



## **GUIDELINES FOR PERIODIC EVALUATION OF ACADEMIC UNITS**

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# Objectives

Periodic formative evaluation, as a collaborative venture between academic units and the Provost's office, serves three primary purposes.

- The first is to elicit informed judgments about how well an academic unit is performing and how it has developed since its previous evaluation, given its collective resources.
- The second is to make prudent projections about emerging opportunities and the ways a unit can best take advantage of those opportunities.
- The third is to ensure that the unit has an updated strategic plan and is in the process of implementing this plan.

A formative evaluation assists academic units in maintaining high academic quality and stimulates change that enhances the unit's performance in the future. When done well, a formative evaluation is both an honest evaluation of current circumstances and a candid dialogue about future possibilities and mutual commitments. The discussion and thought invested in the process should lead to actions that increase the value of the unit's contributions to undergraduate, graduate, and continuing education; to the disciplines and professions through the generation of new knowledge; and to society through application of knowledge and outreach.

Excellence is an abstraction that must, in the end, be viewed in a context. It is imperative that evaluations consider the changing intellectual and educational environments that constitute higher education today and then incorporate responses to these changes into the unit's plans for the future.

**The fundamental questions for any academic unit are:**

- **how creatively and effectively is the unit leveraging the resources it has (or could access) to achieve excellence in its contributions to the instructional, scholarly, and outreach missions of the University, and**
- **how does the unit contribute to achieving the University's strategic priorities as described in the Roadmap, and how might it contribute even further to that goal?**

## Periodic Evaluation Cycle & Timeline

Every academic program offered by the University will be evaluated on a seven-year cycle. The University's program review cycle should be aligned with the cycles of program-accrediting agencies.

The University's program review process will follow the general schedule and procedures outlined below. Typically, this will extend over a period of three or four semesters:

- Semester 1: The Vice Provost overseeing the review meets with the unit's chair/director and other representatives to charge them with the review tasks. The unit's chair/director appoints a committee to oversee and guide the preparation of the Academic Program Review within the relevant deadlines.
- Semester 1: Committee prepares timeline for completing the self-study and gathers data. Committee meets with and works with other offices (e.g., Office of Institutional Research and Assessment, the Graduate School, etc.) to obtain necessary materials and/or data.
- Semester 1: Provost selects external reviewer(s) for site visit(s), aided by list provided by the academic unit.
- Semester 2: Committee completes draft of self-study for unit to review then submits draft to Vice Provost overseeing process; Provost's office will review for completion and may request that the unit add further clarification or analysis. When complete, Provost's office will forward self-study to external reviewers.
- Semester 3: Site visit by external reviewers, arrangements overseen by Vice Provost.
- Semester 3: External reviewers submit written report to Vice Provost, who distributes to unit and dean.
- Semester 3: Vice Provost and Dean confer with unit about the external reviewers' report; unit identifies action items and timeline and submits written response to reviewers' report.
- Semester 3 or 4: Final report is submitted by the Provost to the President

Annually thereafter, the unit reviews key indicators and action items in anticipation of next APR

Three years after site visit: Brief follow-up report on the implementation of the action goals and their impact prepared by unit and submitted to Vice Provost and Dean.

# Self-Study Outline

A critical component of the review process is the self-study undertaken by members of the unit itself. Every unit can benefit from a thorough and reflective look at itself as a prelude to developing plans for the future. The self-study is intended to help faculty and administrators gain a clear understanding of the following:

- The unit's overall quality, relative to the three major components of its mission (teaching, scholarship and service).
- How the vision and goals that the faculty set for themselves over the last 10 years were achieved (as informed by data, analyses, and reflection).
- How the unit benefits New York State and the SUNY system, with an emphasis on the students it teaches (or could teach) (e.g., relative to economic development or societal needs).
- The unit's broader purposes nationally and globally, in terms of the students it teaches (or could teach) (e.g., relative to national or global economic development or societal needs).
- The faculty's vision and goals for the unit over the next 10 years and how the unit proposes to accomplish those.

The purpose of the specific questions below is to shape the internal discussions within a unit, to inform the dialogue with consultants, and to help frame the final report to the Provost. The questions are meant to guide the process of evaluating a unit's current situation, its emerging opportunities, and its plans for the future. The narrative does not need to take the form of itemized questions followed by specific answers, but each question should be addressed somewhere in the self-study. In addition, units should respond to the data and data-driven analyses provided periodically through the University's Office of Institutional Research & Assessment, the Graduate School, and the discipline's professional societies.

