

SELF-STUDY GUIDELINES FOR GRADUATE PROGRAMS

Sam Houston State University
The Graduate and Professional School

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Overview

Preface

This manual outlines the procedure for graduate program performance review as mandated by *Title 19, Part 1, Chapter 5, Subchapter C, Rule 5.52 of the Texas Administrative Code*. The process is one tool to guide programs in their continuous improvement efforts in serving the needs of students, the university, and external stakeholders. The self-studies produced through use of this manual will provide an overview of the programs with detailed information about curriculum, graduate faculty, program resources, assessment, student success, recruitment, and marketing.

The Self-Study Process

The self-study process incorporates three-stages: (1) the creation of the self-study, (2) an external review, and (3) the written program responses. Faculty and staff will conduct a thorough program review and produce a report with support documentation. Masters' programs in the same six-digit classification of instructional programs code as doctoral programs must undergo review simultaneously with their related doctoral programs. A team of external reviewers will read the report, visit the campus, and provide an evaluation of the program to include program strengths and recommendations for improvement. The college and the program will develop an action plan in response to the results of the self-study and external review. The process should be as transparent and inclusive as possible. **At the conclusion of the review, The Graduate and Professional School will submit the self-study, the external reviewers' report, and the program response to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board by statute no later than 90 days after the reviewers have submitted their findings to the institution.**

The Program Committee

The department of the program under review shall create a committee for purposes of compiling and writing the self-study. The chair of the self-study committee should be the director of the graduate program. Based on recommendations by the departmental chair, the academic dean will select the remaining members of the committee. The committee should be fully or primarily comprised of core faculty but may contain at least one outside member from one of the university's other graduate programs. In consultation with the department chair, the academic dean will determine the ultimate size of the committee. No committee should have less than three members.

The Outside Reviewers

A team of outside reviewers (minimum of one for masters' and minimum of two for terminal degrees) will (1) review the self-study, (2) perform an onsite review of the program (citing strengths and concerns, if any), and (3) provide a written report containing a response to the self-study, a summary of observations during the onsite visit, and recommendations. Both reviewers for doctoral programs must come from outside the state of Texas. At least one reviewer for masters' programs must come from outside Texas. **Appendix A** contains guidelines and directions for the reviewers.

In consultation with the academic dean, the chair of the self-study committee will submit to The Graduate and Professional School (TGPS) a list of at least five (5) names of

faculty who are active in a graduate program of the same discipline. Potential reviewers should represent a program nationally recognized for excellence in the discipline. The academic dean must approve the list of potential outside reviewers prior to submission to The Graduate and Professional School. The chair of the committee will then receive a final list of reviewers. The chair of the self-study committee will arrange the itinerary as suggested in the sample in **Appendix B**. Programs reviewed as part of an accreditation/reaffirmation review may follow the accrediting agency's guidelines for selecting reviewers. External reviewers must affirm that they have no conflict of interest related to the program under review.

CHECK LIST FOR REVIEWER SELECTION PROCESS

1. Program director coordinator selects not more than five (5) prospective reviewers, ranked in order of preference.
2. Doctoral programs must utilize a minimum of two (2) reviewers. Masters' programs may utilize one. Reviewers must be active faculty and come from programs outside of Texas.
3. The academic dean approves the list and forwards it to TGPS. The graduate dean approves and/or makes recommendations to complete the final list.
4. Working with the program, TGPS identifies a range of possible visit dates.
5. The department contacts the preferred review team to arrange travel dates for a visit. It is possible that either the academic dean or the graduate dean will have to supply a proxy in the event of unavoidable scheduling conflicts.
6. TGPS will transfer money for reviewer travel and stipends to the participating departments. Those departments will handle the details of the necessary paperwork. TGPS staff will gladly consult and help with applicable university procedures.
7. Departmental staff and TGPS staff will coordinate to make sure all visit dates/events are on the calendars of the academic dean and the graduate dean.

Program Review Calendar Timeline

Target dates to adjust to nearest university business day.

Summer 20XX - Colleges/Departments receive initial alert to upcoming review process. Participants are encouraged to start preliminary planning and research. This period is ideal for compilation of program history, current student polling, faculty vitae/resumes, faculty interviews, and relevant university documents such as policies and catalogue information.

September 1, 20XX – Colleges/Departments receive formal notice, The Graduate and Professional School schedules meetings with the presiding academic dean and/or the college review team.

Month of September, 20XX – Departments receive data and a range of possible dates (see p. 4); program review committee seated.

October 1, 20XX – Reviewer list and on-site visit dates due to The Graduate and Professional School.

November 1, 20XX—Draft of program self-study due to presiding academic dean.

