



Strategic Program Assessment

Self-Study Questions

2023-2024

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.

Program Context

1. Briefly describe local/national/international trends in your discipline and profession that will most affect your program in the next 5-10 years. These trends should be informed by perspectives from potential employers and other stakeholder groups.¹
2. Please *briefly* describe any characteristics of your graduate program that provide important context for the rest of your self-study. While not a strict requirement, anything added here should be referenced later in the self-study. Items you reference might include but are not limited to the following.
 - a. Changes you have made to your program during the last five years that would help explain some of your results and ongoing priorities and gaps they may fill. No need to include changes that will not impact your program moving forward.
 - b. Unique ways your graduate students contribute to your research, teaching, and outreach missions.
 - c. The competitive landscape of graduate programs in your discipline.
 - d. Some of the trends, issues, and/or challenges related to diversity, equity, and inclusion in your program or discipline.²
 - e. How your program is funded: Revenue-based initiative, research assistantships, teaching assistantships, etc.

Student Population Goals and Processes

In this section, we ask a series of questions regarding your goals, processes, and opportunities for growth and improvement with respect to (i) recruiting and admission, (ii) retention and graduation, and (iii) placement. Throughout this section, as you describe your processes, include

¹ To complement your field-specific information, the Council of Graduate Schools provides [trend reports](#) that may be helpful in summarizing trends and setting benchmarks here or in later questions.

² STEM disciplines may find relevant diversity trends and benchmarks from the [National Center for Science & Engineering Statistics](#).

information on how you connect your students to College and University processes and offerings as appropriate.

3. Recruiting and Admission

- a. What are your goals with respect to the following recruiting and admission metrics?
 - i. Application pool size and composition
 - ii. Entering cohort size and composition
- b. Describe your key recruiting and admission processes, ideally connecting them to the goals you outlined in part (a) of this question. Please highlight efforts made to recruit and admit a diverse group of students with potentially unique needs and interests.
- c. Analyze your application and admitted/entering student data in relation to the goals you identified in part (a) of this question. Where are you meeting and not meeting your goals (relate to 3a above)? Please be sure to address diversity, equity, and inclusion in your response.

4. Retention and Graduation

- a. What are your goals with respect to the following retention and graduation metrics?
 - i. Percentage of students who graduate in a timely manner
 - ii. Time to complete key milestones (especially graduation but potentially other milestones such as completing coursework, completing the qualifying examination, completing the comprehensive exam).
- b. Please describe your program's efforts to retain and graduate a diverse group of students with potentially unique needs and interests.
- c. Summarize your retention and graduation data (time to degree and cohort outcome data) in relation to the goals you identified in part (a) of this question. From a diversity, equity, and inclusion perspective, please summarize your entire student population and subpopulations historically minoritized in your discipline or program (e.g., gender, citizenship, parental status, race/ethnicity). Where are you meeting and not meeting your goals?

5. Placement, Career Preparation, and Professional Development

- a. What are your unit's goals for student placement outcomes and how do they align with students' goals?
- b. Describe your program's career preparation and professional development processes, ideally connecting them to the goals you outlined in part (a) of this question. This answer should include what is offered within your program, and programming offered elsewhere (e.g., your college or the Graduate School or by a professional society). Please highlight efforts made to support a diverse group of students with potentially unique needs, interests, and goals.
- c. Summarize your placement data in relation to the goals you identified in part (a) of this question. Where do you feel you are you meeting and not meeting your goals? Please be sure to address diversity, equity, and inclusion in your response.

6. Based on your responses to the previous questions in this section, as you look forward, please answer the following questions.
 - a. What are key priorities your program might focus on to improve recruiting, admission, retention, graduation, and placement outcomes? These might emerge from gaps between your current data and goals identified in the previous questions in this section, or they may reflect strategic opportunities for growth even if there are no such gaps
 - b. What new processes might your unit develop to achieve these priorities?
 - c. How will your unit assess the effectiveness of your efforts?
 - d. What challenges does your unit need to overcome and what strategies may help address these needs?

Student Learning Outcomes

You can combine your answers for Qs 7-9 into a single table, but if you do, please also provide text that defines key terms, explains how different outcomes are linked, and interprets the meaning of a result in terms of the learning outcome.

