

How to Write Self-Study Reports for Academic Departments
New England Association of School and Colleges
Committee on Technical and Career Institutions
Revised August 2018

Introduction

This document was developed to assist teachers and administrators in drafting reports for Academic Departments to be evaluated by Visiting Teams from the New England Association of Schools & Colleges. Use it as a guideline.

Remember that the report you are being asked to write is designed to provide the NEASC Visiting Team with solid, impartial information about your School/Center. Your report must fairly and objectively state what is happening in the Academic Department, highlight program strengths, and include recommendations for program improvement.

If you follow these guidelines, we are confident that your report will be one which provides the Visiting Team with the information it needs to make informed judgments about your Department or Program.

Format of the Report

Your report will consist of three things: (1) a Program Narrative, (2) Strengths, and (3) Areas of Need. These are discussed separately in the coming few pages.

While you are writing the Self-Study, keep all three components in mind.

Length of the Report

NEASC does not require you to write a report of a specific length. However, as a general rule, reports for Academic Departments should be 3-6 pages in length.

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Program Narrative

Make your report clear, concise, honest, and well written.

Write short sentences. Support your judgments with facts and evidence.

To the best of your ability, follow the outline below. Do so in the order indicated, if possible. Respond to each of the questions. Where a question does not apply, indicate that.

In drafting your Self-Study Report, include evidence that relates to the Indicators in Standards 2 (Curriculum), Standard 3 (Instruction), and Standard 4 (Assessment).

While we defer to the professional judgment of the individual School/Center regarding the exact composition of the Self-Study, we expect that every School/Center will respond to ***each*** of the questions posed below:

1. Department Basics. Where is the Department/Program located? What is the physical layout? How many classrooms are there? What equipment or technology is present? Is the classroom conducive to flexible grouping of students? Are there any obvious safety or health issues? Does the area appear to be clean? Is there proper signage? Is there a clear evacuation route? What's the overall appearance to visitors?

2. Curriculum (Standard 2).

Indicators 1 – 10

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3. Instruction (Standard 3).

Indicators 1 – 6

4. Assessment (Standard 4).

Indicators 1 – 8

5. Student Clubs and Awards. What is the level of student involvement in co-curricular activities such as Math Club or Rho Kappa? If students take part in subject matter competitions, to what extent have they been successful?
[Standard 4, Indicator 7]

6. Faculty. How do instructors in the Academic Department keep up-to-date in their field? Do they receive adequate professional development? How do they demonstrate professional leadership and other teacher responsibilities?
[Standard 3, Indicator 5]

7. Adequacy of Department/Program Resources. In your professional judgment, does the department appear to have sufficient resources? Is there sufficient staff? Is the equipment and technology consistent with current practice? If not, what is missing? Is all the equipment working properly? Does the program appear to receive a budget large enough to implement the curriculum?
[Standard 2, Indicator 6]

Note: Comments on safety concerns or major defects in the structure of the physical plant (i.e., condition of the roof, walls, lighting, heating, ventilation, bathrooms, signage, personal protective equipment, handicapped accessibility, etc.) should also be included in the Visiting Team's Report under Standard 7, Indicator 5.)

8. Climate in the Department/Program. What is the culture/climate/atmosphere in the department? Is there a welcoming, all-inclusive atmosphere? Is it collaborative? Is there any evidence of harassing language or behavior? Is the climate gender-neutral? Identify strategies used to create and maintain a positive, inclusive climate in the department's classrooms. [Standard 1, Indicators 1; Standard 1, Indicator 3; and Standard 3, Indicator 1; Standard 5, Indicator 1; Standard 5, Indicator 2)]

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9. Identify and discuss any initiatives that the department is considering for program improvements in curriculum, instruction, or assessment.

Strengths

Part of your work in writing the report is to identify the department's "Strengths".

- In your list of "Strengths," list only those accomplishments or achievements that go "above and beyond" the norm. Suggest a commendation for doing something "exemplary," "exceptional," "one-of-a-kind," or "truly outstanding."
- Do not suggest something is a "Strength" if the department is simply doing its job – or even doing its job well – only for doing its job *exceptionally* well.
- If there isn't something that you feel is worthy of noting as a "Strength," leave this section blank.

Here are a few examples of Strengths:

1. Teachers spend a significant amount of time with students, both before and after school, to provide them with extra help and to personalize their instruction.
2. Every teacher in the English Department serves as a peer coach, providing their colleagues with professional feedback for the purpose of improving instruction.
3. The Science Department faculty wrote a grant application that secured \$75,000 to enable the school to purchase new lab equipment to expand training opportunities for students.

Focus Areas of Improvement

Your "Focus Areas of Improvement" must be clear and concise. They must be supported by facts.

- Identify Focus Areas of Improvement to improve the quality of the program or opportunities for students.
- Identify only those Focus Areas of Improvement that are clearly supported. Do not include recommendations that result from a single personal gripe, personal grudge, or purely personal interest.
- If you cannot identify a Focus Area of Improvement, leave the section **blank**.

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Here are examples “Focus Areas of Improvement”:

1. Create a plan to address the lack of adequate storage for lab chemicals in the Science Department to eliminate a potential safety issue.
2. Replace damaged ceiling tiles in several academic classrooms to improve overall appearance.
3. Establish a system to better communicate grading expectations and practices to parents so they can be better informed about their student’s progress.
4. Seek additional resources to update technology in Math Department classrooms to provide students with a stronger curriculum.

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