**The most effective self-studies make good use of external benchmarks to provide a truly reflective and objective self-evaluation that leads to a new set of goals, a timeline to accomplish those goals, and an indication of how the unit's full array of resources will be used to meet these objectives.**

In preparation for the self-study and subsequent deliberations of the unit, the following information should be used by the unit and used in the self-study:

- Dashboard from Office of Institutional Research & Assessment (workload comparison with Delaware study; record of grant proposals and successes over recent years; synopsis of graduate student applications, enrollment, standardized test scores (GRE), time to degree, attrition rates); information about undergraduate majors and degrees, benchmark comparisons where available and appropriate (from national databases and rankings such as Academic Analytics – contact the Graduate School or OIRA) – The Graduate Dean or Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education will make this request for your unit.
- The student learning outcomes established by the unit, the results of assessment of those outcomes, and the ways in which the unit has used the results of assessment to guide changes in curriculum and pedagogy.
- Description of the infrastructure supporting the unit, including facilities, staff, equipment, library holdings, and computing resources (from unit's records).

# Questions to Guide the Self-study

## Brief history of unit

1. Current mission statement (define purpose; ideally less than 40 words)
2. Current vision statement (conveys values and aspirations; ideally less than 40 words)
3. Current goals and objectives that include measures, schedules, and expected outcomes
4. Descriptions of all degree and certificate programs offered by the unit. (For most units, this information can be drawn directly from the Binghamton University Bulletin.)
5. Synopsis of trends from “Three-year summaries of contributions-to-mission” (summary of faculty annual reports given to departments by the Office of Strategic & Fiscal Planning). Ideally, this will take the form of an “abstract” and be less than 250 words.

## Research and Scholarship

1. The self-study should give special attention to an evaluation of the extent to which the unit creates research and scholarship synergies through faculty hiring and to its strategy for meeting its teaching and service missions through deployment of a mixture of tenured/tenure-track faculty, lecturers, visiting positions and adjuncts. Each unit should explain how it combines “hiring” options to create synergies:
  - disciplinary/professional subfields,
  - scholarly themes, or
  - transdisciplinary areas, especially how hiring supports one or more of the Transdisciplinary Areas of Excellence.
2. What are the current research strengths within the unit? Is the unit’s publication and funding record commensurate with its resources? Graduate programs must make use of external benchmarking databases for analyses and reflection and include those in this self-study. For example, units with access to Academic Analytics data should incorporate this data in the self-study. Describe any unique programs/features of this unit that have national or international prominence and provide external justification of that claim.
3. How is the discipline/profession represented in the unit changing? Are new connections to other disciplines developing? Are there emerging areas of intellectual inquiry that might be particularly promising in the future? What areas of inquiry might be on the decline? How is this unit situated in relation to those trends?
4. How does the unit mentor faculty and promote professional development? How does the unit measure these activities, and what are the outcomes?
5. How does the unit develop research skills and opportunities among its undergraduate students? How does the unit measure achievement in this area and what are the outcomes?
6. How does the unit develop research skills and opportunities among its graduate students? How does the unit measure achievement in this area and what are the outcomes?

## Teaching and Student Learning

1. How does the unit evaluate the teaching effectiveness of faculty, adjuncts, and graduate teaching assistants? How does the unit measure achievement and what are the outcomes?
2. What efforts have been made to improve the effectiveness of teaching, including things like the appropriate use of new technologies, adoption of new pedagogical approaches, or mentoring and training initiatives for faculty and adjuncts?

## Undergraduate

1. What are the undergraduate student learning outcomes that the unit has established as central to its teaching mission? How does the unit regularly assess the degree to which these outcomes are being achieved? What are the changes that have been made as a result of these assessments?
2. Review the undergraduate curriculum. In what ways does it reflect changes in the discipline and/or new interdisciplinary initiatives? In what ways is it articulated to allow students to make good progress through the requirements? What changes have been made, or should be made, to improve its effectiveness?
3. How are personnel used to offer the breadth required for an undergraduate major? How do personnel contribute to General Education and to the University's broader educational mission?
4. What are the undergraduate programs' special areas of emphasis? How do these relate to the research/scholarship mission of the department? In what ways are these appropriate in terms of current strengths and probable future trends in the discipline?
5. Are undergraduate students satisfied with the quality of teaching? How is satisfaction determined?
6. How does the unit advise and mentor undergraduates? Reflect on the effectiveness of this approach and explain how student satisfaction with advising and mentoring is monitored.

