



Program Review: Self-Study Contents and Information Resources

The self-study is a vital component of the program review process, engaging faculty and staff in synthesizing and responding to evidence about the effectiveness of the program in accomplishing its goals. A self-study typically includes the elements listed below. Programs that are accredited by field-specific associations should adapt these elements to reflect the requirements of their accreditors.

I. [Executive summary](#)

- *Program mission statement*
- *Key findings concerning teaching and learning*
- *Key findings concerning scholarly and artistic work*
- *Key findings concerning service and leadership*
- *Key questions and issues the department intends to explore further as part of the review*

II. [Mission, institutional context, and history](#)

- *Program mission statement*
- *Institutional context*
- *Relevant program history*

III. [Resources](#)

- *Budget*
- *Physical resources*
- *Grant funding*

IV. [Student learning and development](#)

- *Intended learning outcomes for each major and/or concentration offered*
- *Instructional program – curriculum, enrollments, pedagogy, advising*
- *Key findings from and responses to your Decennial Cycle Assessment Plan*
- *Key findings and responses related to inclusion and equity*
- *Other evidence of instructional program quality*
- *Evaluation of strengths and limitations*

V. [Faculty scholarly and artistic work](#)

- *Department Statement on Significant Scholarly/Artistic Work*
- *Department accomplishments*
- *Evaluation of strengths and limitations*

VI. [Faculty service and leadership](#)

- *Department goals and expectations*
- *Department accomplishments*
- *Evaluation of strengths and limitations*

VII. [Future plans](#)

- *Addressing needs and advancing program mission*
- *Inviting feedback from external reviewers*

Detailed suggestions

I. Executive summary

- The executive summary should be approximately one page. It will be shared with the Academic Affairs Committee of the St. Olaf Board of Regents as well as with readers of the full self-study.
- The summary should state the program mission; list key findings (both strengths and limitations) in teaching and learning, scholarly and artistic activity, and service and leadership; and identify key questions and issues the department intends to explore further as part of the review.

II. Mission, history, and institutional context

- *Program mission statement*

A program mission statement helps give identity, coherence and focus to the activities and outcomes of a program. Some programs already have mission statements, and use the self-study as an opportunity to revisit and sometimes revise it. Others develop one in the course of the self-study. Some programs link their mission statements to statements prepared by relevant professional associations. It is also helpful to discuss the program mission statement in relation to the mission of the College.

- *Institutional context*

It is helpful to the external reviewers to provide information about the larger context of the college and the role of the department in advancing its mission.

- *Relevant program history*

Programs vary in the attention they give to this dimension of the self-study. Departments can consider the self-study's audience and governing questions, and the larger context of the college as a whole, in determining what to include.

III. Resources

- *Program budget*

It is common to include non-compensation budget information, generally over a period of several years.

- *Physical resources*

Many programs describe an array of physical resources for the support of instruction: library holdings, technology, labs, special equipment, physical space, etc.

- *Grant funding*

Support received through external grants may be an important complement to internal college resources for both instruction and professional activity.

IV. Student learning and development

- *Intended learning outcomes*

A program review provides an opportunity for reviewing, and revising as needed, the program's [statement of intended learning outcomes](#) for each major, concentration, or other academic program it offers. Programs can also discuss the specific types of academic experiences they want their students to have – the kinds of assignments students complete, their engagement with academic research, opportunities for study off-campus, collaborative work with other students or faculty members, etc.

- *Instructional program*

Most self-studies include a fairly extensive, though primarily descriptive, discussion of the instructional program. Different programs organize this material in different ways, but most self-studies address the following in one way or another:

- Structure of and rationale for program requirements for a major and/or a concentration. Every self-study includes a description of the requirements for its major(s) and concentration(s). Many also provide a rationale for each requirement.
- Information about the students who major and/or concentrate in the program. Self-studies typically include longitudinal data on the number of majors and/or concentrators in the program, including demographics of those students (e.g., gender, race/ethnicity, first-generation status, low-income status, citizenship status). Many discuss the additional majors, concentrations and co-curricular activities their students choose to complement their studies in the program.
- Course offerings. A comprehensive discussion of program courses includes not only semester-length courses but also interim courses, independent study and research projects, and summer courses. Self-studies address this dimension of program review in different ways; some examine course offerings by disciplinary subfield, while others group courses by level. Some programs have found it helpful to put together a program teaching portfolio, including course syllabi, assignments, and samples of student work, not only for reference by the external evaluators but also to share ideas and accomplishments with one another. Some longitudinal data on course enrollments are usually included as well. Programs vary in the time frame they select, but it is probably advisable to include at least three years of data.
- Contributions of the program to the OLE Core (General Education). The self-study should discuss the distinctive ways the department/program contributes to the [OLE Core](#).
- Off-campus study, mentored undergraduate research, and other “high-impact practices.” Self-studies typically describe the available opportunities and level of participation in domestic and international programs for which students may earn credit in a major or concentration. Faculty contributions to mentored undergraduate research and other “high-impact practices” are also discussed. Some self-studies also describe the integration of experiential or service learning or academic civic engagement in courses offered on campus.

