



Strategic Program Assessment

Instructions and Advice to Programs

2023-2024

Instructions

- Please watch Teams for all communications, and please use Teams to work with your SPA team and get advice from other programs undertaking SPA. Many resources including this document, links to forms, video recordings of meetings/workshops will be stored here.
- **Deadline: Five key items are due to the Graduate School by May 13, 2024.** You will submit these items using a form that will be made available later. Together these comprise your full SPA report:
 1. A signed letter confirming you have completed the program maintenance checklist.
 2. Copies of the document templates requested in the program maintenance checklist document.
 3. Self-study narrative (and possibly an external review, see below). The main narrative of the self-study should be roughly 10-15 pages, single-spaced, though we have seen good reports that are both shorter and longer than these guidelines. Please try to make the self-study self-contained by paginating it and attaching or selectively including key data/information you reference and discuss within the self-study. Appendices (not included in the main narrative) are welcome.
 4. The PDF commentary from your college's graduate assistant/associate dean (GAAD).
 5. The PDF form from your Chair endorsing the self-study.
- A progress update will be due by December 18, 2023; this will also have a form.
- Please work with your college to determine if an external review will be conducted; if so, please let the Graduate School know at your earliest convenience. This information will be captured in a form due from your GAAD by August 1.
- The most important aspect of the self-study is the final "Looking Forward" section. This section contains your self-identified priorities looking ahead to the next 5-10 years.
- The earlier sections of the self-study will help you identify what these priorities might be. Several of the sections represent a continuous quality improvement cycle in which you define goals, describe what you're doing to meet them, and then compare your actual data to your goals to see where you are meeting them. Any places where you are not meeting your goals represent possible goals/priorities looking forward. You may also have new goals if you have met your current ones. In some cases, you may not have existing goals. One outcome of this assessment might be defining goals moving forward.
- As you work on the self-study, you may discover that different questions might help you better assess your program. Feel free to reach out to the Graduate School if you wish to propose modifying or replacing any of the questions. Likewise, some questions may not be relevant to

your program. If something is not applicable, you do not need to provide a long response for that question. In the extreme, you can respond with simply “Not applicable.”

- We are providing you with an assortment of data. There may be errors. Please review the data carefully and report any potential errors/omissions as soon as possible to Graduate School Data Specialist Dr. Ifeoma Iyioko (ify@msu.edu). Use the most accurate data source available to you and maintain required confidentiality when reporting.
- We may ask you to discuss some specific characteristics from your data in your self-studies. These would be provided to you by September 1.
- As much as possible, provide evidence (quantitative/qualitative/mixed) to support any claims. We recognize you do not have the resources to assess everything, but some assessment, especially for key findings, will strengthen the self-study. You can use your own data sources and collect additional evidence during your self-study. Please cite data sources so we know which sources are useful.

Feedback

- After all self-studies are submitted this year, the Graduate School will meet with your GAAD to discuss all the programs in your college undergoing Strategic Program Assessment in this year.
- After that meeting, your GAAD will meet with you to discuss both college and Graduate School feedback.
- The Graduate School will retain a copy of your full SPA report that may be provided, as needed, as part of the Higher Learning Commission accreditation process.

Advice

- **This self-study should not be completed solely by the Graduate Program Director.** Ideally, you should initially meet with your chair or program director and then determine how you will involve your graduate committee, faculty, graduate program staff, and graduate students as appropriate. For example, your graduate committee and graduate student leaders might provide feedback on drafts of the self-study. If you see data such as survey results that are not clear, you might meet with your graduate student leaders or a focus group of graduate students to try to understand a pattern.
- Before you look at any of the self-assessment questions, you may want to review the data provided to you about your program. What are your impressions of the data? Do the data look accurate? Do the data match your expectations? Does anything surprise you? In reviewing this data, have you learned anything new about your program?
- You may wish to form a peer learning group to work on your self-study with programs also completing theirs. In this way, you can share ideas with other programs as you think about how to answer various questions, or simply dedicate time to work on the self-study during a co-working session. This may also promote sharing of new ideas across MSU.
- If a question requests information that is better presented in a response to a different question, refer readers to that other response; reprise information only if it aids understanding in a new response context.
- Finally, you may want to look over all the questions to see how the various sections connect.