph.D. graduates in tabular format, with advisor, dissertation title, and current employment.

c) 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?

d) Submitted grants / fellowship applications for whole unit

e) Awarded grants / fellowships for whole unit

f) Research expenditure over the last five years

g) Course evaluation form used by unit

Supplementary Data

In order that the external team has easy access to supplementary information, which its members may find useful, the following information should be made available to them:

a) Undergraduate and graduate student survey data
b) 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. These do not have to contain a full publication list, but the publications list does not have to be separated from the CV if it is already incorporated.
c) Five years of TaskStream Assessment Reports (downloaded as .pdfs)
d) Bulletin extract for unit
e) Raw data for production of plots on teaching / enrollments etc.

Supplied Separately

The information below will be supplied to the unit as source material for compilation of the APR. All, aside from the five years of Unit Reports, will be made available to review teams.

1) Five years of TaskStream assessment reports (downloaded as .pdfs)
2) Bulletin extract for unit
3) Raw data for production of plots on teaching / enrollments, etc.
4) Five years of unit annual reports (supplied as .pdfs)

Addendum

What is a curriculum map? Individual courses and curricula should reflect a coherent plan of study. Curriculum mapping provides an efficient means to display the relationship between student learning and the curriculum. Its value is that it enables the faculty to display visually where central information, concepts, or skills are introduced, developed, and mastered. A curriculum map must be included for each major and degree program. If the unit has not already produced curriculum map(s), CCAS strongly encourages units to have broad, faculty-wide involvement in the development of the map, especially from those faculty teaching key courses in the program. That way, faculty members can better understand how their course(s) contribute to the overall learning outcomes for the program. (Use the curriculum mapping feature in TaskStream, or online, to map the curriculum for each program). For examples of completed curriculum maps, see: http://assessment.gwu.edu/curriculum-mapping.)

Why assessment of student learning? Assessment of student learning is an essential tool for advancing GW's commitment to achieve academic excellence in teaching and to provide

outstanding learning experiences for its students. How well students have mastered the knowledge, analytic skills, and tools set forth in each degree program's learning outcomes serves as the key measure of how successfully the degree program contributes to these overall university goals. Moreover, a large component of GW's reaccreditation by Middle States is based on our implementation of a "comprehensive, organized, and sustained process for the assessment of student learning outcomes, including evidence that assessment results are used for improvement[1]."

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[1] From GW's 2008 Statement of Accreditation by Middle States Commission on Higher Education.