

USC Student Affairs and Academic Support Program Review

The University of South Carolina is committed to the comprehensive periodic review of all units in the division of Student Affairs and Academic Support (SAAS). In order to meet the needs and interests of our students, university partners, and other stakeholders, SAAS will conduct periodic program reviews of its units to inform continuous improvement and to provide evidence of their educational and developmental impact on student learning and success.

Policy

The SAAS program review comprises a unit self-study followed by an on-site review conducted by an external group of peers. The external review is a mechanism by which a SAAS unit may benefit from the assessment and advice of professional peers and reflect on how the unit aligns with other units of its type and/or how well the unit effectively delivers programs and services that support students and enrich their college experience. This evaluation extends beyond the assessment of effectiveness documented in assessment reports. While the primary focus of the self-study is the unit and the students it serves, information about the unit staff and other unit resources and initiatives that support the unit is a critical component of any evaluation. Because unit policies, resources, and characteristics have direct impact on the functioning of the unit, these components are considered in the review. This policy sets forth the process for conducting periodic program reviews of SAAS units every four (4) years. Reviews are centrally coordinated and financially supported by the division of SAAS.

Purpose and Intended Outcomes

- Facilitates systematic reflection and documentation of organizational performance, focused on unit mission and goals and the division's mission, vision, and strategic priorities
- Insights from the process are as important as the final report for improving quality and effectiveness
- Assesses the unit's effectiveness with respect to contributing to student/client usage and satisfaction; intended student outcomes and/or business and service outcomes
- Provides evidence of excellence and effectiveness of the unit's programs,

services, and operations for unit and division stakeholders

- Engages staff in strategic thinking about the unit's future to ensure that it is positioned to continue to be effective and relevant
- Defines ways, primarily within existing resources, that a unit can continue to improve the quality of its programs, services, activities, and operations
- Results in a written action plan to guide the unit's continued progress toward effective and excellent performance
- Improving the effectiveness of each unit improves the effectiveness of the division and the university, toward advancing its core education mission

Procedures

1) Responsibility and Oversight

- a. Acting on behalf of the VPSAAS, the AVP for Assessment notifies units of upcoming program reviews.
- b. The Unit Director has primary responsibility for overseeing and initiating the unit's internal self-study and the unit's response to the external review report.
- c. The Unit Director and supervising AVP will recommend candidates for the external review team (three members). No member of the external review team can have a conflict of interest with the unit being reviewed. Candidates will be contacted by the AVP for Assessment to identify team members with appropriate expertise, interest, and availability. Invitations to serve as team members will be issued by the AVP for Assessment. The Unit Director and AVP will be notified of review team member selections and should have no contact with review team members regarding the review.
- d. The AVP for Assessment is responsible for making travel arrangements, scheduling meetings, and overseeing any other review team requirements.
- e. The Unit Director and supervising AVP are responsible for ensuring the self-study is completed in a timely manner. Program review is considered a collective responsibility of unit staff.
- f. The Unit Director and supervising AVP are responsible for producing a formal response to any suggestions or recommendations made by the review team.

2) Review Timeline and Process

- a. Each Spring term, the AVP for Assessment will identify units due for review in the upcoming academic year and notify the respective Unit Directors and their supervising AVPs. For example, in Spring 2023, units will be notified of those program reviews coming up in Fall 2023.
- b. The Unit Director, in consultation with the supervising AVP, will finalize the list of topics and performance criteria identified in the unit's self-study report that will be used in the unit's external review. Units may look to CAS Standards or other professional association or industry standards as a guide to best practices.
- c. Program review for each unit will be conducted every four (4) years and may take up to a year to complete.
- d. The Unit Director will lead the unit's development of the Self-Study Report, following the format and timeline outlined in Appendix 1. The AVP for Assessment will submit the final self-study report to the review team at least one month prior to the review team visit. The office of the AVP for Assessment will provide copies to the VPSAAS and will archive copies for SACSCOC purposes.
- e. Review team visits will last 1.5 days. The VPSAAS, in consultation with the Unit Director and the supervising AVP, will identify the review team within 2-5 months after the Unit Director has been notified of the review. Invitations to serve on the external review team will be issued by the AVP for Assessment.
- f. Guidelines for the review team report are presented in detail in Appendix 2. The review team should submit its report within one month of the review team's campus visit to the AVP for Assessment, who will distribute the report to the VPSAAS, the Unit Director, and the supervising AVP.
- g. On receipt of the external reviewers' report, the AVP for Assessment will coordinate a meeting of the unit director, the supervising AVP, the department's assessment representative, and the VP to discuss the report and the parameters of a unit action plan.
- h. Following an established timeline and format, the Unit Director will submit a Unit Action Plan to the AVP for Assessment for VPSAAS review. Approximately six months from the date of the site visit the AVP for Assessment will coordinate a follow-up meeting with the Unit Director, the supervising AVP, the department's assessment

representative, and the VPSAAS, to review progress on actions taken. Additionally, progress on the unit's action plan should be reported in the Unit's annual assessment report.

