



Program Review: Planning the Self-Study

The program review process is designed to sustain and strengthen the contributions of departments and programs to student learning, scholarly and artistic work, and the mission of the college as a whole. The self-study is a vital component of the review process, engaging faculty and staff in synthesizing, supplementing, interpreting, and responding to evidence about the effectiveness of the program in accomplishing its goals for student learning, scholarly and artistic work, and service to the college and the wider community.

The following questions may be helpful as you are preparing to conduct the self-study.

1. Who is your audience?

The primary audiences for the self-study report are the program faculty themselves, the Dean of the College and Associate Deans, and the external reviewers and/or accreditors (in the case of programs which have their own external accrediting agencies). The Academic Affairs Committee of the Board of Regents reviews an executive summary of the self-study. Secondary audiences may include potential funding agencies for future grant applications; prospective or newly-appointed faculty; other St. Olaf programs or faculty with whom the program may currently, or wish to, partner; potential collaborators at other institutions; or others who may play a role in future program activities.

2. What have you learned from the annual reports and assessment reports you have prepared since your last program review?

The annual reports and assessment action reports on the program's major(s) and concentration(s) are a rich source of information for the program review. This will allow program faculty and staff to direct more of their attention to synthesizing and responding to evidence, rather than gathering it for the first time.

3. What questions do you most want to answer at this point in the life of your program?

Like any inquiry, a self-study agenda should be governed by what you want to learn and convey to your audiences and [how the results are likely to be used](#). In many cases, the principal questions guiding a program review will emerge naturally from the program's discussion of findings from previous annual and assessment reports.

4. What aspects of the larger context of the College are important for your program?

The Office of Institutional Research and Evaluation has posted links to [College-wide documents](#) typically included in a self-study. This is helpful material both for the program faculty and for the external reviewers.

5. What national trends in the disciplines and/or professional fields served by your program have a bearing on your program?

Information about similar programs in comparable undergraduate institutions, the expectations of the graduate and professional schools to which program majors may apply, and trends in the

professions graduates enter, may have important implications for current and future program activities.

6. What resources will you use in evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of your program?

Discipline- or profession-specific professional associations often publish reports, recommendations, position statements, or other documents on teaching, scholarship, and/or professional service and outreach. Professional associations in higher education more generally, such as the [Association of American Colleges and Universities](#) and the [American Council on Education](#), also provide useful resources for self-evaluation.