## Graduate

1. What are the graduate student learning outcomes that the unit has established? How does the unit regularly assess the degree to which these outcomes are being achieved? What are the changes that have been made as a result of these assessments?
2. What are the purposes of the masters program tracks and how well does the unit meet those purposes, in terms of quality of students, training, and placement? Explain the process for the unit's curriculum review and revision of masters programs.

3. What is the quality of doctoral students and their training? Provide an analysis of GRE and institutional pipelines of applicants and enrollees. Explain the process for reviewing the unit's curriculum and professionalization for doctoral students.
4. Reflect on the unit's time to doctoral degree, given national norms in the field and current national and global trends to reduce time-to-degree further across disciplines? In what ways do graduate students receive sufficient job placement help? How have students fared after graduation? Provide a chart of placements within one year of graduation that covers your graduates over the last five years.
5. What are the graduate programs' special areas of emphasis? How do these relate to the research/scholarship mission of the department? How do these address current strengths and probable future trends in the discipline?
6. Reflect on how graduate students are monitored and mentored. Explain the process for the unit's monitoring of students.
7. Reflect on the degree to which graduate students are satisfied with the quality of their training. In what ways is student morale evaluated?

#### Service and Outreach

1. Beyond the unit itself, in what ways does the unit contribute service to the University? Reflect on whether this contribution is commensurate with the size of the unit.
2. To what extent is the unit's professional expertise made available to the community, state and nation through formal programs (e.g., extension service, lectures, exhibits, concerts, service on boards/ professional associations, journal editorship)? Describe the relationship of these contributions to the unit's teaching, research and outreach missions for New York State.
3. Are there areas in which the unit should make other direct contributions to the public? To what degree is that already occurring?

#### Use of Resources

1. In what ways does the unit make the best possible use of its resources (faculty, staff, students, space, S&E, IFR)? In what ways could it streamline or increase efficiency and effectiveness?
2. In what areas or ways could other resources be accessed or developed by the unit? Or in what ways could the unit engage in more fund raising or entrepreneurial activities?
3. How does the unit plan for and manage funding support for graduate students?
4. How does the unit make use of winter/summer session courses, in terms of curriculum offerings and generating its own revenue stream?

5. What is the process that the unit uses to address fair allocation of workload to achieve its missions? How are workload allocations reviewed by the unit and how are decisions to reallocate made?
6. When hiring opportunities occur in the future, what would be the two or three best areas for Binghamton University to search for new faculty to increase the unit's scholarly accomplishments? What are the reasons for these choices? If the reasoning includes a transdisciplinary affiliate or a joint or full appointment in another unit, please explain.

#### Progress since last review

1. What were the action items identified from the last review? What were the timelines to achieve those items? What was accomplished? What remains to be accomplished and what are the timelines for that? Specifically, the unit should refer to the final report that was sent to the President.
2. How has the unit adopted assessment practices to determine its ongoing effectiveness? What additional action items have been identified by the unit since its last program review? What actions have been taken, and what is the result of those actions? What remains to be done?
3. Were additional action items identified by the administration since then? If so, what were they, and what has been done to address them? What remains to be done?

#### Executive summary (one-page with bulleted items to be placed after the cover page of the self-study)

- Summary points
  - Major strengths
  - Major weaknesses
  - Key challenges
  - Key opportunities
- Based on the results of the self-study, what are your next steps to:
  - Enhance your strengths
  - Address weaknesses
  - Overcome challenges
  - Take advantage of opportunities



# Format for Self-study

The self-study should be single-spaced with one inch margins on all sides. Please use Times New Roman with font size 12. Pages should be numbered consecutively. Do not include copyrighted material, private correspondence, or copies of your unit's web pages.

The table of contents should contain these subheadings:

## *Executive Summary of Self-study (one-page)*

- *Research and Scholarship*
  - *Faculty*
  - *Graduate Research*
  - *Undergraduate Research*
- *Teaching and Student Learning*
  - *General*
  - *Undergraduate Major*
  - *Graduate Students*
- *Service and Outreach*
- *Use of Resources by Unit*
- *Progress Since Last Review*
- *Appendix with vita of core faculty*

The self-study must have an appendix with a list of the current faculty in this unit (that is, employed by the University at this time), plus a current vita for each tenured/tenure-track faculty member who has a full or joint appointment in that unit. Ordinarily each vita should be limited to four pages, focusing on current and major achievements.

The unit may append other necessary material that is not available on its web site or as printed matter.

If the unit has graduate programs, the unit's self-study should be forwarded to the Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School in the semester prior to the consultants' scheduled visit. The self-study must be delivered electronically to the Graduate School as a Microsoft Word document. If the unit does not have graduate programs, the self-study should be sent electronically to the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education as a Microsoft Word document. The self-study will be reviewed by the appropriate Vice Provost before being sent to the consultants. If there are gaps in the presentation, it will be returned to the department for completion.