November 1, 20XX – December 15, 20XX – Period available to consult with The Graduate and Professional School about any aspects of the on-site visit.

December 1, 20XX – Self-study final draft and confirmation of finalized on-site visit agenda due to The Graduate and Professional School.

January 1-15, 20XX+1 – Departments send reports and agendas out to external reviewers and provide confirmation to The Graduate and Professional School.

February 1, 20XX+1 – April 30, 20XX+1 – Period available for on-site visit for all programs. Referees will return written reports within four (4) weeks of the visit.

Upon Receipt—Copy of reviewer reports furnished to presiding academic dean and to the graduate dean.

Once reviewers return the written report, the department will prepare a response. The department and college will meet with The Graduate and Professional School to finalize the response and identify program needs.

July 1, 20XX+1 – All final reports due to The Graduate and Professional School. **This is the latest option.**

July 15, 20XX+1 – The Graduate and Professional School uploads reports to THECB, in any case to be completed within 90 days of receipt of reviewer reports.

May-June 20XX+2 - One-year check to see progress of implementation of recommendations.

Roles and Responsibilities of Faculty/Administrators

Chair of Self-Study Committee

- Make recommendations to the departmental chair and academic dean concerning committee membership.
- Assign responsibilities to self-study committee members and coordinate the creation of the self-study document.
- In conjunction with the self-study committee, identify program-specific issues to address in the self-study.
- In conjunction with the self-study committee, department chair and academic dean, provide The Graduate and Professional School a list of candidates to serve as external reviewers.
- Where applicable, plan with SHSU Online for quality review of on-line course offerings.
- Provide the final version of the self-study to the academic dean, and to The Graduate and Professional School. Ensure delivery of reports to visiting reviewers.
- Create the itinerary for the onsite review and arrange time for key personnel to meet with the onsite reviewers.
- Coordinate the arrangements associated with the onsite review (e.g., lodging, travel, transportation, etc.).
- Schedule meeting rooms and meals connected with the onsite visit. **All programs undergoing review should consult to avoid simultaneous scheduling of events.**
- Coordinate the creation of the program written response to the referee report and an Action Plan. Present to the provost, academic dean, graduate dean, and department chair.
 - The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board has provided an optional Graduate Program Institutional Response Form. [Graduate Program Institutional Response Form \(texas.gov\)](https://www.texas.gov/graduate-program-institutional-response-form)

Department Chair

- Be available to meet with the self-study committee during the creation of the self-study.
- Review draft versions of the self-study and make recommendations for amendment prior to submission to the academic dean.
- Be available to meet with the external reviewers during the onsite visit.
- Attend the exit summary oral report.
- Assist in the creation of the program response and Action Plan prepared in response to the self-study and reviewers' written report.

Academic Dean

- Provide feedback and make final decisions concerning members of the self-study committee.
- Recommend outside reviewers.

- Meet periodically (or appoint a deputy to meet) with the self-study committee during the creation of the self-study.
- Review draft versions of the self-study and make recommendations for amendment prior to submission of the final version to The Graduate and Professional School.
- Approve final version of the self-study.
- Meet with the external reviewers during the onsite visit.
- Attend the exit summary oral report.
- Provide feedback to the chair and the self-study committee on the response and the Action Plan resulting from the self-study and reviewers' written report.
- Schedule and monitor the implementation of the Action Plan.

Graduate Dean

- Identify and notify programs slated for review.
- Consult on final list of on-site reviewers from the list provided by the chair of the self-study committee.
- Be available to meet with the external reviewers during the onsite visit.
- Attend the exit summary oral report.
- Provide funding for
 - the external reviewers, to include travel and an honorarium,
 - production and distribution of the self-study.
- Be available to consult with self-study committee in creating the Action Plan.
- Submit final report to the Coordinating Board.
- With the academic dean, conduct a visit with reviewed programs after one year to monitor progress in implementing the Action Plan.

Outline of the Self-Study

This study will cover data from the ten (10) previous academic years, or the period since the last graduate program review.

Sources of data/information may include but are not limited to university data supplied by Institutional Research through the Graduate and Professional School; the graduate catalog; departmental records; college records; the program and department websites; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics; faculty interviews; student interviews and polling; and accreditation standards where applicable.

All self-studies will adhere to the following outline:

- I. **Program Profile** (for this section, members will review the university strategic planning statement, annual program assessment reporting, Institutional Effectiveness data, and graduate faculty interviews)
 - A. Mission of program
 1. Briefly describe the unit's mission, vision, goals and objectives.
 2. How does this align with the university's strategic plan?
 3. What unique role does your unit play or special contributions does it make to the university, state, and/or region?
 - B. History of the program
 - C. Program demographics (e.g., number of students/classes, number of degrees conferred annually, number of core faculty, etc.)
 - D. Faculty/Student ratio for each of the academic semesters under review
 - E. Alignment of program with stated program and institutional goals and purposes
 1. How does the program align with the program goals and the university goals?
 2. In the next several years, what factors will affect the demand for what you do?
 3. How can you position the unit to respond to changes in demand?

