Appendix 2: WASC Good Practice: Subsection C (dated October 2015)

C. Components in the Self-Study Report
The self-study consists of evidence-based inquiry and analyses which are documented in a comprehensive self-study report. The specific format and content of a self-study report varies across institutions, but they usually share some core elements.

1. Introduction/Context
Most reviews begin with a section that provides a context for the review. In contrast to the rest of the self-study report, this portion is primarily descriptive and may include:
- The internal context – In what department does it reside? In which school or college? What degrees does it grant? What concentrations are available?
- The external context – How is the program responsive to the needs of the region or area in which it serves?
- It may also include a brief history of the program or a description of changes made in the program since the last review (if relevant).

A key component in providing the context for the review is a description of the program's mission, goals, and outcomes.
- A mission statement is a general explanation of why your program exists and what it hopes to achieve in the future. It articulates the program's essential nature, its values and its work.
- Goals are general statements of what your program wants to achieve.
- Outcomes are the specific results that should be observed if the goals are being met.

Note that goals typically flow from the mission statement, and outcomes are aligned with goals. In addition, the program's mission, goals and outcomes should relate to the mission and goals of the college and institution.

2. Analysis of Evidence About Program Quality & Viability

The bulk of a self-study report consists of a presentation and analysis of evidence about the quality and viability/sustainability of a program. This major portion of the report addresses the extent to which program goals are being met by using evidence to answer key questions related to those goals. It is important for an institution's program review guidelines to identify the precise evidence to be analyzed in the self-study and for Institutional Research to provide a packet of relevant institutional data available on the program.

To facilitate meaningful analysis of the evidence, it is helpful to provide guiding questions to structure the self-study inquiry and report. These questions often produce deep discussions among faculty and are considered the most important aspect of the self-study process. Hence, a set of sample questions is embedded below within each of the core elements typically analyzed in a self-study report.

Program evidence falls into two categories:
1. Evidence that addresses questions about program quality
2. Evidence that addresses issues of program viability and sustainability

2a. Evidence of program quality typically addresses questions about:

- **Students** – What is the profile of students in the program and how does the profile relate to or enhance the mission and goals of the program?
  - Data in this category might include students' gender, ethnicity, age, GPA from previous institution, standardized test scores, type of previous institution, and employment status.
  - Note that the specific list of indicators in this category will depend on the goals of the program.

- **The Curriculum and Learning Environment** – How current is the program curriculum? Does it offer sufficient breadth and depth of learning for this particular degree? How well does it align with learning outcomes? Are the courses well sequenced and reliably available in sequence? Has the program been reviewed by external stakeholders, such as practitioners in the field, or compared with other similar programs? Evidence in this category might include
  - A curriculum flow chart and description of how the curriculum addresses the learning outcomes of the program (curriculum map)
  - A comparison of the program's curriculum with curricula at selected other institutions and with disciplinary/professional standards
  - Measures of teaching effectiveness (e.g., course evaluations, peer evaluations of teaching, faculty scholarship on issues of teaching and learning, formative discussions of pedagogy among faculty)
  - A description of other learning experiences that are relevant to program goals (e.g., internships, research experiences, study abroad or other international experiences, community-based learning, etc.), as well as how many students participate in those experiences o A narrative that describes how the faculty's pedagogy responds to various learning modalities and student learning preferences.

- **Student Learning and Success** – Are students achieving the desired learning outcomes for the program? Are they achieving those outcomes at the expected level of learning, and how is the expected level determined? Are they being retained and graduating in a timely fashion? Are they prepared for advanced study or the world of work? Evidence in this category might include:
  - Annual results of direct and indirect assessments of student learning in the program (could be combination of quantitative and qualitative measures), including the degree to which students achieve the program's desired standards
  - Ongoing efforts by the department to "close the loop" by responding to assessment results
  - Student retention and graduation rate trends (disaggregated by different demographic categories)
  - Placement of graduates into graduate schools or post-doctoral experiences
  - Job placements
  - Graduating student satisfaction surveys (and/or alumni satisfaction surveys)
  - Employer critiques of student performance or employer survey satisfaction results
  - Disciplinary ratings of the program
  - Student/Alumni achievements (e.g., community service, research and publications, awards and recognition, professional accomplishments, etc.)

