

SAM HOUSTON STATE UNIVERISTY  
SELF-STUDY GUIDELINES  
FOR DOCTORAL PROGRAMS

July 2008

## **Preface**

Graduate studies, and doctoral programs in particular, demand excellence. Any expectation faculty place on students should be more than matched by expectations placed on the program and institutions. Sam Houston State University (SHSU) is committed to placing the responsibility of appropriate curriculum and academic excellence on its faculty. One component of a commitment of excellence is the willingness to be open to critical review, both from internal and external sources. All programs are encouraged to engage in external review processes.

It is expected that any self-review process be integrated into the unit's strategic planning process. To facilitate internal and external critical review, it is crucial to develop a process of program self-examination. SHSU's Doctoral Advisory Committee was charged with the task of creating the University's initial self-study manual. Self-studies are not unique to SHSU. In the creation of this manual, the members of the Doctoral Advisory Committee relied heavily on products emanating from excellent doctoral programs throughout the country as well as regional and national entities dedicated to excellence in graduate education. Of note, this manual borrowed liberally from the Council of Graduate Schools, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business, Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, Texas A&M University, John Carroll University, James Madison University, Texas Tech University, and the University of Texas at Arlington.

This manual is designed to create a self-examination process that addresses the aspects that are common to all doctoral programs as well as accommodating the unique attributes of each program. Doctoral programs accept as a primary obligation to know and to extend the knowledge-base of a specific discipline in a climate of scholarly inquiry. Furthermore, graduates of a doctoral program should be contributing to the generation of new knowledge and/or be professionally engaged.

Any doctoral program is intended to prepare students to be educators and/or advanced practitioners in their discipline. A self-study is but one tool to guide programs in their continuous improvement efforts in meeting the challenge of serving the needs of its students, the university, and external stakeholders. The self-study produced as a result of this manual will provide an overview of the program as well as a detailed study of the curriculum, graduate faculty, program resources, and assessment.

## **The Self-Study Process**

The self-study process incorporates three-stages: (1) the creation of the self-study, (2) an external review, and (3) development of an action plan for improvement. The faculty and the support staff will conduct a thorough program review and will produce a report with support documentation. A team of external reviewers will read the report, visit the campus, and provide an evaluation of the program to include program strengths and recommendations for improvement. University leaders will develop an action plan in response to the self-study and external review. It is recommended that the process be as transparent and inclusive as possible.

### **Selection of Self-Study Committee**

A self-study committee shall be created for purposes of compiling and writing the self-study. It is recommended that the chair of the self-study committee be the director of the doctoral program. The chair will select, pending the academic dean's approval, the remaining members of the committee. It is further recommended that the committee be fully or primarily comprised of core faculty. It is also recommended that the committee contain one outside member, preferably a faculty member from one of the University's other doctoral programs. The size of the committee shall be determined by the committee chair in conjunction with the department chair and academic dean.

### **Self-study Components**

All self-studies will address the following.

- I. Program Profile
  - Mission of program
  - History of program
  - Program demographics (e.g., number of students/class, number of graduates, number of core faculty, etc.)
  - Administrative processes and policies
  
- II. Curriculum
  - Description of curriculum (e.g. program length, degree plan, specializations, etc.)
  - Appropriateness of curriculum (e.g. content comparison with accrediting standards and/or peer and aspiration institutions)
  - Description of comprehensive exams and dissertation processes
  
- III. Faculty
  - Credentials
    - Appropriateness of degrees
    - Publications/external grants/presentations/artistic endeavors
    - Awards/recognitions
    - Service to the profession
    - Professional experience
  - Teaching load
  - Diversity
  - Program responsibilities (e.g., dissertation committees/comps, etc.)
  - Program faculty profile
    - Core faculty
    - Support faculty
  
- IV. Students
  - Number of applicants/admits/enrolled
    - Demographics (to include ethnicity and gender)

- Profile of admitted students
  - Demographics
  - Description of admission process/criteria
  - Full-time/part-time
  - Description of assistantship responsibilities
- Student funding
  - Percentage of full-time students with financial support
  - Average support per full-time student
- Graduation rate
- Time to completion
- Employment profile upon graduation

V. Resources

- Facilities
- Technology
- Travel funds
- Assistantships
- Scholarships
- Clerical/administrative support
- External funding
- Faculty

VI. Assessment efforts

- Alumni surveys
- Employer surveys
- Clinical supervisor surveys, if appropriate
- Student learning outcomes
- Dissertation quality
- Student publications/grants/presentations
- Recognition/awards
- Internships, if appropriate
- Other

VII. Program specific issues

VIII. Program strengths and recommendations for improvement

**Timeline**

It is expected that each doctoral program conduct a self-study on a regular basis. The time between self-studies should not exceed six years. The time between self-studies may exceed this time period for programs that have discipline specific reviews related to accreditation.

In most cases, the self-study will be conducted during a fall semester with the external reviewers visiting the campus during the subsequent spring semester. This timeline may be adjusted, with the approval of the academic dean and graduate dean.