- II. Program Administration** (For this section, committee authors will need to discuss and clarify the differences between procedures/processes and university policies)
- A. Administrative processes including admission processes, etc.
 - 1. Evaluate the effectiveness of the procedures noting strengths to retain.
 - 2. Describe any planned changes.
 - B. Administrative policies
 - 1. What are the academic and administrative policies affecting your unit?
 - 2. What, if any, university infrastructural barriers impede your operations?
 - 3. What specific policy changes would the department propose to remedy/overcome those barriers?
 - C. Mentoring and Academic Advising
 - 1. Who designates and assigns advisors?
 - 2. Who monitors the student academic progress?
- III. Curriculum** (For this section, members will consult the most recently published University Graduate Catalogue, SHSU Online where applicable, the public records of comparable programs/institutions, and the published standards of appropriate accrediting bodies. Please see **Appendix E** for the online class evaluation rubric.)
- A. Description of curriculum (e.g., program length, degree plan, specializations, etc.)
 - 1. Describe major curriculum changes in the last several years.
 - 2. Discuss proposed changes to the curriculum. What evidence indicates the need for changes?
 - B. Appropriateness of curriculum
 - 1. Degree plan/s
 - 2. Content by course description. List all courses with their university catalogue descriptions.
 - 3. Compare Items B1 and B2 to any applicable accreditation standards.
 - 4. Compare Items B1 and B2 with similar programs of at least three (3) peer or near-peer aspirational institutions. At least one of these must be outside of Texas.
 - C. Description of comprehensive exams and dissertation/thesis processes
 - D. Cite and give brief descriptions of any/all accreditations.
 - E. Quality of Instruction
 - 1. Create a table IDEA scores for courses offered during the period under review
 - 2. Other evidence of quality of instruction
 - F. Quality of Online Course Offerings
 - 1. SHSU Online will supply a summary of the findings based upon the rubric in **Appendix F**.

IV. Faculty (For this section, members will review vitae/resumes and conduct interviews of all graduate faculty in the program/department. A short vita/resume for each faculty member should appear in **Appendix C**, “Faculty Resumes”)

A. Credentials

1. Appropriateness of faculty degrees
 - a. Core program faculty
 - b. Faculty supporting program through teaching or service
2. A tabular summary of peer-reviewed publications for the period under review
 - a. book/book length (editorial participation included)
 - b. key articles
 - c. abstracts/scientific notices
3. External grants submissions noting those funded/not funded
4. Academic conference presentations
5. Artistic endeavors
6. Awards/recognitions
7. Service to the profession at the state, regional, or national level
8. Professional experience

B. Teaching load

1. Provide a table showing the usual teaching load for each member. Cite/explain any notable deviations having occurred in the period under review.

C. Faculty demographics

D. Faculty program responsibilities (e.g., dissertation/thesis committees; comprehensive exam administration, etc.)

1. What is the dissertation/thesis supervision count per faculty member during the period under review?

V. Students (For this section, members will review university admissions policies, published program guidelines/the program website, Institutional Effectiveness data, and conduct a poll of students currently active in the program. The polling document should appear in **Appendix D**, “Current Student Poll”. Please see **Appendix D** for suggested polling items.)

A. Admission Criteria

B. Number of applicants for each year under review

1. Demographics (to include ethnicity and gender)

C. Profile of admitted students

1. Demographics
2. Full-time/part-time

D. Student funding

1. Percentage of full-time students with financial support
2. Average support per full-time student
3. Number of assistantships and description of duties/responsibilities

E. Program Performance Statistics

1. Graduation rate for each of the academic years under review
2. Average time to completion for each graduating cohort
3. Student retention rates
4. Graduate licensure rates (if applicable)
5. Employment profile upon graduation (i.e. employment or further education/training)
6. Student publication and awards (quantitative performance)
7. Student participation in funded grants

VI. Resources and Finances (for this section, members will review departmental and program budgets and interviews with the department chair and academic dean)

- A. Travel funds annually available
 1. For faculty
 2. For students
- B. Assistantships
- C. Scholarships
- D. Overall Program Budget
- E. Clerical/administrative support
- F. External funding other than awarded grants

VII. Facilities and Equipment

- A. Facilities
- B. Technology and Technology Costs
 1. Does this program require technology/tech support over and above the normal operations of the university? No discussion of basic faculty computing support is necessary here
 2. Other Special Equipment Needs