- **Faculty** – What are the qualifications and achievements of the faculty in the program in relation to the program mission and goals? How do faculty members' background, expertise, research and other professional work contribute to the quality of the program? Evidence in this category might include: o Proportion of faculty with terminal degree
  - Institutions from which faculty earned terminal degrees
  - List of faculty specialties within discipline (and how those specialties align with the program curriculum)
  - Teaching quality (e.g., peer evaluations, faculty self-review)

o Record of scholarship for each faculty member
o Faculty participation in development opportunities related to teaching, learning and/or assessment
o External funding awarded to faculty
o Record of professional practice for each faculty member
o Service for each faculty member
o Distribution of faculty across ranks (or years at institution)
o Diversity of faculty
o Awards and recognitions

[Note that the specific list of indicators in this category will depend on the goals of a particular program/department/college.]

2b. Evidence of program viability and sustainability typically addresses questions about the level of student demand for the program and the degree to which resources are allocated appropriately and are sufficient in amount to maintain program quality:

• **Demand for the program**
   o What are the trends in numbers of student applications, admits, and enrollments reflected over a 5-8 year period?
   o What is happening within the profession, local community or society generally that identifies an anticipated need for this program in the future (including market research)?

• **Allocation of Resources**
   o **Faculty** – Are there sufficient numbers of faculty to maintain program quality? Do program faculty have the support they need to do their work?
      ▪ Number of full-time faculty (ratio of full-time faculty to part-time faculty)
      ▪ Student-faculty ratio
      ▪ Faculty workload
      ▪ Faculty review and evaluation processes
      ▪ Mentoring processes/program
      ▪ Professional development opportunities/resources (including travel and research funds)
      ▪ Sufficient time for course development, research, etc.

   o **Student support**
      ▪ Academic and career advising programs and resources
      ▪ Tutoring, supplemental instruction, and T.A. training
      ▪ Basic skill remediation
      ▪ Support for connecting general learning requirements to discipline requirements
      ▪ Orientation and transition programs
      ▪ Financial support (scholarships, fellowships, teaching assistantships, etc.)
      ▪ Support for engagement in the campus community.
      ▪ Support for non-cognitive variables of success, including emotional, psychological, and physical interventions if necessary
      ▪ Support for research or for engagement in the community beyond campus, such as fieldwork or internships

   o **Information and technology resources**

- Library print and electronic holdings in the teaching and research areas of the program
- Information literacy outcomes for graduates ▪ Technology resources available to support the pedagogy and research in the program
- Technology resources available to support students' needs

- o **Facilities**
  - Classroom space
  - Instructional laboratories
  - Research laboratories
  - Office space
  - Student study spaces
  - Access to classrooms suited for instructional technology
  - Access to classrooms designed for alternative learning styles/universal design

- o **Staff**
  - Clerical and technical staff FTE supporting program/departmental operations

- o **Financial resources**
  - Operational budget (revenues and expenditures) and trends over a 3-5 year period

3. Summary Reflections

This portion of the self-study report typically interprets the significance of the findings in the above analysis of program evidence. Its purpose is to determine a program's strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for improvement. It is helpful to have questions that guide the interpretation of the findings, such as:
- Are the curriculum, practices, processes, and resources properly aligned with the goals of the program?
- Are department/program goals aligned with the goals of the constituents that the program serves?
- Is the level of program quality aligned with the college/university's acceptable level of program quality? Aligned with the constituents' acceptable level of quality?
- Are program goals being achieved?
- Are student learning outcomes being achieved at the expected level?

It is also helpful to have evaluation criteria in mind; that is, what guidelines will be used to determine what the evidence suggests about the program's strengths and weaknesses? In some cases, an absolute standard may be used. For example, it may be decided that a student-faculty ratio of 20 to one is necessary to ensure program quality, and any ratio higher than that is unacceptable. In other cases, a norm-referenced criterion may be more appropriate. For example, if a national student survey was used to assess student satisfaction with the program, the evaluation criterion might be that your students' satisfaction is at least as high as students at other similar institutions.

4. Future Goals and and Planning for Improvement

Self-study reports conclude with a section devoted to future planning and improvement. Findings from all prior sections of the report serve as a foundation for building an evidence-based plan for strengthening the program. This section might address such questions as:

- What are the program's goals for the next few years?

• In order to achieve these goals: ○ How will the program specifically address any weaknesses identified in the self-study?

    ○ How will the program build on existing strengths?

    ○ What internal improvements are possible with existing resources (through reallocation)?

    ○ What improvements can only be addressed through additional resources?

    ○ Where can the formation of collaborations improve program quality?