



State University of New York  
College of Environmental Science and Forestry

# **Evaluation of Undergraduate Academic Programs Self-Study Guidelines**

**Office of the Provost  
Fall 2009**

## Purpose

This guide is designed to support academic unit efforts to evaluate undergraduate academic programs thereby providing invaluable data and opportunities to adjust programs and organization of administrative efforts to better achieve our institutional goals. Specifically, this guide identifies the items to be addressed in the self-study report prepared for external review of the department's undergraduate education programs. These guidelines also meet SUNY Assessment of the Major requirements. Much of the content of this guide is drawn from the highly regarded standards developed by the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology (ABET), and The SUNY University Faculty Senate "Guide for the Evaluation of Undergraduate Academic Programs" (2001).

### Guiding Principles for Self-Study

An effective self-study process is well-planned, fits the distinctive nature of the department and achieves the stated goals that guide the design and conduct of the process. It ensures effective evaluation of the program(s) by building on existing assessment processes, and engages multiple constituencies. The process should provide adequate opportunity for confidential input by constituencies including faculty, staff, and students to avoid any concern of retribution for critical comments. Constructive critique is essential to effective evaluation of programs.

### Items to Be Addressed in Self-Study

Six areas are to be addressed in the self-study: curriculum, faculty, students, program management and operations, support services, and administrative support. The pages that follow list the specific items in each to be included in the self-study report. The requirements fall into two main categories: information and evaluation. Identification of responsible agent for delivery of information for inclusion in the report is given in each section. The academic department undertaking the self-study is responsible for assembling the information and for all evaluation as specified in this guide. Some of the material describing Support Services and Administrative Support is general to the institution and will be available on the Provost's webpage under Faculty Resources, Program Assessment ([www.esf.edu/admin/provost/](http://www.esf.edu/admin/provost/)) for you to place into your self-study report. Some data necessary for program evaluation will be requested by the Provost's Office of the appropriate administrative units each Academic Year and will be available to Departments undertaking reviews as follows.

Section of Self-Study	Data Provided	Source	Date Available
Faculty	Faculty List	Human Resources	15 July
Students	# in Majors	Registrar	15 July
	Graduates	Student Life	15 July
	Enrollment Patterns	Marketing & Enrollment	15 July
Support Services	Student Services	Student Life	15 July
Administrative Support	General Material	Provost's Office	15 July

## I. Curriculum

The undergraduate academic major as a program of study is defined by the curriculum. This includes the courses and other educational experiences, the methods of delivery, and the structure of requirements and electives into which these are arranged to give coherence to the program.

Although some traditional curricular goals underlie all academic programs, curricula for programs bearing the same name differ across institutions as a function of variations in the training and interests of the faculty, in the background and interests of the students, and in the availability of resources both on and off the campus. The resultant variations in curricula offer students and employers the desirable situation of having choices; however, differences make design and publication of a program's expectations especially important. Faculty must determine the programmatic goals, objectives, and purposes for the major. Consequently, faculty, students, administrators, and staff must engage in an active review of the combination of in-depth study and specialized skills in an academic discipline, general education, and intellectual growth that will best meet the needs of their students.

**Information** – Provided by the academic unit

### Mission, Goals, and Objectives

- Prepare a program mission statement that outlines the goals and their relationship to the institutional mission statement.
- Delineate the program's goals and objectives.
- Define quality as it relates to the program.
- Identify the learning outcomes students should demonstrate.

### Program Design

- Specify the degree requirements for the program, using the format of the catalog description of the program.
- Describe the congruence between course and program goals and national standards and expectations in the discipline or profession, as appropriate.
- Describe the congruence between course and curricular goals, courses, and prerequisite patterns.
- Explain the balance between breadth and depth designed in the program.
- Describe the methods used to ensure comparable learning outcomes among multiple sections of a course.
- Describe efforts to assure that required courses and electives are offered on a schedule to meet the needs of various student constituencies.
- Describe internship opportunities and the rationale for assigning credit.
- Describe departmental procedures including student participation in the development, review, and evaluation of courses.
- Describe the advisement procedures and the way the department assesses advisement effectiveness.

### Assessment

- Describe program assessment efforts.
- Describe the planning processes, including those to be used to formulate and implement changes based on program review analysis.
- Describe the most recent assessment of the program, what was learned from the evaluation, and what improvements resulted.
- Describe the results of any alumni follow-up surveys that reflect the student outcomes.