- Contributions to interdisciplinary programs. The strong emphasis on interdisciplinary study is a distinctive feature of a St. Olaf education, and has fostered rich collaborations among both disciplinary and interdisciplinary programs. Most self-studies describe program contributions to other programs and the activities of program faculty in developing interdisciplinary programs, linked courses, and other opportunities for integrative study.
- Pedagogy and faculty development. Some program reviews give attention not just to what they teach, but how they teach, addressing both long-standing and more recently-developed practices. Samples of course activities and assignments included in the program teaching portfolio are often helpful. Self-studies may also discuss the participation of program faculty in various faculty development programs supporting innovation and improvement in instructional strategies (e.g., the use of technology, the incorporation of oral communication or writing as a means of learning, just-in-time teaching, implementation of equitable and inclusive teaching practices, etc.).
- Academic advising. A description of the program's advising activities, both for majors and for other students, should be included.
- Other contributions to student learning and development. Many self-studies describe the department's contributions to student organizations, honors houses, speaker series, graduate school and career planning programs, alumni networks, and other opportunities for student development outside the classroom.
- *Key findings from and responses to your [Decennial Cycle Assessment Plan](#)*
For this component of a self-study, departments are asked to consider findings from a minimum of **three** of their stated intended learning outcomes in each major and/or concentration offered, drawing wherever possible on evidence already available from previous department assessment projects. By the time of the review year, departments should have completed assessment of all of their intended learning outcomes and submitted two decennial assessment reports, so they will already have evidence and interpretations to hand. Departments should aim to give the bulk of their attention during the self-study year to integrating, interpreting, and responding to their evidence, rather than to gathering and reporting it. In particular, the department should describe specific actions taken previously on the basis of assessment evidence.
- *Key findings and responses related to inclusion and equity*
In addition to looking at disaggregated demographic data for majors/concentrators and in course enrollments, the department or program may implement the following to expand their consideration of equity and inclusion within the program:
 - Investigate student access to and participation in high-impact practices, considering whether particular groups of students participate less frequently and why.
 - Analyze the demographic characteristics of students who take an introductory course in the major/concentration and those who complete the major/concentration. Where do students "drop off", and do these students share any particular demographic traits? The course or courses a program chooses to analyze will depend on the particular requirements for the major/concentration and where common entry into the major/concentration occurs.
 - Look at disaggregated student demographic data for students who earn a D, F, or withdraw from a major/concentration introductory or gateway course. This may prompt or

complement the type of trajectory analysis described in the second bullet point above.

- *Other evidence of instructional program quality*

Many programs conduct surveys or focus groups with current students and alumni, asking for feedback on their experiences in the program – program strengths, weaknesses, suggestions for improvement, etc. Some have sought feedback from employers and from graduate and professional schools as well. A few programs have engaged in “curriculum mapping,” showing where and how students encounter the various program-level intended learning outcomes as they make their way through the requirements for a major or concentration. It can be very powerful to synthesize these sources of indirect evidence of quality with the more direct evidence of student learning outcomes available from Decennial Cycle assessment. Additional guidance for [designing and administering surveys](#) is available on the IE&A website.

- *Evaluation of strengths and limitations*

What does the evidence – both direct and indirect – show about student learning and development in relation to the intended learning outcomes articulated by the department? In view of these results, what is the department likely to sustain, and what might it consider changing, in its instructional program and pedagogical practices?

V. Faculty scholarly and artistic work

- *Department Statement on Significant Scholarly/Artistic Work*

As with the program mission statement, the program’s Statement on Significant Scholarly/Artistic Work is often revisited and sometimes revised in the course of the self-study. The content of the Statement should reflect current guidelines from the Provost. The department’s Statement serves as a “barometer” for the accomplishment of individual faculty members; at the time of program review, some programs build on this Statement to articulate goals for the *collective* scholarly and artistic work of their department.

- *Department accomplishments*

Self-studies generally describe the principal areas of scholarly and/or artistic expertise represented by program faculty and summarize their professional activities and accomplishments (publications, performances and showings, grants, etc.). Copies of each faculty member’s CV are included in an appendix.

- *Evaluation of strengths and limitations*

In view of the evidence, what does the department see as the principal strengths and limitations of the contributions of the department as a whole to scholarship and artistic work?

VI. Faculty service and leadership

- *Department goals and expectations*

Program review allows for a collective conversation on the department’s intended contributions

to the well-being of the College community, relevant professional associations, higher education more generally, the professions served by the program, or public life. This conversation is timely in view of recent changes to the language of the Faculty Manual concerning the types of faculty work that comprise “service and leadership.” Establishing goals in this area can help departments be more intentional in the nature and extent of their involvement in campus governance, service and leadership in the wider community, and other kinds of faculty work.

- *Department accomplishments*

Faculty members at St. Olaf commit significant time to leadership and service within and beyond the College, modeling the kind of engagement they seek to foster in their students. Giving attention to this dimension of faculty work in self-studies not only affords recognition of faculty investments and accomplishments, but also makes collective planning for the future possible.

- *Evaluation of strengths and weaknesses*

In view of the evidence, what does the department see as the principal strengths and limitations of the service and leadership contributions of the department as a whole?

VII. Future plans

- *Addressing needs and advancing program mission*

What are the tentative conclusions the department has drawn from the self-study process, and how does the department expect to respond? What actions would be needed, and with what support or partnerships, to help the department address its most pressing needs and consolidate or expand its key strengths? Some discussion of constraints and challenges may also be helpful.

- *Inviting specific feedback*

While the external reviewers are free to comment on any dimension of the self-study, it is often helpful to list specific questions or issues that the department would like the reviewers to address in their report.

Self-study information resources

In addition to the annual reports and Decennial Cycle assessment reports previously prepared by department faculty and staff, departments can consult the following resources:

[Relevant college-wide documents](#)

Links to college-wide documents typically included in a self-study to provide context for external evaluators

[Data dashboards for academic program leadership](#)

These dashboards include information on course offerings, enrollments, student and faculty demographics, CE workload, and more, to support the preparation of both annual reports and program reviews.

The [Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Assessment](#)

The [Office of the Registrar](#)