**Self-Study Guidelines for the Review of
Educational Programs and Research Centers**

American University of Armenia

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Modified for Acopian Center for the Environment Self-Study
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Introduction

An integral part of AUA's commitment to the improvement of student learning through continuous assessment is the self-study/audit cycle. Starting in 2008, the University will begin a new cycle that will end in 2011. In order to meet the needs of the University, the AUA Evaluation Plan calls for the regular review of all academic programs and research centers by the Curriculum Committee. The primary goals of the review process are to continuously enhance the academic programs and research centers and to move the University forward in meeting its mission and strategic plan.

In addition to the primary purposes of evaluation and improvement, the self-study reports of the academic programs and research centers and the subsequent audit reports of the Curriculum Committee will form the base for the two reports required by WASC for its on-site reviews of the University in 2012 and 2013. The AUA Guidelines for the self-study process have taken into consideration all WASC "criteria for review" (CFRs).

The review process includes two steps: (1) The self-study and report of the academic program or research center based on the AUA Educational Review Guidelines and (2) the audit of the academic program/research center by the Curriculum Committee based on the self-study report. (The audit team, which in this cycle will include outside evaluators, reviews the appropriateness of the program/center's mission, goals, objectives and learning outcomes, the extent to which all three have been met, and the overall quality of the program.)

The review process begins with the self-study. The Guidelines were developed to assist in this process. The purpose of the self-study is to allow the faculty, administration, students, alumni and other stakeholders of each academic program and center (1) to evaluate accomplishments and challenges, (2) to engage the academic program and research center in strategic planning, and (3) to use data/information and analyses to make changes that improve the program and student learning.

Faculty members of the academic program/research center, including adjunct and core visiting faculty, must be involved in the self-study process as must students, alumni, and other stakeholders such as employers of graduates. The Dean/Director and faculty members decide how to conduct the self-study, who will write which portions of the report, and the timeline of activities.

Let me share with you some of the basics:

- The self-study is a process that results in a report. A major part of this self-study effort is the improvement of the academic program/research center. This is the time for you to make changes based on your analyses of the data and information you collect.

- Make sure to keep minutes of all faculty meetings and that the minutes document discussion of the self-study process.

- The self-study report needs to be concise, based on evidence, and well-argued. This is very much a self-evaluation based on data and information collected for the self-study. Data can include all sorts of statistics and trends, interviews and group discussions with students and alumni, and other collected information. Anecdotal evidence is not sufficient.

- The self-study report is in narrative format. Data and other information are presented in several required appendices. The appendices will form a separate large folder of documents.

- This is a process that is tied to the future and to the past – it is not just one more discrete report. This new self-study should take into consideration the reports prepared for the self-study in 2003-2004 and the reports of the 2006 audits – if and when applicable - and should mark progress that has been made along with obstacles and how they have or have not been overcome.

- The audit teams will be evaluating how the academic program/research center has met its own recommendations (if applicable) as stated in the 2003-2004 self-studies and how it has dealt with the recommendations of the 2006 audit teams. Wherever possible and relevant, include how you have handled these two sets of recommendations when answering the Guideline questions.

- As a result of the self-study process, the academic programs and research centers will make new changes that improve the programs. Make sure to include a discussion of the changes that have been made already as a result of this self-study process. Include a discussion and/or list of planned future changes resulting from the self-study process.

- Use the table of contents and the order of contents provided in Attachment A. You may add but may not delete items.

- Make sure to answer all of the AUA Guideline questions. You must answer all questions in the narrative but not necessarily in the order indicated in the Guidelines.

- Add information that you believe is important.

- Two components of the self-study are on-going and you are engaged in them already – enrollment/student recruitment and assessment of student learning. All you will need to do is plug information into the self-study report.

- Do your best to limit the length of the self-study report to 20-25 pages, excluding appendices.

The IRO Manager, Anush Bezhanyan, is ready to assist you by locating and providing data that she has collected in the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment. Her office maintains data for each program and center on student and faculty demographics, degrees granted, enrollment, exit and alumni surveys, students and faculty full and part time, student-faculty ratio, and grades.

In addition to these regularly updated data, you may contact Anush to arrange for special reports – just make sure to make your requests in a timely manner.   Anush also has a long list of resources on assessment that she will be happy to share with you.

Components of the Self-Study Process and Report

Component 1: Program/Research Center Description and Evolution

Mission

1. What is the mission of the academic program/center?
2. Does the academic program/center's mission statement clearly describe the program/center's purpose? How has it changed since the establishment of the program/center?
3. How well is the program/center's mission aligned with the University's mission and strategic plan?
4. How well does the program/center serve the community?
5. How well does the center address the needs of all stakeholders (i.e. students, university, benefactors, funders)?
6. How well does the center balance public education and advocacy with the academic aspects of its subject matter?

Overall Program Goals and Educational Objectives

1. What are the program's goals, educational objectives/competencies, and learning outcomes? Are they consistent with the program's mission and purpose? How are the educational objectives published?
2. Where is the program now and where do you expect and want it to be in five years? (Attach the latest academic program strategic plan as an appendix.)