### Relationship to Broader Community

- Describe the dissemination of the results of the program review to appropriate constituencies.
- Describe discipline-, college-, and community-related student activities, and how the program promotes and supports faculty and student involvement and effort.
- Describe how the program responds to the needs of the community, if applicable.
- Provide follow-up data on student placement for the last five years. Indicate year(s) of data collected and total number of student responses: percentage employed in the field, percentage employed elsewhere, percentage seeking employment, and percentage continuing education.

### **Evaluation**

- Analyze the effectiveness of the program in achieving its goals and objectives in the discipline. Describe the procedures, criteria, and methods used for this assessment.
- Analyze the effectiveness of the program in achieving its goals and objectives in general education. Describe the procedures, criteria, and methods used for this assessment.
- Analyze the effectiveness of the program in achieving its goals and objectives for intellectual growth. Describe the procedures, criteria, and methods used for this assessment.

## II. The Faculty

The quality of the faculty is critical to the quality of an undergraduate academic program. The qualifications of the faculty constitute traditional measures, and they are useful to show the extent to which the faculty is prepared to fulfill the mission of the program. The quality of the program also depends upon the availability of the faculty to the undergraduates and the effectiveness of the interactions, in other words, the extent to which the faculty creates a participatory culture. The following are categorized according to the five criteria for the evaluation of academic employees in the *Policies of the SUNY Board of Trustees*.

### Information

#### Mastery of Subject Matter

Faculty Summary	Full Time	Part Time
<i>No. faculty assigned to unit</i>		
Women		
Men		
Minorities		
<i>Credentials – highest degree</i>		
Bachelor’s Degree		
Master’s Degree		
Doctorate		
<i>Experience</i>		
0-3 years		
4-7 years		
8-11 years		
12-15 years		
16-24 years		
25+ years		

Also complete Faculty Analysis (Table 1) on page 7.

#### Effectiveness in Teaching

- Describe the hiring procedures, including formulation of the job description, publication of the position, representation on the search committee, and responsibility for the final decision. Include copies of faculty vitae with the report.
- Explain how the training and interests of the faculty contribute to appropriate breadth of the program’s mission. Indicate areas, if any, in which greater strength would be beneficial.
- Analyze the teaching loads and how they are distributed among faculty by rank, fulltime, part-time, and teaching assistants (number of courses/number of students).
- Highlight faculty innovations in teaching.
- Describe the program’s procedures for evaluating effectiveness in teaching.

### Scholarly Ability

- Describe the recent scholarly and creative contributions of the program faculty that are important to the program goals.
- Collect and submit faculty resumes.

### Effectiveness in University Service

- Describe the faculty's service to the university, such as committee work, administrative work, public service, and other activities that contribute to the fulfillment of the program's mission in relation to the university and the community.

### Continuing Growth

- Identify the steps taken to assure that faculty members maintain currency in their disciplines and the activities that result in the continuing growth of the faculty.
- Describe the relative weight of the five criteria for evaluation and promotion in the *Policies of the Board of Trustees* in the consideration of rewards: mastery of subject matter, effectiveness in teaching, scholarly ability, effectiveness of University service, and continuing growth.

### **Evaluation**

- Analyze faculty ability and performance relative to delivery of programs.



### III. The Students

In the evaluation of the effectiveness of an undergraduate academic program, it is essential to consider the students it serves and those it might serve in the future. Student needs influence the design of the curriculum, the faculty to implement it, and the services to support it. The quality and success of the program depends upon the extent to which it meets the needs of its students.

#### Information

##### Student Profiles

*Annual cohorts for the last five years:*

##### Total Number of Majors – Provided by Registrar

Academic Year	Full Time	Part-time

##### Graduates – Provided by Registrar and Student Life

Academic Year	Number Graduated	Number Employed	Number Licensed/Certified ( if applicable)

- Describe the program strategies used to recruit students. (Data provided by Marketing & Enrollment Management.)
- Identify the program minimum requirements for admitting students. (Data provided by Marketing & Enrollment Management.)
- Compare the student diversity of the program to that of the institution, other institutions, the region, and the state. (Data provided by Student Life.)

