***Introduction***

Annual assessment is important to ensure timely reflection and respond to immediate needs or challenges, but a deeper self-study and external review, conducted every ten years, provides unique and important perspective on the functioning, needs, and goals of the unit.[[1]](#footnote-1) An action plan, developed in response to the self-study and external review, serves as a guide to further strengthen the unit and align with the mission and strategic goals of Centre College. Upon completion of this comprehensive process, all of the evaluation documents should be combined into one file (self-study, external review and action plan with the name of the program/unit) and uploaded to the Moodle page *Assessment and Reaccreditation Documents.*

***Preparing the Self-study Document***

The self-study document will provide a comprehensive review of the program/unit, and it will take time to compile all of the information, so advance planning and delegation of duties is recommended. The document should reflect the ideas and input of all members of the unit, and they should have the opportunity to read and comment upon the self-study prior to submitting the final version to the Dean **at least two weeks prior** to the campus visit by the external reviewer(s). Specifications and guiding questions to consider in preparing the self-study are provided in a subsequent section of this document.

***Selection of External Reviewers***

The head of the unit, in consultation with the unit’s members, will create a list of potential evaluators for the upcoming external review. Those considered should be prominent practitioners whose talents are relevant to the particular distinctions and aspirations of the unit being reviewed. The head of the unit will then consult with the Dean of the College, and the mutually-agreed-upon reviewer(s) will be contacted first by the program chair to ascertain willingness to serve. The Dean will then negotiate remuneration and send contract letters to the reviewer(s).

***Scheduling the External Review***

Once dates have been agreed upon, the head (or designee) of the unit prepares a draft schedule for the external reviewer(s) visit. The schedule should include a tour of campus and the unit’s facilities. The draft should then be finalized in consultation with the Dean of the College.

Interview meetings with the reviewer(s) might occur in roughly this order:

* Program Chair/Unit Director
* Individual and group meetings with other members of the unit
* Faculty/staff members who interact with, but are not members of, the unit, such as Directors of relevant support units, such as the Library, ITS, Career Services, Global Studies, CTL
* Division Chair (for program reviews)
* Lunch with students who directly interact with/benefit from the unit
* President
* Vice President/Dean and Associate Dean for Academic Affairs
* Break (approx. one hour) to prepare for final listening session
* Final debriefing session\* with all members of the program/unit.

\*As time permits, and as agreed upon in advance by the reviewer(s), it is helpful to have an end-of-visit debriefing in which immediate takeaways/impressions gleaned by the reviewer(s) are shared with all members of the program/unit.

The entire visit should be as pleasurable for the external reviewer(s) as possible. The Executive Administrative Assistant to the Dean will help plan housing and travel for the reviewer(s). The program chair/unit head (or designee) should schedule all meetings, meals, and breaks (~45 min. in morning and afternoon) for the visit, and provide escorts to guide the reviewer(s) to each meeting location. Meals are good times for the reviewer(s) to meet with groups, such as students at lunch and/or with colleagues at a local restaurant for dinner (up to six people). Be sure to ask the reviewer(s) in advance of their visit about any allergies, special needs, or food preferences, and plan accordingly.

***Response and Action Plan***

The external reviewer(s) should submit a *draft* of their report to the head of the unit within six (6) weeks of the campus visit for correction of any factual errors, and then the final report should come from the reviewer(s) to the Dean and unit head, who will share it with all members of the unit. All members will then collaborate on the development of an Action Plan, to be completed as soon as possible (ideally within six weeks) after receipt of the external review report. The Action Plan should respond to specific recommendations derived from the self-study and the external review. If the unit chooses not to act on a particular recommendation of the reviewers, reasons for this decision should be noted. Ideally, each action in the Action Plan should be prioritized, include a timeline for implementation, and any budgetary implications should be articulated. It is important that all members of the unit have the opportunity to read and comment upon the final draft of the Action Plan prior to its submission to the Dean of the College. The unit head should then review the Action Plan with the Dean.

The head of the unit *may* be called upon to briefly present the findings of the self-study, external review, and Action Plan to the Academic Affairs Committee of the Board of Trustees.

