



WRITING THE SELF-STUDY REPORT

Special Emphasis Self-Study Guidelines

The special emphasis option will give the department or college credit for successfully completing a round of accreditation review. However, the department will be invited to explore, within the context of CSU's program review, its unique opportunities and challenges that may only be of cursory interest to accrediting agencies. Using the special emphasis option for review will pave the way for aligning a department or program's goals with the strategic direction adopted by the college, and the university as a whole. One example of differences in accreditation vs. internal priorities is CSU's need to affirm its responsiveness to the complex issues of its urban community through teaching and research. An emphasis such as this and many others may be outside the sphere of accreditation.

In other instances where a program has completed an accreditation review, the data compiled for the initial dossier may show that a particular weakness deserves attention or that a particular strength provides an opportunity for growth given sufficient resources; in these cases, the self-study may focus on a single theme.

Eligibility

This option is available as an alternative to the traditional program review for academic programs that meet one of the following conditions: (1) are accredited through professional or specialized accreditation agencies outside the university; or (2) are well-functioning CSU departments that are willing to commit serious attention to a select group of critical issues in order to strengthen the quality of the programs. The option of engaging in a focused review is not for everyone; however, some departments may wish to use this opportunity to build their self-study around a small number of carefully-selected critical areas where improvement is sought.

Request for a special emphasis review should be made to the Vice Provost for Instructional Excellence by the dean of the college, early in the planning process. The Provost will make the decision on whether or not such a review is appropriate, based on the recommendations of the dean and the vice provost.

Once the decision is made to pursue this option, the department chair and dean will determine the areas of emphasis for the program review.

Selected Topics for Areas of Special Emphasis

A program review with a special emphasis can be limited to particular themes or subunits, e.g., a curricular sequence, a graduate program, advising, or recruitment. This type of program review may be warranted for units that have recently undergone external review for accreditation. In such instances, data compiled for the initial dossier may show that a particular weakness deserves attention or that a particular strength provides an opportunity for growth given sufficient resources; in these cases, the CSU special emphasis self-study may focus on a single theme.

The following are examples of topics that could be addressed through a focused study:

- Designing new programs, assessing the market for such programs
- Designing interdisciplinary or international programs
- Curriculum realignment, developing new majors or phasing out others
- Strengthening instruction in courses with large enrollment
- Addressing the issues of part-time faculty as it relates to the quality of the programs
- Developing interdisciplinary collaborations in research or instruction
- Developing partnerships with other regional or national universities
- Strategic planning, engaging alumni, advancement, development, promotions, marketing
- Pursuit of external funding
- Coping with rapid enrollment growth or decline
- Strengthening the graduate or undergraduate curriculum or programs
- Developing new electives in the major or strengthening service courses
- Improving student performance – working on quality, rankings or accreditation
- Recruiting majors, developing links with feeder institutions and high schools
- Developing distance or web delivered courses
- Introducing technology or adapting to new technology in the field