

**SAM HOUSTON STATE UNIVERSITY  
SELF-STUDY GUIDELINES  
FOR GRADUATE PROGRAMS**

**October 2011**

## **Preface**

Graduate study demands excellence. Any expectation faculty place on students should be more than matched by expectations placed on the program and institutions. Sam Houston State University (SHSU) is committed to placing the responsibility of appropriate curriculum and academic excellence on its faculty. One component of a commitment to excellence is the willingness to be open to critical review, both from internal and external sources. Thus, all programs are encouraged to engage in external review processes.

This manual is designed to create a self-examination process that addresses the aspects that are common to all graduate programs as well as accommodating the unique attributes of each program. A self-study is but one tool to guide programs in their continuous improvement efforts in meeting the challenge of serving the needs of students, the university, and external stakeholders. The self-studies produced as a result of this manual will provide an overview of the programs as well as a detailed study of the curricula, 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 development of an action plan for improvement. The faculty and the support staff will conduct a thorough program review and produce a report with support documentation. 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. University leaders will develop an action plan in response to the results of the self-study and external review. It is recommended that the process be as transparent and inclusive as possible. The self-study, the external reviewers' report, and the response will all be sent to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

## **Selection of Self-Study Committee**

A self-study committee shall be created for purposes of compiling and writing the self-study. It is recommended that the chair of the self-study committee be the director of the graduate program within the respective department. The dean, based on recommendations by the chair, will select the remaining members of the committee. It is further recommended that the committee be fully or primarily comprised of core faculty and contain one outside member, preferably a faculty member from one of the University's other graduate programs. The outside member is not a requirement but is recommended. The size of the committee shall be determined by the department chair and academic dean.

## **Self-study Components**

All self-studies will address the following:

- I. Program Profile
  - Mission of program

Briefly describe the unit's mission, vision, goals and objectives. How does this align with the university's Strategic Plan? What is the unique role your unit plays or contributions it makes to the university, state, and/or region?

- History of program
- Program demographics (e.g., number of students/class, number of degrees conferred annually, number of core faculty, etc.)
- Faculty/Student ratio
- Alignment of program with stated program and institutional goals and purposes
  - How does the program align with the program goals and the university goals? In the next several years, what factors will impact the demand for what you do? How can you position the unit to respond to changes in demand?
- All doctoral programs must include the 18 Characteristics (See appendix)

## II. Program Administration

- Administrative processes including admission processes, etc.
  - Evaluate the effectiveness of the procedures and describe any planned changes.
- Administrative policies
  - What are the academic, structural and administrative barriers in your unit? How are you reducing them?
- Mentoring and Academic Advising
  - How are advisors assigned? Who monitors the student's progress?

## III. Curriculum

- Description of curriculum (e.g. program length, degree plan, specializations, etc.)
  - Describe major curriculum changes in the last several years.
  - Discuss proposed changes to the curriculum and what evidence led to the changes.
- Appropriateness of curriculum (e.g. content comparison and duration comparison with accrediting standards and peer and aspiration institutions)
- Description of comprehensive exams and dissertation/thesis processes
- Accreditations

## IV. Faculty

- Credentials
  - Appropriateness of degrees
  - Publications/external grants/presentations/artistic endeavors
    - Describe new research initiatives and discuss how they address the citizens, government, economy, and environment of the state of Texas. Are faculty members competitive in receiving external grants? What constraints

to faculty productivity are you facing? Are you competitive (assistants, start-up funds, administrative processes, etc.) with other graduate programs in your discipline at similar institutions? How are you enhancing faculty productivity and competitiveness?

- Awards/recognitions
- Service to the profession
- Professional experience
- Teaching load
- Diversity
- Program responsibilities (e.g., dissertation/thesis committees/comps, etc.)
- Program faculty profile
  - Core faculty
  - Support faculty

#### V. Students

- Admission Criteria
- Number of applicants/admits/enrolled
  - Demographics (to include ethnicity and gender)
- Profile of admitted students
  - Demographics
  - Full-time/part-time
  - Description of assistantship responsibilities
- Student funding
  - Percentage of full-time students with financial support
  - Average support per full-time student
- Graduation rate
- Time to completion
- Student retention rates
- Graduate licensure rates (if applicable)
- Employment profile upon graduation (i.e. employment or further education/training)
- Student publication and awards

#### VI. Resources and Finances

- Travel funds
- Assistantships
- Scholarships
- Program Budget
- Clerical/administrative support
- External funding
- Faculty

#### VII. Facilities and Equipment

- Facilities
- Technology
- Other Equipment

#### VIII. Assessment efforts

- Alumni surveys
- Employer surveys
- Clinical supervisor surveys, if appropriate
- Student learning outcomes
- Dissertation/thesis quality
- Student publications/grants/presentations
- Recognition/awards
- Internships, if appropriate
- Other

#### IX. Recruitment and Marketing Efforts

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

#### X. Outreach

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

#### XI. Program specific issues

- This could include issues such as licensure, specific accreditation requirements, or other issues relevant to just that program.