VIII. Assessment Efforts (For this section, members will consult the annual department and program assessment reporting for the years under review; various applicable data as described)

- A. Annual program assessment reporting results
 1. Student Learning Outcomes
 2. Dissertation/thesis quality reviews
- B. Alumni surveys
- C. Employer surveys
- D. Clinical supervisor surveys, if appropriate
- E. Student publications/grants/presentations (qualitative assessment)
- F. Program Recognition/awards
- G. Internships, if appropriate
- H. Other

IX. Recruitment and Marketing Efforts (For this section, members will consult among other sources with application data from Enrollment Management, SHSU Online, University Marketing and Communications, the

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, publications of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, University Advancement)

- A. Demand for graduates, including specific market trends and indicators for the program
- B. Geographical location from which students come
- C. Marketing and recruitment efforts and their effectiveness
- D. Current markets
- E. Potential new markets
- F. Enrollment plan for the next 5 years
- G. Alumni and donor relations

X. Outreach

- A. Service learning or community engaged learning
- B. Internships
- C. Professional outreach (providing professional services, such as consulting, etc.)

XI. Program specific issues

- A. Please list any issues such as licensure, specific accreditation requirements, or other issues uniquely relevant to the program under review.

XII. Summary (cited responses for this section should result from a general meeting of the relevant graduate faculty after having read a preliminary draft of the report—this section can become the core of the final response document)

- A. Strengths and Good Practices to Retain
- B. Items/areas of Concern
 - 1. For each listed item, identify the proposed solution/s

Appendices

Appendix A: Reviewer Guidelines

Reviewers not governed by external bodies should:

- A. Review the self-study prior to onsite visit.
- B. Conduct the onsite visit – one of the external reviewers will serve as chair of the team.
 - 1. The onsite visit must include inspection of the department/program website and sample course pages for online offerings, where appropriate.
- C. Conduct an exit interview as the last component of the onsite visit.
- D. Write an evaluation of the graduate program to include program strengths and recommendations for improvement. The evaluation should address each chapter of the self-study but need not be in identical format. Reviewers will submit the evaluation electronically to The Graduate and Professional School (thegraduateschool@shsu.edu) no later than four (4) weeks after the completion of the onsite visit.

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board has provided an optional Graduate Program External Review Form. [Graduate Program External Review Form \(texas.gov\)](#)

Appendix B: Sample Onsite Visit Itinerary

Understanding that each visit will be unique, the following will serve as a basic template for the onsite visit. The chair of the self-study committee will create the itinerary for the onsite review to include coordinating with individuals involved with the onsite visit. Additionally, the chair will coordinate the arrangements associated with the onsite review (e.g., lodging, travel, transportation, etc.).

Day 1

- Arrive at SHSU. Check into hotel.
- Dinner with the chair of the self-study committee (optional)

Day 2

- 7:30 – 8:30 Breakfast with chair of self-study committee
- 8:30 – 9:15 Meet with self-study committee
- 9:15 – 10:15 Meet with faculty members
- 10:15 - 10:30 Break
- 10:30 – 11:00 Meet with department chair
- 11:00- 11:30 Meet with academic dean
- 11:45 – 1:00 Lunch with self-study committee (Optional)
- 1:15 – 2:30 Time in document room/additional individual interviews (Optional)
- 2:30 – 3:00 Tour of campus and facilities (Optional)
- 3:00 – 3:30 Meet with provost and graduate dean
- 3:30 – 3:45 Break
- 3:45 – 5:00 Meet with students
- 5:00 – 5:30 Wrap-up with chair of self-study
- 6:00 – 7:00 Dinner, review team members only
- 7:00 - Time to work on report and prepare for exit interview

Day 3

- 7:30 – 8:30 Breakfast, review team only.
- 8:30 – 11:00 Time to prepare for exit interview
- 11:00 – 12:00 Conduct exit interview (academic dean, graduate dean, department chair, chair of the self-study committee)
- Lunch, if travel schedule permits
- External reviewers depart

Appendix C: Faculty Vitae/Resumes

Please include short resumes of all participating faculty.

Appendix D: Current Student Poll

Suggested Items for the Current Student Poll:

1. Overall satisfaction with the program.
2. Likert scale ranking of specific program components such as instruction, class availability, administrative support, degree planning, advising, and financial support availability.
3. Likert scale rankings of specific SHSU components like admissions, enrollment, financial aid, and the registrar.

These dozen items should be included but are not exhaustive of the possibilities. Programs will likely have specific questions for which they would like student responses.

Programs should ensure student anonymity in the survey process.

A sample of the survey instrument should appear in this appendix along with summary of results.

Appendix E: Online Class Evaluation Rubric (Double click image to open)