**Guidance for preparing the self-study document**

At the end of this document are additional questions to be considered by academic programs. However, ***all*** areas of the College share common features, and every unit in Academic Affairs is encouraged toinclude responses to the following in their self-study document:

* A brief history of the unit, including any changes in the number of personnel, physical location, facilities, funding source(s), etc. since the last self-study.
* A brief description of current facilities, equipment, etc.
* A list of the overarching/primary goals of the unit for students and for faculty/staff.
* Descriptions of all personnel and their roles. Include resumés or vitae of all members.
* Breakdown of budget, including costs and changes incurred over time (i.e., operating expenses, capital projects, required cuts and their impact, etc.).
* Who uses and benefits from the unit?
  + For programs, this would include # students served, broken down by total taught as well as those majoring or minoring. Showing trends over five to ten years is helpful.
  + For resource centers, this would include # and types of users, peak times, etc.
* The strengths, challenges, opportunities and aspirations of the unit. It may be helpful for all members to engage together in a SWOT or [SOAR](https://libraryguides.missouri.edu/c.php?g=28374&p=4304702) analysis (the latter is more positive and aspirational).
* Noteworthy excerpts from, and links to, the unit’s webpage(s). Feel free to include ideas/wishes for an improved media or webpage presence.
* Ways the unit assesses its effectiveness and any suggestions for further improvement of assessment/evaluation.
* How evidence from assessment is used to improve performance and better meet the unit’s goals and mission.
* Recent innovations employed by the unit (i.e., new policies or practices put into use and evidence of outcomes).
* Efforts to learn beyond Centre, including benchmarking other institutions, reviewing literature in the field, consulting with peers, attending conferences, etc.
* Approaches undertaken to make policies/programming/curriculum/teaching inclusive and equitable in order to foster belonging among students, faculty, and staff.
* Ways in which members are mentored, learn and grow in support of their job satisfaction, mission of the unit, and the College.
* Evidence of collaboration and teamwork within the unit, across the campus, and beyond the institution. Examples might include how the unit contributes to the excellence of our academic programs, General Education, extracurricular/co-curricular programs, positive campus ethos, diversity and inclusion, and/or student success.
* The perceived challenges/obstacles to success of the unit and ideas for overcoming these challenges, including associated budgetary issues.
* The recommendations and actions that can be taken both immediately and longer-term to meet the needs identified in the self-study. These include actions needed from those outside the unit (e.g., the Dean) to support the unit’s work.

For Academic programs, here are some additional questions to consider as you complete your self-study.

* Is there consensus among your members that the current design (e.g., number of courses, required courses, course innovation, sequencing, capstone) of the major/minor is appropriate? If not, please describe specific ideas that have been suggested, but not embraced, and why.
* Does your curriculum prepare majors and minors for their next steps after college? What evidence supports your conclusion? (e.g., admission to grad schools, letters of gratitude, job placement, etc.)
* Are your faculty members able to adequately support their advisees? What might improve this area of their work?
* How does the current curriculum in your program compare to other high-quality, liberal arts undergraduate programs?
* How do you assess student learning outcomes in the major/minor?
* How does/will the program contribute to the general education curriculum?
* Are there opportunities for the majority of your students to “do the discipline” – within classes, in independent study, or through mentored research?
* How do/could you ensure that students are able to engage in high impact practices (such as international study, internships, and research opportunities) beyond completing your major/minor requirements?
* How are faculty members in your program mentored and supported in achieving successful tenure, promotion, and other aspirational goals?
* Are there adequate opportunities for professional development of faculty and staff?
* Are your facilities sufficient? (office space, classrooms, laboratories, studios)?
* Are the other resources (number of faculty members, support from staff, library, equipment, technology, e.g.) appropriate and sufficient?

1. At Centre, a *program* offers a disciplinary or interdisciplinary major or minor (e.g., biology, English, etc.), whereas *unit* is used herein as a broader term inclusive of resource centers, such as the library, IT, CTL, as well as programs. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)