Component 2: Academic Program/Research Center Profile and Processes

Governance

1. What is program/center's administrative organization?
2. How are curricular and other decisions made?
3. How does the policy on academic freedom for faculty, staff, and students operate in the program/center?
4. How does program/center administration assure that all students are treated fairly and equitably?
5. What are the procedures in place for addressing student conduct, grievances, and human subjects in research?
6. Are curriculum requirements clearly published and understood by students, faculty, and staff?

Students

1. How are students involved in the curriculum decision-making?
2. How are student needs and satisfaction levels identified and used?

3. Are there opportunities for student-faculty communication outside the classroom?
4. What is the program's grading policy? How is it communicated to students? How is course grading evaluated? How are problems such as grade inflation handled? How are grade appeals handled?

Faculty

1. Is there a sufficient number of qualified faculty to sustain the program? How is faculty workload determined? *(Summarize faculty data in an appendix.)*
2. Are faculty credentials appropriate for the curriculum?
3. What are the program's faculty recruitment, retention, and promotion processes? What are faculty turn-over trends?
4. How are annual faculty reviews used to improve student learning?
5. How are faculty included in taking collective responsibility for participating in the development, implementation, and assessment of objectives and learning outcomes?
6. How are faculty members included in program governance and strategic planning? *(Attach faculty minutes from the past three years in an appendix.)*
7. How is mentoring junior and visiting faculty conducted in the program?
8. What notable activities have the faculty been engaged in since the university-wide 2003-2004 self-study in the areas of teaching, scholarship and service?
9. What has the academic program done to support faculty development?

Research

1. What kinds of funded research does the Center undertake?
2. What institutions are the main funders of the Center?
3. Does the center have any joint projects or regular research partners?
4. How does the program's research center provide students with research opportunities?
5. What is the relationship between the academic program and the research center?
6. Are there other opportunities for students to engage in research and scholarly activity? How have they been realized?
7. What are the notable awards and publications of faculty and students resulting from center activity? (Provide a list of awards, publications, and conference presentations as an appendix.)

Resources and support services

1. Describe and evaluate the department/center's facilities, equipment and computer and communications resources.
2. How do AUA library holdings in the program/center's field meet the needs of the program/center?
3. Is there adequate staff support to meet program/center goals?
4. Discuss and prioritize the program/center's most important specific needs.

Component 3: Teaching and Academic Assessment

Curriculum

1. How does the curriculum meet the program/center's mission, goals and objectives?
2. How are the mission, goals, objectives, and learning outcomes of the curriculum communicated to students?
3. Are objectives and learning outcomes stated in all course syllabi? (Include all course objectives and learning outcomes in an appendix.)
4. How and how often is the curriculum reviewed by faculty, both informally and formally? (Include minutes of faculty meetings for the past three years.)
5. Does the program/center's curriculum have an international perspective?
6. What are the program/center's plans for improving the curriculum?

Academic assessment

1. What is the status of the program assessment plan? Provide evidence that all student learning outcomes of the program will be assessed by 2009. (Attach a copy of program's assessment plan as an appendix).
2. How does the program assess student satisfaction with the program? "Closing the loop." How has the assessment of learning outcomes been used to improve student learning and the effectiveness of the curriculum?
3. How have assessments of student satisfaction been used to improve student learning and the effectiveness of the curriculum?

Component 4: Enrollment – keep heading and indicate N/A

Component 5: Overall Evaluation and Recommendations

1. What are the program/center's strengths and major accomplishments within the last three years and in what ways has the program changed?
2. What is the program/center's impact on the country and region? Include also information on former students' accomplishments for the last three years.
3. What are the program/center's weaknesses? Where areas could most use improvement? What challenges or obstacles make it difficult for the program/center to overcome these weaknesses? What further challenges do you foresee in the next five years?
4. Is there a continuing need for the program/center in the country and the region?
5. What are the program/center's main challenges and what are the recommendations for overcoming them? What recommendations have already been implemented as a result of the self-study process?

Required Appendices for the Report

Follow numbering and headings. You may add additional appendices to the end of the list.

1. Academic unit profile
   a. Student statistical summary (for the past three years: descriptive, GPA, PT/FT, international students, etc. Can be obtained from IRO Office.)
   b. Faculty statistical summary (for the past three years: list of faculty members, positions, PT/FT, citizenship, highest degree. Can be obtained from the IRO Office,)
   c. Faculty CVs for the past three years
2. Curriculum: Course list organized by program objectives/competencies with course objectives and learning outcomes listed for each course
3. List of faculty publications, conference participations, awards, etc.
4. Copies of minutes of faculty meetings for the past three years.

Attachment A : Required Table of Contents for the Self Study Report

Include all titles and subtitles in the order provided. You may add but not delete items.

Title Page

Executive Summary

Participants in the Self-Study Process

Academic Program/Research Center Description and Evolution
Mission
Overall program/center goals and educational objectives

Academic Program/Research Center Profile and Processes
Governance
Students
Faculty
Research
Resources and support services

Teaching and Academic Assessment
Curriculum
Academic assessment

Enrollment

Overall Evaluation and Recommendations

Required Appendices
1. Academic unit profile
    a. Student statistical summary
    b. Faculty statistical summary
    c. Faculty CVs
2. Curriculum: Course listing, course objectives and learning outcomes
3. Assessment plan
4. Annual assessment reports
5. Entrance scores for the past three years
6. Strategic plan
7. Student handbook
8. List of faculty accomplishments
9. Faculty meeting minutes