#### XII. Program strengths and recommendations for improvement (Data –driven decisions)

### **Timeline**

It is expected that each graduate program conduct a self-study on a regular basis. The time between self-studies should not exceed seven years. The timeline for each program's review is attached. Master's programs in the same 6-digit classification of instructional programs code as doctoral programs must be reviewed simultaneously with their related doctoral programs. A report of the outcomes of the review, including the

evaluation of the external reviewers, the self-study and the institution's response with actions to be taken must be provided to the Coordinating Board by the Office of Graduate Studies no later than 90 days after the reviewers have submitted their findings to the institution.

### **Outside Reviewers**

A team of two outside reviewers will be created to (1) review the self-study, (2) perform an onsite review of the program, and (3) provide a written report containing a response to the self-study, a summary of observations during the onsite visit and recommendations (strengths and concerns). These reviewers must be outside the state of Texas. Appendix A contains guidelines for the reviewers.

#### ***Selection of Outside Reviewers***

The chair of the self-study committee (usually the director of the graduate program) will submit a list of at least eight names of faculty who are active in a graduate program of the same discipline to the Office of Graduate Studies. Potential reviewers should be part of a program that is nationally recognized for excellence in the discipline. The list of potential outside reviewers must be approved by the academic dean prior to submission to the Office of Graduate Studies. The Office of Graduate Studies will be responsible for inviting reviewers to campus. The final list of reviewers, with possible onsite visit dates, will be given to the chair of the self-study committee. The chair of the self-study committee will be responsible for arranging the itinerary. Appendix B contains a sample itinerary. Programs being 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.

### **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 be addressed in the self-study.
- In conjunction with the self-study committee, department chair and academic dean, provide the Office of Graduate Studies a list of candidates to serve as external reviewers.
- Provide the final version of the self-study, through the academic dean, to the Office of Graduate Studies for dissemination.
- 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.
- Coordinate the creation of the Action Plan. Present to the provost, academic dean, graduate dean, and department chair.



***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 improvement 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 Action Plan prepared in response to the self-study and reviewers' written report.

***Academic Dean***

- Provide feedback and make the final decisions concerning members of the self-study committee.
- Make recommendations for outside reviewers.
- Meet periodically with the self-study committee during the creation of the self-study.
- Review draft versions of the self-study and make recommendations for improvement prior to submission of the final version to the Office of Graduate Studies.
- 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 Action Plan prepared in response to the self-study and reviewers' written report.
- Monitor the implementation of the Action Plan.

***Graduate Dean***

- Identify the programs to be reviewed and set the schedule for their review in consultation with the provost, academic dean, department chair, and director of the doctoral program and/or graduate coordinator.
- Create final list of onsite reviewers, with potential visitation dates, 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, when appropriate, 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 Provost for final approval.
- Submit final report to the President and The Coordinating Board.

***Provost***

- Be available to meet with the external reviewers during the onsite visit.



- Attend the exit summary oral report.
- Be available to consult with the Graduate Dean and Academic Dean concerning the Action Plan.
- Make modifications and give final approval to the Action Plan.

## **Appendix A: Reviewer Guidelines**

Reviewers, not governed by external bodies, are expected to:

- Review the self-study prior to onsite visit.
- Conduct the onsite visit – one of the external reviewers will serve as chair of the team. The Graduate Dean will ask one external reviewer to serve as chair.
- Conduct an exit interview as the last component of the onsite visit.
- 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. The evaluation should be submitted electronically to the Office of Graduate Studies ([graduate@shsu.edu](mailto:graduate@shsu.edu)). The evaluation should be submitted no later than six weeks after the completion of the onsite visit.

## **Appendix B: Sample Itinerary**

Understanding that each visit may be unique, the following may serve as a 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
- 1:15 – 2:30 Time in document room
- 2:30 – 3:00 Tour of campus and facilities
- 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 (provost, academic dean, graduate dean, department chair, chair of the self-study committee)
- Lunch, if travel schedule permits
- External reviewers depart