

II.5 The Plan for the Self-Study

The comprehensive review process begins with a notice from the Office for Accreditation advising the school of the scheduled comprehensive review of the program. This notification occurs approximately two (2) years before the ERP's planned visit. During the next few months, the Program Head works with the OA Director to select specific dates for the visit. The COA approves an ERP Chair from a list of highly qualified and experienced reviewers. After the program clears the proposed ERP Chair for any conflicts of interest, the Office invites the reviewer to chair. Appointment to ERP Chair can be made after the reviewer declares no conflicts of interest and confirms availability for the preparations and visit. Following appointment of the ERP Chair, the program begins developing a plan for its Self-Study.

At least one year before the site visit, the Program Head submits the Plan for the Self-Study to the OA Director and the ERP Chair for review. The main purpose of the plan is to ensure that the preparation for program review is done in a timely, thorough, and effective manner. In writing the plan, the school decides whether to give special focus in the Self-Study to specific areas, such as an initiative or a comprehensive curriculum review. The Plan is most effective when the school takes a future-oriented approach, often building on strategic planning documents, vision statements, biennial narrative reports to the COA, and other such items that the school already has or is planning for the near future.

The plan is discussed by the Program Head, the OA Director, and the ERP Chair in a conference call. During the conference call, the ERP Chair and the Program Head begin to work on preliminary scheduling of the visit activities.

The Plan for the Self-Study should be detailed enough to:

- Outline the process the school and program will follow as it prepares for the accreditation review (e.g., committee structure, faculty and staff assignments, responsibility for developing the documents required);
- Describe any special areas of emphasis for the comprehensive review;
- Describe the layout of the document;
- Include a timeline that allows the school to submit a complete draft Self-Study four (4) months before the site visit date and a final Self-Study at least six (6) weeks before the site visit date;
- List by standard the evidence that will be used in the Self-Study to indicate compliance with the *Standards* and how the evidence will be presented: in the text of the document as tables, charts, graphs, or links; as appendices; or on-site only. See section II.7.4: Organization and format of the Self-Study for a list of examples of evidence that is typically needed to indicate compliance with the Standards.

The Plan should indicate whether other reviews, such as university, state or institutional, are scheduled around the time of the COA review. The COA encourages schools to coordinate these reviews in order to optimize resources that are dedicated to external evaluation.

The Plan should include and describe plans for the presentation of collected data necessary for the review, including both direct and indirect measures of student learning outcomes. It should also describe the groups and individuals who will create the Self-Study and how it will be done. Representatives of all constituencies should be involved in developing the Self-Study. The Plan

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can also be used to begin to determine the degree to which the program is in compliance with the *Standards*.

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