##### Student Needs

- Describe the goals of the students entering the program.
- Describe the financial needs of the students enrolled.
- Describe the academic needs of the beginning and transfer students.
- Describe the special needs of groups of students, such as nontraditional, international, disabled, and underprepared students.
- Explain any academic placement procedures.

- Describe the diverse learning styles of the students and strategies for engaging them.
- Describe any orientation activities designed to introduce students to the program.

### **Evaluation**

- Analyze the enrollment patterns over the last five years.
- Analyze attrition patterns and describe efforts to improve retention. (Provided at institutional level by Marketing & Enrollment Management.)
- Analyze the time students take to complete degrees.

#### **IV. Program Management and Operations**

In addition to curriculum, faculty, and student data, the overall management and operations within an academic unit critically influence the delivery and success of programs.

Organizational and governance structures at the academic unit level must be clear and flexible to effectively manage academic programs.

##### **Information**

- Describe the organizational and governance structure of the academic unit.
- Describe the links between organizational structure and program management.
- Describe the nature of decision-making within the academic unit.
- Identify peer institutions (specify programs) and aspirational peer institutions.
- Describe the process by which the academic unit determines mission, goals and objectives.
- Describe the process used to engage the multiple constituencies interested in the programs being evaluated, including the provision of adequate opportunity for confidential input for the development of this self-study.

##### **Evaluation**

- Analyze academic unit operations and management for strengths and weaknesses. Identify possible improvements or alternative approaches to current operational arrangements.

## **V. Support Services**

The academic and student services of the campus provide important support to the instructional efforts of the faculty. Furthermore, support services should contribute directly to the richness of students' academic lives.

### **Information**

#### Special Student Services – Provided by Student Life

What provisions are made for groups of students with special needs in this program for the following groups?

- Nontraditional students
- International students
- Students with disabilities
- Students who need special remedial or tutorial services
- Nonresidential students

#### General Student Services – Provided by Student Life

What provisions are made for all of the students, such as in the following areas?

- Orientation
- Diagnostic evaluation and placement
- Health and counseling services
- Career advisement
- Job placement
- Describe student and faculty satisfaction with services that support the program.
- Describe the general campus environment and climate. Explain their impact upon student performance.
- Describe how student affairs and academic affairs are coordinating efforts to contribute to student success.

#### Facilities

Please provide a summary and description of the following:

- Library and media resources – Provided by Admissions & Recruitment
- Computer resources – Provided by Admissions & Recruitment

Academic Unit provides the following:

- Office Space (Administrative, Faculty, Clerical, GAs)
- Classroom Space
- Laboratory Space
- List of Major Instructional and Research Field and Laboratory Instruments/Equipment
- Summary of Student Access to Space and Instruments/Equipment

### **Evaluation**

- Analyze adequacy of special student services.
- Analyze adequacy of general student services.
- Analyze adequacy of facilities.

## **VI. Administrative Support**

An academic program exists within the context of an institution, and it is effective in so far as it contributes to the mission of that institution. Similarly, the institution must be committed to the quality and effectiveness of the program. The health and continued vitality of an undergraduate academic program is critically influenced by the quality and continuity of leadership and support that its faculty and students receive from the administration of the campus, starting at the level of the president. Furthermore, the institution's leadership plays an important role in fostering a climate that supports change and makes clear the consequences of not improving. Consequently, administrators also have a need for training as evaluators.

### **Information**

The Provost's Office will provide the following information (give web address):

- Provide a general Institutional summary (this may be presented first in the report or as an appendix) (web address).
- Explain the effective ways in which the administration encourages program review.
- Explain how the leadership helps to create an environment and a climate for academic excellence ([www.esf.edu/provost](http://www.esf.edu/provost)).
- Provide an organizational chart that shows the relationship of the program to the rest of the institution ([www.esf.edu/provost/orgchart](http://www.esf.edu/provost/orgchart)).
- Explain how the program is represented in the institution's governance bodies and planning processes ([www.esf.edu/facgov](http://www.esf.edu/facgov)).
- Describe faculty development and support efforts by administration in the program area.

The academic unit provides the following information:

- Describe the ways by which the administration empowers faculty and students.
- Explain how budget decisions reflect the concern for quality programs and support academic robustness.

### **Evaluation**

- Analyze the fairness of the reward structure of the institution and the program.