### **Outside Reviewers**

A team of three outside reviewers will be created to (1) review the self-study, (2) perform an onsite review of the program, and (3) provide a written report containing a response to the self-study, a summary of observations during the onsite visit and recommendations (strengths and concerns). Appendix A contains guidelines for the reviewers.

#### ***Selection of Outside Reviewers***

The chair of the self-study committee (usually the director of the doctoral program) will submit a list of at least eight names, of which at least six are active in a doctoral program of the same discipline, to the Office of Graduate Studies. Potential reviewers should represent both peer and aspiration programs, and should be identified as such in the information provided to the Office of Graduate Studies. The list of potential outside reviewers must be approved by the academic dean prior to submission to the Office of Graduate Studies. The Office of Graduate Studies will be responsible for inviting reviewers to campus. The final list of reviewers, with possible onsite visit dates, will be given to the chair of the self-study committee. The chair of the self-study committee will be responsible for arranging the itinerary. Appendix B contains a sample itinerary. Programs being reviewed as part of an accreditation/reaffirmation review may follow the accrediting agency's guidelines for selecting reviewers.

### **Roles and Responsibilities of Faculty/Administrators**

#### ***Chair of Self-Study Committee***

- Select members of the self-study committee in conjunction with and with the approval of the department chair and academic dean. Assign responsibilities to self-study committee members and coordinate the creation of the self-study document.
- In conjunction with the self-study committee, identify program specific issues to be addressed in the self-study.
- In conjunction with the self-study committee, department chair and academic dean, provide the Office of Graduate Studies a list of candidates to serve as external reviewers, if appropriate.
- Provide the final version of the self-study, through the academic dean, to the Office of Graduate Studies for dissemination.
- Create the itinerary for the onsite review to include coordinating with individuals involved with the onsite visit.
- Coordinate the arrangements associated with the onsite review (e.g., lodging, travel, transportation, etc.).
- Schedule meeting rooms and meals connected with the onsite visit.
- Coordinate the creation of the Action Plan. Present to the provost, academic dean, graduate dean, and department chair.

### ***Department Chair***

- Be available to meet with the self-study committee during the creation of the self-study.
- Review draft versions of the self-study and make recommendations for improvement prior to submission to the academic dean.
- Be available to meet with the external reviewers during the onsite visit.
- Attend the exit summary oral report.
- Be available to participate in the creation of the Action Plan prepared in response to the self-study and reviewers' written report.

### ***Academic Dean***

- Be available to provide consultation in the creation of and final approval of the self-study committee and list of prospective outside reviewers.
- Be available to meet with the self-study committee during the creation of the self-study.
- Review draft versions of the self-study and make recommendations for improvement prior to submission of the final version to the Office of Graduate Studies.
- Approve final version of the self-study.
- Be available to meet with the external reviewers during the onsite visit.
- Attend the exit summary oral report.
- Be available to participate in the creation of the Action Plan prepared in response to the self-study and reviewers' written report.
- Oversee the implementation of the Action Plan.

### ***Graduate Dean***

- Identify the programs to be reviewed and set the schedule for their review in consultation with the provost, academic dean, department chair, and director of the doctoral program.
- Create final list of onsite reviewers, with potential visitation dates, from the list provided by the chair of the self-study committee, if appropriate.
- Be available to meet with the external reviewers during the onsite visit.
- Attend the exit summary oral report.
- Provide funding for
  - the external reviewers, to include travel and, when appropriate, an honorarium,
  - copies of the self-study,
  - distribution of the self-study.
- Be available to participate in the creation of the Action Plan prepared in response to the self-study and reviewers' written report.

### ***Provost***

- Be available to meet with the external reviewers during the onsite visit.
- Attend the exit summary oral report.

- Be available to participate in the creation of the Action Plan prepared in response to the self-study and reviewers' written report.
- Make modifications and give final approval to the Action Plan.

## **Appendix A: Reviewer Guidelines**

Reviewers, not governed by external bodies, are expected to:

- Review the self-study prior to onsite visit.
- Conduct the onsite visit – one of the external reviewers will serve as chair of the team.
- Conduct an exit interview as the last component of the onsite visit.
- Write an evaluation of the doctoral program to include program strengths and recommendations for improvement. The evaluation should address each chapter of the self-study. The evaluation should be submitted electronically to both the director of the doctoral program and the Office of Graduate Studies ([graduate@shsu.edu](mailto:graduate@shsu.edu)). The evaluation should be submitted no later than six weeks after the completion of the onsite visit.



## Appendix B: Sample Itinerary

Understanding that each visit may be unique, the following may serve as a template for the onsite visit. The chair of the self-study committee will create the itinerary for the onsite review to include coordinating with individuals involved with the onsite visit. Additionally, the chair will coordinate the arrangements associated with the onsite review (e.g., lodging, travel, transportation, etc.).