7. List the student learning outcomes for the program and for any associated certificates.
8. For each learning outcome, explain your assessment method(s) for determining whether the learning outcome is achieved by a given student. More precisely, for each learning outcome, describe what evidence you use and how you use the evidence to determine if the learning outcome is achieved. The evidence should be direct qualitative or quantitative evidence of student performance, i.e., something students did that demonstrated the extent to which they achieved the outcome. Examples of evidence include a course as a whole, a course assignment, a licensure examination, and a program milestone such as a qualifying examination and comprehensive examination. Examples of how the evidence is used might include passing the qualifying examination or achieving a specific grade in a course or course assignment.
9. For each learning outcome and associated assessment method, analyze how well your students are achieving each learning outcome. From a diversity, equity, and inclusion perspective, please consider your entire student population and subpopulations historically minoritized in your discipline or program (e.g., gender, citizenship, parental status, race/ethnicity). Please show the results of your analysis, identifying which learning outcomes are achieved by which student groups in your program and which learning outcomes are not successfully achieved by which student groups in your program.
10. Based on your responses to the questions in this section, as you look forward, please answer the following questions.
 - a. What are some key priorities/goals your program might focus on to improve student achievement of your learning outcomes?
 - b. What programmatic changes would be needed to achieve these goals?
 - c. How will you assess the effectiveness of your efforts?
 - d. What challenges do you need to overcome?
 - e. What help might you need and from whom?

Student Learning Outcomes Review

11. Compare degree requirements and goals for your program to those at an appropriate peer group for your program (e.g., Big Ten Academic Alliance universities). You may want to put this information into comparison tables, but if you do, please provide one or two sentences summarizing the data. Differences in requirements make sense, particularly if programs have different goals.
12. How did you develop your student learning outcomes for your program?
13. What review process do you have for evaluating and potentially modifying your student learning outcomes?
14. What feedback, if any, do you have from employers or students with respect to your student learning outcomes or, more broadly, your curriculum?
15. Based on your responses to the questions in this section, your program context from section 1, feedback from employers and students, and your placement data, as you look forward, please answer the following questions.
 - a. What, if any, changes will you make to your student learning outcomes?
 - b. If you plan to make changes, how will you assess your new learning outcomes?
 - c. Finally, how will you assess the effectiveness of these changes?

Support for Holistic Student Success

16. Classroom Instruction
 - a. How do you assess the quality and effectiveness of classroom instruction of graduate students in your program? Focus on courses offered by your unit.
 - b. Briefly summarize the overall trends and any important outliers from your assessment of the quality of classroom instruction.
 - c. How does your program address any issues that arise during this assessment in part (b)?
 - d. How does your program encourage and reward teaching development for your program's instructors? As part of this effort, how do you connect to resources and efforts provided by your college, MSU, professional societies, or other networks?

17. Advising and Mentoring

In the questions below, please compare your efforts and results to the [MSU Guidelines on Graduate Student Mentoring and Advising](#).

- a. How does advising and mentoring typically occur in your program? As part of this answer, if your program has thesis or dissertation committees, what are your expectations for how committees advise and mentor students?
- b. How do you assess the quality and effectiveness of advising and mentoring of graduate students in your program?
- c. Briefly summarize overall trends and any important outliers from your assessment of the quality of advising and mentoring.
- d. How does your program address any issues that arise during this assessment in part b)?

- e. How does your program encourage professional development for your program's advisors and mentors? As part of this effort, how do you connect to resources and efforts provided by your college, MSU, professional societies, or other networks?

18. Student Wellbeing

After reviewing your gradSERU health and wellbeing results (in combination with any additional health and wellbeing information you may have from other surveys, interviews with students, or conversations with faculty & staff about students), please describe any efforts your program may take to improve the health and wellbeing of your program's students. These efforts could include changes to your program as well as advocacy and input to larger changes at the department, college, or university levels.

19. Based on your responses to the previous questions in this section, as you look forward, please answer the following questions. From a diversity, equity, and inclusion perspective, please consider your entire student population as a whole and subpopulations historically minoritized in your discipline or program (e.g., gender, citizenship, parental status, race/ethnicity).
 - a. What are some key priorities/goals your program might focus on to improve the advising, mentoring, instruction, and wellness of your students?
 - b. What new processes might you develop to achieve these priorities?
 - c. How will you assess the effectiveness of your efforts?
 - d. What challenges do you need to overcome?
 - e. What help and resources might you need and from whom to achieve your goals?

Additional Information

20. Please discuss any aspirations, achievements, issues, or concerns that were not addressed in the previous questions.

Looking Forward

21. Based on the opportunities for improving your program you identified above, please answer the following questions:
 - a. What are your strategic priorities for the next 5-10 years, classifying them as short term (1-3 years), medium term (3-5 years), and long term (5-10 years)?
 - b. What do you foresee as your greatest challenges as you map out your strategic priorities?
 - c. How will you address these challenges?
 - d. What assistance do you need from your department, college, the Graduate School, and/or other units to meet these challenges?