Self-Study Process

Jena Dunn, MDiv, EdD
Stark College & Seminary
jdunn@stark.edu
Tyler, Jena, and McCullen Dunn
Self-Study Process Overview

The self-study process is the keystone of institutional assessment, accreditation compliance documentation, and institutional improvement. The maturity of an institution and their leadership capacity is reflected in the quality of their self-study process, and it paves the way for continuous institutional improvement.

- Review the purpose and spirit of accreditation and the self-study process.
- Define the specific terminology related to the self-study process.
- Organize for a smooth process - team engagement, schedule, and accountability.
- Explore the best ways to collect documentation and supporting evidence, and write the narrative.
Accreditation is designed to foster ongoing systematic self-study with the goal of continuous institutional improvement. The ultimate goal is to better equip institutions to prepare students for a life of service to the glory of Jesus Christ.

An institution must demonstrate it is substantially achieving and can continue to achieve its mission and the Standards for Accreditation. It must also demonstrate its commitment to ongoing institutional improvement.

Institutions are to affirm, updating as needed, their mission statements; examine evidence for achievement of their mission and goals; identify areas of strength, weakness, opportunity, or threat; and develop plans to address issues.
Definitions

Mission
Concise statement of the institution’s purpose, scope, and intended impact.

Goals
A desire or ambition seeking to be accomplished. “Big picture” statements.

Objectives
Anticipated or intended result of an activity/set of activities that is specific and measurable.

Outcomes
Consequence or end-result of activities that have been measured and can be demonstrated to be the product of activities.
Definitions

**Assessment Plan**
A written description of the institution’s ongoing assessment activities. Identifies: instruments, cycles of assessment, schedules, and benchmarks.

**Compliance Document**
Self-study report that assesses the extent to which an institution satisfies the ABHE standards and essential elements.

**Improvement Plan**
A written description of the institution’s plans for the next 3-5 years, including: timeframes, strategies, responsible parties, and cost analysis.
Definitions

**Statistical Abstract**
Overall summary of the institution, programs, enrollment, salary, library, finance, and ministry formation data.

**Exhibits**
Evidence of claims made in the Compliance Document. Exhibits should be numbered and referenced by number in the Compliance Document.
Engagement of the President is vital. Engagement of the President in the self-study process is vital.

The President provides leadership over writing and approval of all documents. The President monitors the self-study process and communicates with ABHE.

The Coordinator researches compliance, gathers data, and drafts the compliance document. The Coordinator guides analysis of assessment data and supports other committees.

The Steering Committee provides leadership over writing and approval of all documents.

The Standard Committees researches compliance, gathers data, and drafts the compliance document.

The Assessment Committee guides analysis of assessment data and supports other committees.
Organization of the Self-Study Process

Planning Committee
Determines action plan based on assessment results.

Writer/Editor
Edits the document into a consistent voice/narrative.

Document Finishers
Proof and address form issues.

Tech Team
Add exhibit hyperlinks and transitions the document into final form.

Support Personnel
Data gathering, formatting, distribution, logistics, scheduling, etc.
## Organization of the Self-Study Process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Months before Submission</th>
<th>Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Develop and approve plan and timeline for self-study.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-12</td>
<td>Complete first draft of compliance document.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9-10</td>
<td>Review findings of Assessment Plan and Compliance. Further revision of documents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-8</td>
<td>Final document revisions by editor and final approvals of documents.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Organization of the Self-Study Process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Months before Submission</th>
<th>Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4-6</td>
<td>Develop Improvement Plan based on results. Revisions of Improvement Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-3</td>
<td>Final revisions and approvals of all documents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Preparation of Data and Documents for submission. Share results with constituents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>Submit self-study.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Documentation of Evidence

Self-Study

1. Statistical Abstract
2. Compliance Document
3. Regulatory Requirements Evaluation
4. Institutional Assessment Plan
5. Institutional Improvement Plan
6. Exhibits
**Programs**
List all degrees and majors offered in addition to the academic schedule of the institution (e.g. semester system, quarter system).

**Enrollment**
Four years of undergraduate and graduate enrollment to include headcount, number of full-time students, and FTE.

**Salary**
List professional staff data, information about highest earned degrees, and average salaries for faculty.

**Library**
Four years of information to include: volumes, title, subscriptions, circulation, staffing, and budget/expenses.

**Finance**
Four years of information to include: unrestricted revenue, financial ratios, plant and equipment, and indebtedness.

**Ministry Formation**
Brief description of ministry formation and student participation in ministry formation at the institution.
Compliance Document

01 Introduction
Brief history of the institution, statement of its mission and goals, and description of the self-study process.

03 RREs
Self-assessment of the institution's satisfaction of the 14 external requirements. Describe why the institution meets the requirement and cite documents which support rationale.

Chapters
Chapters covering each Standard subdivided into sections by Essential Element. Describe how the institution is meeting each Element and cite exhibits for evidence.

04 Conclusion
Summary of all issues identified as a result of comparing institutional characteristics with Standards for Accreditation. Should point to Institutional Improvement Plan.
Institutional Assessment Plan

Introduction: Provides a brief background on the institution and its mission, the process used in developing the Assessment Plan, and the participants who worked to develop and implement the plan.

Assessment of Student Learning: Section should include outcomes that apply to all graduates and outcomes that apply to graduates of specific programs, means of assessment, benchmarks, and results of assessment efforts.

Assessment of Institutional Effectiveness: Should describe how well the institution functions and performs its various educational and support services, means of assessment, benchmarks, and results of assessment efforts.
Institutional Improvement Plan

**Introduction:** Provides a brief background on the institution and its mission, the process used in developing the Institutional Improvement Plan, and the participants involved.

**Short-Term Plan:** Section should include actions steps developed from results of the Assessment Plan which will be implemented in the next 12 to 24 months. Will detail actions, resources, persons, deadline, and anticipated results.

**Long-Range Plan:** Should describe goals for the next three to four years in the planning cycle.

**Conclusion:** Summary of results and an outline of the process for renewing the planning cycle.
Exhibits

**Numbered**
Exhibits should be numbered and referenced in the compliance document by their number.

**Excerpts Preferred**
Only excerpts or single pages should be included. Avoid citing entire catalogs/handbooks for single sentence evidence.

**Highlight Specific Evidence**
When including a page of evidence with additional text or data, highlight the specific information on the page that is relevant to the Essential Element.
Questions?
Jena Dunn, MDiv, EdD
Stark College & Seminary
jdunn@stark.edu