Note: If the self-study contains data and/or reports from Academic Analytics, then the self-study must contain the following statement – on a page by itself.

## **Notice of confidentiality**

**The Academic Analytics data and reports provided in this self-study, including the Faculty Scholarly Productivity Indices and rankings, are licensed to Binghamton University. These data and reports are confidential. The data and reports must not be disseminated in any way without written permission of Binghamton University’s Office of the Provost. The data and reports contained in this self-study are presented for the sole purpose of this self-study, the follow-up site visit and external consultants’ review. All parties involved in the self-study, site visit and review are expected to abide by the licensing agreement that Binghamton University has with Academic Analytics.**

## Consultation with External Reviewers

Fresh perspectives improve formative evaluations. For that reason, external consultants will be invited to familiarize themselves with the unit and to take part in the deliberations about the unit's assessment and planning. Consultants will be expected to provide candid assessments of the program's current strengths and weaknesses and their best judgment on where the unit should invest its intellectual and other resources to become even better in the future. Toward that end, the Provost's Office will invite the consultants, give them their charge, and oversee the debriefing process.

Two consultants will be chosen by the Provost with advice from the academic unit, the Dean of the school or college, and the Vice Provosts. Consultants will be established scholars whose areas of expertise represent a diversity of interests coinciding with the areas of importance to the unit and whose programs are regarded as successful, innovative, and effective in managing resources. At least one of them will have had some significant professional experience outside the particular discipline or profession being evaluated.

To help the Provost identify appropriate consultants, the academic unit provides a list of faculty from six to eight programs or departments at other institutions that model different forms of excellence to which the unit aspires. The academic units listed might be thought of as benchmarks, programs whose achievements or innovations Binghamton University could stretch to match. With roughly the same number of faculty and the same financial resources, they might have higher rankings in the national indices, more research funding, more citations, a more focused program, better placement of graduates, and/or faster time to degree. They might have established a reputation for excellence in a particular sub-specialization of interest to Binghamton's program.

To ensure no conflict of interest, individuals with particularly close relationships to the program (former faculty or students, former mentors or students of program faculty, and research collaborators) should not be nominated and will not be used as consultants. The Provost's Office will identify and contact individual scholars at the institutions nominated and make arrangements with them for travel. The communications with consultants should be via the Provost's Office (or the Graduate School).

# Procedures for Site Visit of External Reviewers

## Arrangements for Consultants

The Provost's Office (via the Graduate School, if the unit has graduate programs, or via the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education, if the unit does not have graduate programs) will make the necessary arrangements for the consultants. The usual visitation time will be two to two-and-half working days. Typically consultants arrive Wednesday afternoon and leave Friday in late afternoon. The Provost's Office will develop an itinerary for the visitors in consultation with the unit. The goal of a campus visit is to foster conversations and observations that enable the consultants to do well the job we ask of them. Time will be provided for the team members to work together in private in order to complete at least a rough draft of the report prior to departure from Binghamton. The consultants will be asked to share their preliminary observations with the Provost and the Provost's invitees in an exit interview.

The Provost's Office covers the cost of duplicating the self-study for the consultants; mailing of the self-study; travel, meals, and housing for the consultants; and consultants' honorarium. The Provost's Office also provides a small and limited amount to cover the hosting expenses of the unit (i.e., breakfast, lunch, dinner for a limited number of people). To facilitate discussion, the number of people per meal is limited to six (two of whom are the consultants). Expenses for travel, meals, and housing will be reimbursed as quickly as possible after the necessary receipts and vouchers are provided. Once the final report is received by the Provost (via the Graduate School or Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education), each consultant will receive the honorarium.

## Typical schedule for consultants' visit (beginning in evening, then through two days)

- Organizational meeting over dinner on first evening (agenda, logistics, university overview) – Provost, Graduate Dean and/or Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education (VPUE)
- Overview with chair/director of unit over breakfast on second day – chair/director
- Undergraduate program overview – undergraduate director/committee
- Graduate program overview – graduate director/committee
- Research overview – one to four meetings with subgroups of faculty
- Meeting with undergraduates – should include an appropriate range of students in the major(s)
- Meeting with graduate students – should include an appropriate range within the program(s)
- Meeting with junior faculty – assistant professors
- Meeting with Dean of unit – which may include some of the Dean's staff
- Tour of facilities – organized by the unit
- Consultant team meeting – private meeting for three hours (including lunch) on third or last day