### Day 1

- Arrive at SHSU. Check into hotel.
- Dinner with the chair of the self-study committee (optional)

### Day 2

- 7:30 – 8:30 Breakfast with chair of self-study committee
- 8:30 – 9:15 Meet with self-study committee
- 9:15 – 10:15 Meet with faculty members
- 10:15 - 10:30 Break
- 10:30 – 11:00 Meet with department chair
- 11:00- 11:30 Meet with academic dean
- 11:45 – 1:00 Lunch with self-study committee
- 1:15 – 2:30 Time in document room
- 2:30 – 3:00 Tour of campus and facilities
- 3:00 – 3:30 Meet with provost and graduate dean
- 3:30 – 3:45 Break
- 3:45 – 5:00 Meet with students
- 5:00 – 5:30 Wrap-up with chair of self-study
- 6:00 – 7:00 Dinner, review team members only
- 7:00 - Time to work on report and prepare for exit interview

### Day 3

- 7:30 – 8:30 Breakfast, review team only.
- 8:30 – 11:00 Time to prepare for exit interview
- 11:00 – 12:00 Conduct exit interview (provost, academic dean, graduate dean, department chair, chair of the self-study committee)
- Lunch, if travel schedule permits
- External reviewers depart

## Appendix C: Characteristics of Texas Public Doctoral Programs

### Characteristics of Texas Public Doctoral Programs<sup>1</sup>

Measure	Operational Definition	Reporting Source
Number of Degrees Per Year	Rolling three-year average of the number of degrees awarded per academic year	Coordinating Board
Graduation Rates	Rolling three-year average of the percent of first-year doctoral students <sup>2</sup> who graduated within ten years	Coordinating Board
Average Time to Degree	Rolling three-year average of the registered time to degree <sup>3</sup> of first-year doctoral students within a ten year period	Coordinating Board
Employment Profile (in field within one year of graduation)	Percentage of the last three years of graduates employed in academia, post-doctorates, industry/professional, government, and those still seeking employment (in Texas and outside Texas)	Institution
Admissions Criteria	Description of admission factors	Institution
Percentage Full-time Students (FTS) with Financial Support	In the prior year, the percentage of FTS ( $\geq 18$ SCH) with support/the number of FTS	Institution
Average Financial Support Provided	For those receiving financial support, the average financial support provided per full-time graduate student (including tuition rebate) for the prior year, including research assistantships, teaching assistantships, fellowships, tuition, benefits, etc. that is “out-of-pocket”	Institution
Student-Core Faculty <sup>4</sup> Ratio	Rolling three-year average of full-time student equivalent (FTSE) /rolling three-	Institution

<sup>1</sup> Programs included only if in existence 3 or more years. Program is defined at the 8-digit CIP code level.

<sup>2</sup> First-year doctoral students: Those students who have been coded as doctoral students by the institution and have either completed a master’s program or at least 30 SCH towards a graduate degree.

<sup>3</sup> Registered time to degree: The number of semesters enrolled starting when a student first appears as a doctoral student until she completes a degree, excluding any time taken off during graduate study. The number of years is obtained by dividing the number of semester by three.

<b>Measure</b>	<b>Operational Definition</b>	<b>Reporting Source</b>
	year average of full-time faculty equivalent (FTFE) of core faculty	
Core Faculty Publications	Rolling three-year average of the number of discipline-related refereed papers/publications, juried creative/performance accomplishments, book chapters, notices of discoveries filed/patents issued, and books per year per core faculty member.	Institution
Core Faculty External Grants	Rolling three-year average of the number of core faculty receiving external funds, average external grant \$ per faculty, and total external grant \$ per program per academic year <sup>5</sup>	Institution
Percentage Full-Time Students	Rolling three-year average of the FTS ( $\geq 9$ SCH)/number students enrolled (headcount) for last three fall semesters	Coordinating Board
Number of Core Faculty	Number of core faculty in the prior year	Institution
Faculty Teaching Load	Total number of semester credit hours in organized teaching courses taught per academic year by core faculty divided by the number of core faculty in the prior year	Institution
Faculty Diversity	Core faculty by ethnicity (White, Black, Hispanic, Other) and gender, updated when changed	Institution
Student Diversity	Enrollment headcount by ethnicity (White, Black, Hispanic, Other) and gender in program in the prior year	Coordinating Board
Date of Last External Review	Date of last formal external review, updated when changed	Institution
External Program Accreditation	Name of body and date of last program accreditation review, if applicable, updated when changed	Institution
Student Publications/Presentations	Rolling three-year average of the number of discipline-related refereed papers/publications, juried creative/performance accomplishments, book chapters, books, and external presentations per year per student	Institution

NOTE: Institutions may wish to add a “comments” field to explain any anomalies.

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<sup>4</sup> Core Faculty: Full-time tenured and tenure-track faculty who teach 50 percent or more in the doctoral program or other individuals integral to the doctoral program who can direct dissertation research.

<sup>5</sup> All external funds received from any source including research grants, training grants, gifts from foundations, etc.