- i. The VPSAAS should address follow-up to the final review team report and the response of the unit in the supervising AVP's next annual review.

3) Self-Study Report

- a. Preparing a self-study report requires units to evaluate the status, effectiveness, and progress of their programs and services; recognize and reflect on unit strengths and weaknesses; identify important directions in the profession that need to be addressed; and assess the relationships among and contributions to the priorities of the division of SAAS and the University.
- b. Sections of the Self-Study Report will be submitted to the office of the AVP for Assessment for review and feedback, following a timeline designed to result in unit completion of the full report by the pre-established deadline.
- c. The Unit Self-Study Report should be shared with all staff within the unit and should represent consensus, or it should state the nature of differences in viewpoints before its submission as a final report.
- d. All units will use the standard format for the self-study report detailed in Appendix 1.

Appendices

- 1) Appendix 1: Self-Study Report
- 2) Appendix 2: Review Team Report
- 3) Appendix 3: Unit Response and Action Plan

Appendix 1: Self-Study Report

The self-study report must be prepared using the following standard report format.

- Use the outline provided below. Keep the headings and numbers as they are in the outline and provide a narrative response under each numbered question.
- Use a standard font, standard margins, and no special formatting.
- Submit each section as an email attachment (word document, named with the name of the report section) to the AVP for Assessment.

The outline below is intended to fit a typical SAAS unit; any necessary modifications should be requested prior to the start of the unit self-study. Note the timeline of events provided in the policy.

A short narrative response should be provided for each item; please keep the original headings and numbers in the document and provide the narrative below each numbered question.

In addition to the self-study report, the unit should submit an organization chart (with person names and job titles) in a separate document.

The following self-study materials will be made available to external reviewers by the AVP for Assessment:

- Unit's self-study report, provided by the unit
- Organization chart, with person names and job titles, provided by the unit
- Resumes of unit director and professional staff, provided by the unit
- Staff demographics, provided by SAAS HR
- Unit budget, provided by SAAS Finance
- Annual assessment reports for most recent three years, provided from SAAS Repository

Please discuss any additional documents with the AVP for Assessment before including or submitting them.

Self-Study Report for
(Unit Name)
(Department Name)

- I. Overview (draft as first component of the self-study process; then review and revise prior to completing the final self-study report)
1. Provide a brief description of the purpose of the unit under review; include a mission statement that describes the unique role of the unit and the results it intends to produce.
 2. Describe the unit's primary service target population(s)
 3. Name the unit's core functions and, for each core function, describe the methods used within each to deliver programs and/or services to students and other clients (programs, services, events, activities).
 4. Identify any overlap or duplication of program and/or service functions with other SAAS or University units and describe how these units interact on this topic.
 5. Provide a brief description of the over-arching department (AVP area) that includes the unit under review.
 6. Describe the connection between the unit mission, intended outcomes, and the division's strategic priorities.
 7. Highlight major achievements of the unit during the review period (previous 4 years) identified during the self-study.
 8. Describe the unit's primary challenges and/or opportunities for improvement identified through this self study.
 9. Describe any substantive changes in the programs and services delivered by the unit in the past four years, including justification.
 10. List any professional associations or accrediting agencies that guide the work of the unit.
 11. Provide any contextual information that influences the work of the unit.
 12. Describe emerging trends or best practices that are likely to influence the work of the unit in the future. Describe how the unit is taking action to address these trends.
 13. Identify any areas of the unit's operation where the external peer review team should focus attention, to help identify opportunities for improvement of the unit. Please provide

a list of questions for the consideration of the peer review team.

II. Organization, Staff

- In a separate document, provide an organization chart that includes person names and job titles
 - In separate documents, provide brief resumes for director and professional staff
 - SAAS HR will provide a report of the unit's staff demographics to the AVP for Assessment and to the unit to include in the self-study materials as a separate document.
1. In the format of a table in the report, provide a staff roster with three columns: 1) Staff member's first and last name, 2) job title, and 3) highest degree earned.
 2. Describe the unit's strategies to recruit and retain quality, diverse staff members.
 3. Explain how the unit is structured and resourced to achieve efficiency and effectiveness toward fulfilling the mission of the unit.
 4. Explain how the unit collaborates with other units across the division and the university to achieve division and institutional priorities.
 5. Describe the unit's policy/strategy for managing confidentiality issues.
 6. Describe the unit's processes for managing risks (regulatory, safety, legal, etc.).
 7. Describe how the unit monitors and ensures compliance with federal and state laws, system policies, and university policies and procedures.
 8. Explain how the unit assures implementation of effective practices regarding access, equity, diversity, and inclusion in hiring and supervising staff, and professional development.
 9. List any staff awards given by regional, national or international professional associations (last 4 years)
 10. List any staff publications in regional, national, or international journals or books (last 4 years)
 11. Student recognition/awards from external sources (based on engagement with the unit under review) (last 4 years)
 12. Staff positions held in regional, national, or international professional associations (last 4 years)

III. Resources

- SAAS Finance will provide a budget information report to the AVP for Assessment

and the unit, to include in the self-study materials as a separate document.