- Debriefing with administrators (Provost, Deans, VPUE) and unit chair, UG director, and graduate director
- Debriefing with administrators – Provost, Dean of unit, Graduate Dean, VPUE

### The Consultants' Report

After reviewing all the pertinent information, the team will prepare a final report addressing how the unit's contributions to the various aspects of the University's mission (research and scholarship, teaching and learning, service and outreach) can be as strong as possible in the future. If there are choices to be made, for example, among sub-disciplines for a unit's focal point, the alternatives should be outlined and critiqued. Obviously, if the University invested more resources in a program, the University would reap additional benefits. **What the University asks of consultants is a much more crucial task: They are asked to provide advice about the quality of what the unit does, how current resources are used, and how they might be used better to achieve the unit's aspirations.**

The team should agree during its visit on a plan for preparing a single, consolidated report (typically about five pages of single-spaced text). Use of bulleting for items is acceptable. The following headings are suggested:

- *Research and Scholarship*
  - *Faculty*
  - *Graduate Research*
  - *Undergraduate Research*
- *Teaching and Student Learning*
  - *General*
  - *Undergraduate Major*
  - *Graduate Students*
- *Service and Outreach*
- *Use of Resources by Unit*
- *Assessment of the unit's strategic plan*
- *Recommendations by Consultants for When New Resources Are Available*
- *Conclusions*

### Disposition of the Report

The consultants should forward their report to the Vice Provost & Dean of the Graduate School, if the unit has graduate programs, or to the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education, if the unit has no graduate programs, no later than three weeks after the visit is completed.

## **Follow-up after Receiving Report from External Reviewers**

Copies of the external reviewers' report will be forwarded to the unit and to the unit's Dean who each will have three weeks to respond in writing to the document, sending their response to the Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School, if the unit has graduate programs, or to the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education, if the unit does not have graduate programs, who will forward the assembled packet to the Provost. The Provost's Office will prepare the Division of Academic Affairs response and send it, along with copies of the consultants' report, unit's response and Dean's response (if separate), to the President. Copies of this packet will be sent to the appropriate Deans, VPUE, the unit, Vice President for Research, and Assistant Vice Provost of OIRA. The timing of sending the packet will depend on whether discussions between the unit and Deans and/or Provost are needed before preparing the summary for the President.

After that, there will be annual follow-up with either the Graduate Dean or the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education, including a brief written statement at the mid-point of the seven-year period between formal academic program reviews.

## Appendix – Middle States Commission Expectations

The University is accredited by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education. For the University as a whole to meet the requirements of re-accreditation, each unit within the University must individually meet those requirements. Therefore, as outlined by Middle States, the requirements of the unit include that:

- the unit has developed and implemented an assessment plan and process that evaluates its overall effectiveness in:
  - achieving its mission and goals;
  - implementing planning, resource allocation, and institutional renewal processes;
  - using unit and other institutional resources efficiently;
  - providing leadership and governance;
  - providing administrative structures and services;
  - demonstrating unit integrity; and
  - assuring that unit and institutional processes and resources support appropriate learning and other outcomes for its students and graduates;
- the unit's educational offerings display academic content, rigor and coherence that are appropriate to its higher education mission;
- the unit identifies student learning goals and objectives, including knowledge and skills, for its educational offerings;
- the unit's curricula are designed so that students acquire and demonstrate college-level proficiency in General Education and essential skills, including oral and written communication, scientific and quantitative reasoning, critical analysis and reasoning, technological competency, and information literacy; assessment of student learning demonstrates that the unit's students have knowledge, skills, and competencies consistent with unit and institutional goals and that students at graduation have achieved appropriate higher education goals.

## **Appendix – Graduate School Expectations**

The University adheres to the principles advocated by the Council of Graduate Schools (CGS) and the National Research Council (NRC). Therefore, as suggested by CGS and NRC, the unit should:

- articulate a vision of excellence for its graduate program(s), provide quality control for all aspects of its graduate education,
- provide clear statement of expectations of students and timely monitoring of student progress, address retention and time-to-degree appropriately,
- provide inter-disciplinary perspective,
- emphasize the importance of adequately training future college and university teachers,
- provide sufficient and timely evaluation of teaching assistants,
- develop ways for graduate education to contribute to and enhance undergraduate education, and promote diversity.



# Appendix – Learning outcomes

Degree Qualifications Profile from Lumina Foundation

[http://www.luminafoundation.org/publications/The\\_Degree\\_Qualifications\\_Profile.pdf](http://www.luminafoundation.org/publications/The_Degree_Qualifications_Profile.pdf)

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