1. Describe the adequacy of financial resources to support the unit
2. Describe the adequacy of staffing - part-time and full-time - to support the unit
3. Describe the unit's facilities, and material resources
4. How effectively do the unit's current facilities and space support the work of the unit?
5. How does the use of technology support the work of the unit, and what are the unit's projected technology needs?
6. How does the unit evaluate the "value added" of programs, services, events, activities?

IV. Effectiveness and Continuous Improvement

1. List unit's intended outcomes as stated in assessment documents.
2. Provide mapping of unit's intended outcomes to key programs, services, events, activities provided by the unit.
3. Provide a summary of assessment metrics and methods used in conducting the unit's assessment activities.
4. Explain how the unit assures that it applies best practices for access, equity, diversity, and inclusion in its programs and services for students and others.
5. Provide a summary overview of assessment activities and results for the last three years (details are provided in the annual assessment reports included in self-study materials).
6. Explain how assessment results are discussed and shared with staff to elicit feedback/input.
7. Describe the process used for this self-study, including director and staff involvement.

V. Summary and Unit Recommendations

1. Describe the unit's comparative advantages and/or its unique features; may include the following:
 - Top strengths and areas of concern/weakness
 - Distinctiveness attributable to interrelationships with other university programs
 - Areas of focus and uniqueness / differentiation from units at other state-assisted universities, others colleges and universities in South Carolina, peer comparison

universities, and other universities in the region and nation.

- Areas of duplication with other units at the university.
2. Describe any additional information about the unit that would be helpful to the external reviewers.
 3. Describe the top 3 to 5 areas for improvement the unit identified through the self-study.
 4. Describe how the unit plans to change or improve using currently available university resources and/or additional resources the unit will generate through its own activities.

Appendix 2: External Review

A team leader will be identified in the group, to take the lead in shaping campus interview meetings and compiling the reviewer report.

Prior to the campus visit, the team will meet with the AVP for Assessment to review the process and expectations for the campus visit and report.

The team will meet online following the visit with the AVP for Assessment to discuss the draft report before it is submitted to USC.

Each review team member will be paid a consulting fee for the review and will be reimbursed for travel expenses.

Reviewer Team Report

Information sources that serve as the basis for the report should include the self-study report prepared by the unit under review, information available on unit (and division/university) websites, on-campus meetings with staff, and other sources that may be identified during the process. The report should reference any professional standards or best practices that inform their review and report. The format of the report should follow the outline provided below.

The report should not name specific individuals (or positions, where the person holding the position would be identifiable) and should take care not to attribute statements or impressions to a specific individual.

Cover Page

- Name of Unit, Department
- Date of Submission
- Review Team Membership
- External Review Timetable
- External Review Procedures Followed

Executive Summary (maximum two pages)

The Executive Summary should provide an overview of the most compelling findings, encapsulating what the Review Team believes administrators most need to consider about the

unit under review. Specific recommendations for action or further exploration should be listed in the Executive Summary.

Unit Analysis

The review team should address the narrative provided by the unit in each section of its self-study report, as listed below. From the review team members' perspectives based in professional expertise, knowledge of best practices, professional standards, and national trends, they are asked to reflect on the unit's self-study report content and provide comments on the current status, program strategies, opportunities, threats, possible future status, and other topics they deem essential to the review. Please cite the source if professional standards or best practices are referenced.

- I. Overview
- II. Organization, Staff
- III. Resources
- IV. Effectiveness and Continuous Improvement
- V. Summary and Unit Recommendations

Appendix 3: Unit Response and Action Plan

- I. **Insights Gained**
(In a few sentences, describe insights gained from the self-study process, the campus visit, and/or the reviewer report.)

- II. **Agreement with Reviewer Perceptions/Recommendations**
(In a few sentences, describe how well you believe the reviewers understood the unit, based on their report. If there is critical disagreement with perceptions and/or recommendations of the review team, acknowledge and briefly discuss these differences.)

- III. **Strengths Identified**
(List (3-5 bullet points) the unit's most important strengths identified through this process.)

- IV. **Areas for Improvement Identified**
Identify 3-5 specific issues to be addressed immediately; on a separate page for each issue, draft an improvement action plan following the format provided.

Post-External-Review Action Plan (complete a plan for each of 3-5 Issues)

Issue identified:

Goal:

Action Plan:

- Responsible Person(s):
- Actions (steps you plan to take to address the issue, to include staff member(s) to address
- Timeline (deadline for each step)
- Resources (personnel/funding you need to allocate for each step)
- Potential barriers (factors that can potentially hinder the completion)
- Outcomes (desired result)

Success Indicators (include how you will track and evaluate Process: