



**Fashion Institute  
of Technology**

# Guidelines: Academic Program Review

Revised November 2023

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## Overview

FIT has long had in place a practice of evaluating academic programs through periodic comprehensive reviews. These academic program reviews are conducted in order to:

- create an institutional culture that embraces continuous educational improvement;
- follow SUNY and Middle States guidelines, as well as best practices in higher education; and
- provide faculty and the academic administration an opportunity to review operations and services, assess effectiveness, and develop improvement plans.

Each degree program is scheduled for a program review every five years; these are often referred to as “five-year reviews” at FIT. The review should incorporate all degree award levels and delivery methods in the major area. For example, a review of Fashion Business Management will include its associate and bachelor’s award levels (in New York and in NY/Florence), the online program, and the one-year programs. Departments that offer credit certificates will incorporate review of their certificate programs as well.

Academic Program Review is focused upon the examination of academic degrees that FIT awards as a way to ensure that the programs remain of the highest academic quality. Most departments at FIT oversee related degrees within a subject area, all of which undergo review in the same program review cycle. There are a few departments for which this is not the case. For example, the Communication Design department oversees an AAS in Communication Design as well as BFAs in Graphic Design, VPED, and Advertising Design, which are separately reviewed in different years.

The following document describes the components of the academic program review process. These guidelines are revised regularly based on feedback from academic programs. The Office of Academic and Administrative Assessment (OAAA) welcomes comments, as this process continues to be refined to better achieve the goals of the College’s assessment program.

# Academic Program Review Phases

The academic program review consists of three phases:

**Phase 1** - a self-study reviewing the academic program degrees

**Phase 2** - a review conducted by professionals external to the College who understand the academic program, and

**Phase 3** - a Use of Results process, which provides an opportunity for program representatives, their respective dean, the Office of Academic Affairs, and the Office of Academic and Administrative Assessment to consider all of the information gathered during the review process and develop an action plan for future planning and decision-making.

An outline of this process follows. The remainder of this document provides detailed information on how to complete each step in this outline.

## **Phase 1 - Self-study**

- a. Program profile: Mission; past history, present, and future directions; and resources
- b. Learning outcomes, program requirements, and curriculum map
- c. Assessment -- Review of recent assessments of program learning outcomes; reflection on student learning; student survey results
- d. SWOT analysis
- e. Specific questions for reviewers
- f. Preliminary action plan

## **Phase 2 - External Review**

- a. Selection of reviewers
- b. Site visit
- c. Reviewers' report
- d. Department response
- e. Revisions to action plan

## **Phase 3 - Use of Results**

- a. Distribution of materials
- b. Use of Results meeting
- c. Final action plan

# Phase 1: Instructions for Completing Self-Study

The Office of Academic and Administrative Assessment will provide a template to each program undergoing self-study, prepopulating it with information OAAA has on hand, such as program learning outcomes, curriculum maps, curricular charts, program data, and course descriptions.

Programs should use the opportunity of program review to review this information and determine whether any changes are necessary. For example, if the mission statement is outdated, it may be more useful to rewrite it for the self-study than to wait until after the review.

## Program profile

This section of the report serves the general purpose of describing the program to those who are not familiar with it. Among the first readers of the profile will be the external reviewers who are engaged to review the self-study and conduct a site visit. These reviewers will not be familiar with FIT-specific practices and terminology (e.g. CCE, travia). Readers from FIT, such as academic leadership, may not be familiar with industry-specific terminology. Be sure to explain for both audiences.

Keeping the purpose of the profile in mind, describe the program as follows:

### Mission; past history, present, and future directions; and resources

#### *Mission Statement and Related Information*

Include the mission statement for each program that is a part of the review. Each program has a mission statement on file, and faculty should review and, if necessary, revise the statement to ensure that it remains current. Additional resources for writing a mission statement can be found on the OAAA webpage. Since mission statements should be limited to a single, short paragraph, programs may also include a vision statement if desired, or information developed for the website profile.

#### *Program history*

In the review process, it is helpful to understand the program's history and how it has evolved. When and why was the program created, and how has it changed over the years? In this section, provide a brief account of significant events that have affected the department's academic programs. These could include mergers, expansions, and notable changes in mission. Please note that there is a separate information technology section in the resources section of the profile. Details about technology changes should be included in that section. In addition, briefly describe the most recent program review, the major findings, and what improvements were made as a result.

#### *Program at present*

Much about the present of the program will be covered in the resources, curriculum section, and other areas of the self-study. Elements of the program that are essential to understanding it and

that are not included in another self-study section can be incorporated here. For example, the program may want to describe unique aspects of the current program, student activities, its relationship to industry or its advisory board, or other aspects that deserve further elaboration and are not discussed elsewhere.

In addition to whatever you'd like to communicate to the reviewers, please cover:

\*an overview of any recent major changes to the curriculum that the program is still adjusting to, or any change in progress; detailed discussion of the curriculum should be in the curriculum section.

\*Describe any program-related student activities and how the program promotes and supports faculty and student involvement and effort

\* Discuss admissions and enrollment, found in Appendix A of the template provided to the program at the start of the process. Please address the following questions: Does the application/acceptance/enrollment data indicate a sufficient pool of interested and qualified students to maintain current levels of enrollment and degrees awarded? Please comment on any relevant issues related to admissions and enrollment.

\*Discuss program diversity/demographics (Appendix A) as well as any efforts to support diversity, equity and inclusion, in terms of student diversity, curriculum, etc.

### *Program future directions*

If the program anticipates changes for the future, those should be outlined. Where does the program see itself going?

## Resources (faculty, specialized skills, trends, budget, facilities and equipment, technology)

### *Faculty*

List all full-time and adjunct faculty members who have taught a class in the prior academic year. Include the information below. This is sometimes done in chart form (OAAA can provide an example).

CVs of full-time faculty must be included in an appendix; it is optional as to whether the program includes the CVs of part-time faculty.

- Name
- Classification (full- or part-time)
- Rank
- Number of years teaching in the program (and at FIT, if different)
- Number of relevant years of industry experience
- Highest degree held
- Area of specialization or expertise

### *Faculty trends and Specialized skills*

Present five years of trend data on employed faculty (full-time and adjunct reported separately). Briefly discuss the reasons for fluctuations, if any. Discuss the faculty's mix of knowledge, experience, and disciplines and whether any enhancements to the mix are recommended.

### *Faculty Development and Accomplishments*

Discuss the activities and processes faculty members engage in to improve their own teaching and keep current in their disciplines and activities that result in the continuing growth of the faculty. Faculty research and grants obtained may also be discussed here when relevant.

### *Facilities, Equipment, and Information Technology*

List the equipment and facilities currently used by the academic program, noting any specialized features. Discuss how well they meet the program's needs. Discuss equipment needs that have not been met, as well as long-term space requirements and any need for proximity to other departments. List any software packages utilized by the program and indicate their major function(s). Discuss how the utilization of information technology has changed and/or improved the quality of instruction in recent years. Evaluate the program's use of technology. What works well and what needs improvement?

### *Library Resources*

In consultation with the assigned library liaison (who may draft this section), summarize the specific library resources (print, non-print, and services) available to support the program. Discuss how well the library resources meet the program's needs. Have the resources kept current with curricular and other changes, and are any additional resources necessary for the program's future?

### *Budget*

Include the total OTPS budget for the program in the most recent fiscal year, as well as any restricted accounts managed by the department. Departmental budgets are available through the college's financial information system (BiTech). Explain parts of the budget that are unusual, and discuss how the budget supports the program.

## **Learning outcomes, program requirements, and curriculum map**

In this section, provide a detailed description of how each program under review carries out its academic mission. This will include any accelerated one-year associate degrees, degrees offered abroad or online, and credit certificates.

### *Student Learning Outcomes*

All degree programs at FIT have developed learning outcomes, or statements that describe significant and essential learning that students have achieved and can reliably demonstrate at the end of a program. As programs make changes in courses and curriculum, the current list of learning outcomes may no longer accurately represent the most essential learning. As a part of Academic Program Review, faculty should review the learning outcomes and make revisions if necessary.

For information on writing effective program-level learning outcomes, see OAAA’s webpage, <http://www.fitnyc.edu/assessment>

### *Program Requirements*

The OAAA will insert the curriculum chart (used in the FIT catalog and on the FIT website) reflecting degree requirements for each degree under review, as well as the course descriptions for the self-study in the Appendix, as well as the course learning outcomes for each required course. The program should review these materials to make sure they are up to date.

### *Curriculum Map*

A curriculum map is a matrix or grid that provides information on the relationships between program requirements and the program learning outcomes. Most programs have curriculum maps, but may need to update them if there have been any changes in required courses or learning outcomes. Insert the curriculum map for each academic degree program under review. After the map, note the specific course learning outcomes that support the corresponding program learning outcomes. A curriculum map is not necessary for credit certificates. For instructions on creating a curriculum map, see the OAAA webpage (<http://www.fitnyc.edu/assessment>)

### *Curriculum Revision History*

OAAA will provide a chart of curricular change history. If there have been changes to a course that are not reflected in the CIM history, please note it on the chart.

### *Curriculum Discussion*

Provide a brief explanation regarding the curriculum for each degree, as well as reflections as to how the curriculum is working, etc. Provide an overview of changes in curriculum and reasons for the changes. For programs with multiple cohorts: please describe methods used to ensure comparable learning outcomes across multiple sections of a course.

## **Assessment of program-level student learning outcomes**

In this section, programs will discuss recent assessments of program learning outcomes and reflect on what they show about strengths and weaknesses in student learning. In addition, programs will present student feedback on the program from surveys given in the past or done for this review.

### *Review of Recent Assessments of Program Learning Outcomes*

Using the chart below, provide an overview of the assessment of student learning outcomes completed since the last review. List the assessments and the year they occurred, which program learning outcomes were assessed, and briefly note the findings of the assessments and improvements or changes made by the program in response. **Two years of annual assessment reports or ACBSP results should be included in the appendix.**

**Please include information for each degree on the chart.**

| Assessments Completed | Academic Year | Degree/Learning Outcomes covered by assessment | Findings of assessment (in brief) | Improvements or changes taken as a result |
|-----------------------|---------------|--|-----------------------------------|---|
|                       |               |  |                                   |   |
|                       |               |  |                                   |   |
|                       |               |  |                                   |   |
|                       |               |  |                                   |   |

Provide a narrative discussion that reflects the assessments of student learning done by the program.

- What evidence does the program have that, overall, students are achieving the desired learning outcomes?
- What learning outcomes are particularly strong for students? Which learning outcomes are students less successful at achieving?
- How has the program used assessment evidence to improve student learning since the last review? If curricular, pedagogical, or other changes have been made by the program in order to improve student learning, what evidence does the program have in terms of whether the changes have been successful?
- Does the program notice any gaps in student achievement between diverse groups of students? Programs may define diversity in different ways depending on issues with the program – race/ethnicity, gender, transfer students vs. non-transfer, etc. Please provide relevant comments, if any.

### Student Survey Results

Discuss results of student surveys here, and included one set of results as an appendix. Programs without recent student survey results should complete one with the assistance of OAAA as a part of this process.



## Retention and Graduation

Please comment on the following: Do the retention and graduation rates indicate that students are succeeding in the program, or are they encountering obstacles in their degree completion efforts? (Information found in **Appendix A** of template provided to program).

## Employment Information

Please provide any information the program has documented regarding employment for students. What types of positions do students obtain? Does the graduates' employment information indicate that the program is preparing students for work after graduation?

## SWOT Analysis

At this point in the review process, a wide variety of information has been compiled. The next step is to analyze this information and present it in a way that can help formulate an action plan for improvement. A SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis is one method for doing this. In a SWOT analysis, the available information is placed into four categories. Strengths and weaknesses are internal – either to the program or to FIT, while aspects of the external environment can be classified as opportunities or threats. The primary purpose of this portion of the review is to understand these internal and external factors and to begin developing strategies to effect improvement or mitigate problems.

Briefly, these are the questions that are addressed in the SWOT analysis:

- What are the program's strengths that contribute to accomplishing its goals?
- What are the program's weaknesses that confound or hold it back from accomplishing its goals? (These may also be institutional weaknesses at FIT that affect the program).
- What are the external opportunities that may arise for the program in the short and longer term?
- What are the external threats that might make it difficult to accomplish program goals going forward?

A guide to conducting a SWOT analysis is available in **Attachment 1**.

## Additional Questions for Reviewers

Reviewers are sent a “scope of work” document that lists the areas they should address in their report; see the end of **attachment 2** for this document. Programs may have specific questions or issues for which they seek feedback from reviewers that are not included in these directions. List those questions in this section.

## Preliminary Action Plan

Based on all of the information gathered in the program profile and the assessment process, and the interpretation of the results of the SWOT analysis, a first draft of an action plan can be developed. As a result of the self-study process, the program should be able to identify areas that the program would like to focus on in the next 3 to 4 years in order to continually improve and meet overall program goals. The preliminary action plan should focus on actions under the program’s control, with an emphasis on those that can improve student learning outcomes. The actions should be ones that the program itself can undertake with current resources or a modest increase. On a separate list, the program lists initiatives that are supported by the review and require substantial resource support. At this point, the steps are preliminary ideas, since reviewers’ input, as well as that of the dean and Office of Academic Affairs, is particularly important before making final decisions.

After the site visit and report from external reviewers, the program chair will meet with members of their dean’s office, FIT’s Academic Affairs, and the Office of Academic and Administrative Assessment for a wrap-up meeting to determine final action steps. At that point in time, programs will finalize the action plan, which will include a summary of key findings of the self-study and a list of action steps, along with specific information about responsible personnel, a schedule for implementation, and plans for assessing changes.

### PRELIMINARY ACTION PLAN

| Action Steps | Action Status:<br>New as a result of self-study; currently planned; recently implemented | Outline of Implementation | Intended effect, particularly on student learning |
|--------------|--|---------------------------|---|
|              |  |                           |   |
|              |  |                           |   |
|              |  |                           |   |
|              |  |                           |   |
|              |  |                           |   |

### Resource Requests Supported by Self-Study

In this chart, programs list resource requests they plan to make through the budgetary process, such as requests for new lines or equipment; whether these requests are already in progress, already planned, or come out of the self-study; and a summary of how the self-study support the request. Academic program review self-studies and reviewers reports may be used by programs as evidence to support budgetary requests through FIT's established processes. These processes are outlined in an appendix to this document.

| Budgetary Request | Cost | Already requested (R); already planned (P); or New (N) | How supported by self-study |
|-------------------|------|--|-----------------------------|
|                   |      |  |                             |
|                   |      |  |                             |
|                   |      |  |                             |

### Appendices:

[Appendix A:](#) Student data outcomes, provided by OAAA

[Appendix B:](#) Course descriptions and course learning outcomes. OAAA will insert these into the template, and program should review to ensure they are updated.

[Appendix C:](#)

Faculty CVs: Required for full-time faculty; if program would like to share adjunct CVs, please include as well.

[Appendix D:](#) Syllabi/course outlines, for key classes.

[Appendix E:](#) Assessment reports/results

[Appendix F:](#) Student survey results

## Phase 2: The External Review

Two external reviewers will be engaged to review the program's self-study, conduct a site visit, and write a report on their findings. Reviewers are professionals with expertise in the program's area(s) with no meaningful prior relationship with the department or its faculty. One individual should have expertise in the application of the work in an academic setting; this individual should have experience as a full-time faculty member and ideally as a program chair. The second individual may have such experience in a non-academic setting (e.g., industry professional).

The reviewers must be knowledgeable about standards of academic excellence in the program area and the relationship between the program and the prospective employers of its graduates. In some cases, the school's dean may require a certain degree level as a qualification.

In order to provide a fresh perspective, the external reviewers should not have close relationships with the program or FIT. Under no circumstances can someone who sits on a program's advisory council be an external reviewer. No financial ties or arrangements can exist between an external reviewer and the College. Likewise, FIT alumni and faculty who have previously taught at FIT should not be selected. External reviewers can be professionally known by department members, but close personal associations would require disqualification.

Costs for the external review and site visit will be paid through the OAAA budget. Reviewers are compensated \$1,000 for their work. OAAA's budget allows for one reviewer to be non-local; OAAA will cover transportation (flights (from North American only), train, etc.) and hotel. One reviewer should be from the local area.

### a. Selection criteria and selection process

The selection of appropriate external reviewers is key to the success of the review. The department chair should identify a few potential reviewers on both the academic and industry sides; faculty in the department may have names to recommend.

Departments are strongly advised to start searching for potential external reviewers very early in the academic program review process to gauge their level of interest and suitability. The department chair generally makes the first contact with potential external reviewers, to verify the potential reviewers' interest and availability, and ask for credentials; OAAA will provide sample recruitment text and the "Scope of Work" document to assist in this process (sample recruitment text and Scope of Work is included in the appendix). The chair can also request that OAAA make this first contact, particularly in cases where they have not met the individuals before.

After this, **the chair should forward the names, contact information, credentials and a rationale for selecting the individuals** to the Office of Academic and Administrative Assessment. The information on credentials could be in the form of a vita or resume, but in any case should be detailed enough so that the prospective reviewer's qualifications can be evaluated. The Office of Academic and Administrative Assessment will forward the names and credentials to the Dean and the Vice President for Academic Affairs for review. Once reviewers are selected, OAAA will handle communication with reviewers and the associated administrative tasks.

## b. Reviewer tasks

The reviewers will:

- Review self-study materials and other materials as needed;
- Conduct a site visit to meet with program faculty and stakeholders; and
- Prepare a report summarizing findings.

Components of the reviewers report will include:

- Recommendations for enhancing program effectiveness;
- An evaluation of how well the program's action plan addresses the findings of the self-study; and
- An assessment of whether the program's recommendations are reasonable and doable.

## c. Site visit

The purpose of the site visit is to give the reviewers a more complete view of the program than can be provided through the self-study alone. During the site visit, the reviewers will have opportunities to gather additional information, both from program representatives and FIT constituents outside the program.

The self-study should be forwarded to external reviewers at least two weeks prior to the site visit. Other relevant materials may also be forwarded as needed.

The site visit can be completed in one day, but in some cases a longer format may be desirable. Since programs vary in terms of size, class scheduling, structure, and physical environment, there is some flexibility in how the site visit time is scheduled. In general, the schedule should include:

- Meetings with the department chair and faculty within the program who had significant roles in producing the self-study;
- Meetings with academic administrators, including the school Dean, the Vice President for Academic Affairs, and other academic affairs senior leadership;
- Meetings with current students of the program; occasionally, meetings with alumni will be included as well;
- Meeting with the Executive Director of Assessment;
- A tour of the instructional facilities and physical working spaces of the program; and
- Time allotted for conferring with each other throughout the day as needed, as well as time for bathroom breaks, etc.

### Example site visit schedule, single day format – Specifics vary by program needs

8:00 am – 9:00 am Breakfast meeting with department chair and faculty

9:00 am – 10:00 am Meet with senior academic administrators (Vice President for Academic Affairs)

10:00 am – 10:45 am Meet with Dean

11:00 am – 12:00 pm Classroom visit

|                    |  |
|--------------------|--|
| 12:00 pm – 1:00 pm | Lunch and discussion with students                       |
| 1:00 pm – 1:30 pm  | Reviewer break   |
| 2:00 pm – 2:45 pm  | Meeting with Chair                                       |
| 3:00 pm – 3:30 pm  | Tour of facilities                                       |
| 4:00 pm – 4:30 pm  | Meet with Executive Director of Assessment               |
| 4:30 pm – 5:00 pm  | Wrap-up meeting with Vice President for Academic Affairs |

#### **d. Reviewers' report**

The external reviewers' report should be completed within two weeks of the site visit and sent directly to the Office of Academic and Administrative Assessment. Upon receipt of the reviewers' report, the Office of Academic and Administrative Assessment will forward copies to the department chair, the school Dean and the Office of Academic Affairs.

## Phase 3: Use of Results Review Wrap Up

The final phase of the program review process is “Use of Results,” which includes:

- The distribution of all informational materials (self-study, reviewers’ report, latest version of action plan) to closing the loop meeting participants and other interested parties;
- A Use of Results and Review Wrap-Up meeting; and
- The development of a final action plan;
- Follow-up on the action plan, including a meeting one year later to discuss progress.

### Department response

Following the external reviewers’ visit and upon receipt of the report, the program will review the findings. This is best done with the department chair and the faculty who have participated in the process. OAAA will provide a list of the observations and recommendations that the program should respond to in a written response for the review wrap-up meeting.

*A note: External reviewers provide an important outside perspective on the program, but it is understood that they are not the “experts” after a brief visit. FIT’s faculty know the program best. The written response allows the program to note which recommendations are insightful and useful, and those that may be off-base or not useful at present.*

### Revision of preliminary action plan

The department will revise its preliminary action plan at this point, based on the findings of the reviewers’ report; use Excel template supplied.

### Wrap-Up Meeting

Participants in the Use of Results process include program representatives, the school dean, the Vice President for Academic Affairs, other academic affairs senior leadership, and staff from the Office of Academic and Administrative Assessment.

The wrap-up meeting will include a discussion of the following topics:

- the issues that came out of the self-study;
- a discussion of the reviewers’ report; and
- The actions that should be taken in light of the findings of the observations and recommendations.

The wrap-up meeting should result in an agreement on the proposed outcomes and a commitment to move forward on the agreed upon action plan recommendations.

Notes will be taken during the wrap-up meeting and minutes prepared by Institutional Research and Effectiveness staff.

After the meeting, the program will finalize the action plan, to be approved by the school dean and OAAA. Each year, the department will report progress to the OAAA regarding the action steps, and should discuss progress in their annual reports to the dean. Approximately a year after the wrap-up meeting, the OAAA will schedule a meeting to discuss progress since the review.

Actions that have budgetary implications must go through the college budget planning process, with the program review results provided as supporting materials. These are listed separately from the Action Plan, which focuses on areas of improvement under the control of the program, particularly those related to curriculum and teaching.



## Attachments

1. Instructions for Conducting a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) Analysis
2. External Review Process: Sample recruitment text, Scope of Work
3. Suggested Annual Timeline for Academic Program Reviews

# Instructions for Conducting a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) Analysis

There are a variety of ways to conduct a SWOT analysis. The department should adopt an approach that fits its circumstances and personnel and is applicable to department programs.

Things to consider include which people to involve in the process and how to get their input. Views from within the department, students and/or alumni if appropriate, and other FIT departments are needed to produce a successful analysis. Methods for getting input include tabulation of written responses or surveys, open group discussion, and development of a “straw man” SWOT that is thrown out for reaction. The most effective mix will depend on the number of participants, their temperaments, and their level of engagement in the process.

For example, a small number of well-informed, highly engaged, and equally vocal participants could do very well with an open discussion. However, in other situations it could be beneficial to gather information on participants’ views through an informal or formal information collection process, with a summary of responses provided to the group. That summary could then provide the basis for a discussion.

During this step, use the questions listed in the section below, *Questions to Ask During a SWOT Analysis*, for guidance.

The next step is to create a final, prioritized version of the SWOT analysis listing the factors in each category (S,W,O,T) in priority order (highest to lowest). This can be prepared as a simple list or summarized as shown on the SWOT template on page 22.

## Questions to ask during a SWOT analysis

The following questions should be used for guidance or starting points; there are many other questions to ask and factors specific to the department’s mission to consider.

**Strengths** (*internal, positive factors*): these describe the positive attributes, tangible and intangible, internal to the program. They are within your control.

- What do you do well?
- What strong internal resources do you have? For example:
  - *Positive attributes of faculty*, such as knowledge, background, education, credentials, network, reputation, or skills.
  - *Tangible assets of the program*, such as funding, effective teaching methods, industry support, or technology.
- Does the department have faculty with strong capabilities in redesigning or improving ways of doing the program’s work?

- What other positive aspects, internal to your program, add value or offer you an advantage in fulfilling your goals?

**Weaknesses** (*internal, negative factors*): these are aspects of your program, or of FIT, that detract from the value you offer or place you at a competitive disadvantage. These areas need to be enhanced in order to fulfill the goals and mission.

- Are there sufficient faculty members and/or do the faculty have appropriate training, skills and attributes to carry out the work?
- Are the goals and mission of the program unrealistic?
- Have there been incidents or negative events that produce a poor reputation for the program?
- Is the technology lacking or inappropriate in some way?

**Opportunity** (*external, positive factors*): these are external attractive factors that represent reasons your program is likely to prosper. An important part of conducting this part of the SWOT analysis is an environmental scan, gathering information within FIT and in the broader community, state, nation and world.

- What opportunities exist outside of your department or outside of FIT that you can benefit from?
- Is the perception of your department positive?
- Has there been recent growth or other changes in the environment that create an opportunity?
- Is the opportunity ongoing, or is there just a window for it? In other words, how critical is your timing?

**Threats** (*external, negative factors*): these include factors external to FIT that could place your strategy, the program or FIT itself at risk. The program and FIT have no control over these, but you may benefit by having contingency plans to address them if they should occur.

- What factors beyond your control could place your department or FIT at risk?
- Are there challenges created by an unfavorable trend or development that may lead to deteriorating likelihood of meeting the goals of the department or of FIT?
- What situations might threaten your efforts?
- Have there been shifts in students' or others' behavior, the economy, or government regulations that could negatively affect your department's work? Are such shifts anticipated to occur in the future?

**SWOT Brainstorming Template**

This template is useful to use when brainstorming possible factors to include in the SWOT analysis with a group including program faculty, students, and/or advisory board members. The final list will include a sentence or two of explanation regarding each factor.

| Strengths     | Weaknesses |
|---------------|------------|
|               |            |
| Opportunities | Threats    |
|               |            |

## Sample Reviewer Recruitment Text

Note: Please customize the text with the appropriate information. Feel free to adapt the language so that it fits your style and level of acquaintance with the potential reviewer.

Dear .....,

You have been suggested as a potential external reviewer for XYZ Department of the Fashion Institute of Technology, based on your professional experience and your independence from the department. FIT conducts periodic academic reviews of its programs as part of the College's continuous improvement process. An important part of our process is an "external review," undertaken by knowledgeable professionals outside of the College, to ensure that our programs provide excellent education and prepare students for the industries they will enter.

I am attaching the "Scope of Work" document, which outlines the expectations for the review. In brief, two external reviewers are selected, and each will read the self-study document and other relevant materials. Together, the reviewers will participate in a site visit and will prepare a report (separately or jointly) that summarizes their findings and recommendations. FIT will reimburse the reviewers for travel and lodging expenses associated with the site visit. Compensation for the work related to review of materials, the site visit, and the preparation of the report will be \$1,000 for each reviewer. We anticipate that the site visit will be held in/on Month/date/time period.

If you could let us know by Month, Date, Year about your willingness and availability for this engagement, we would appreciate it. To aid in the reviewer selection process, we ask that you send us information about your education, experience, and qualifications in addition to your indication of interest (a CV, detailed Linked In profile, etc).

## External Reviewer’s Scope of Work, Academic Program Review

External reviewers are an essential part of FIT’s academic program review process, providing independent and informed perspectives as to how an academic program compares to other programs in the field. Reviewers evaluate and offer constructive recommendations for a program based upon an analysis of program strengths and weaknesses. This helps ensure that FIT’s academic programs meet the needs of their students, the industries they serve, and align with FIT’s strategic goals.

The engagement to conduct an external review at the Fashion Institute of Technology consists of three components:

1. Review of the department’s self-study and other materials as needed.
2. A site visit, which usually lasts a full working day, from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.; some reviews may be scheduled to include time in the evening or may require a second day, according to program structure and needs. Site visits may be held virtually when that is the best option for those involved.
3. Preparation of a report (jointly with a second reviewer), to be submitted within two weeks of the site visit.

Compensation for the work related to review of materials, the site visit, and the preparation of the report will be \$1,000 for each reviewer. In addition, FIT will reimburse the reviewers for travel and lodging for the site visit. Reviewer expenses are processed after the site visit, and the honorarium is processed after receipt of the written report.

### External Reviewer’s Report:

In a report of approximately 6-9 pages, reviewers will comment upon the strengths and weaknesses of the program, with reference to the self-study report and site visit. The areas listed below should be addressed; in each area there is at least one guiding question to consider. Reviewers are encouraged to address other topics that arise during the course of their review that they see as relevant to the program’s success.

### Overall

- Did the program’s self-study align with what you observed in your visit to the campus and discussions with various stakeholders? Why or why not?
- What are your perceptions of the program, in terms of overall quality, standout attributes, areas that could be strengthened, etc?

### Curriculum and Student Learning – Most important focus of review

- Do student learning outcomes address the needs of the employers and industry that graduates are being prepared for? Are they sufficiently rigorous?
- Do the courses and the curriculum as a whole address the preparation expected of a student graduating in this field? Are there parts of the curriculum that are redundant? Areas that need increased emphasis?

- Does the program thoughtfully assess and reflect on the overall student learning of each cohort, making improvements as needed?

#### Student Population and Student Support

- Comment on student population in terms of admission rates, demographics, size, retention, and graduation rates. Do these seem appropriate for the program? Do students seem to be adequately supported through advising, tutoring, and other support services at FIT?

#### Faculty and Instructional Resources

- Does the program have adequate and appropriate faculty?
- Do the instructional resources (e.g., facilities/space, equipment, information technology, etc.) meet the program's needs?

#### Questions from Program

- If the program has asked for feedback on specific issues, please address those issues in the report.

#### Recommendations

- Are the items included in the program's preliminary action plan reasonable and achievable?
- With only current resources or a modest infusion of new ones, what specific recommendations could improve the program, marginally or specifically? What recommendations do you have to help the program improve or strengthen?

The report can be sent via e-mail to Dr. Carolyn Comiskey, Executive Director of Assessment (Carolyn\_Comiskey@fitnyc.edu).

## Timeline for Academic Program Reviews

The Academic Program Review process generally takes about a year or slightly longer. Depending on the annual workflow of the program and the assessment approaches undertaken, completion of the intermediate steps may occur at different times than those indicated in this schedule. It is possible to adapt the schedule for a site visit in either the spring term or the fall, depending on what works best for the program.

In the early stages of the review process, the Executive Director of Assessment will work with the program to create an individualized timeline for the review.

|   |  |
|---|--|
| 1. Programs scheduled for review are notified, along with their deans.  | April prior to starting year   |
| 2. Kick off meeting with the Office of Academic and Administrative Assessment, to discuss schedule, set due dates for draft sections, and discuss the process | September, AY 1  |
| 3. Self-study   |  |
| First half of draft due   | November, AY1  |
| Second half of draft due  | February, AY1  |
| Student survey conducted, if necessary  | February, AY 1   |
| 4. External review  |  |
| a. Selection of reviewers   | Begin selection process in mid-fall AY 1, complete selection by January AY 1 |
| b. Site visit and report  | March, AY 1  |
| c. Department's response to external reviewers' report, revision of action plan   | April, AY 1  |
| 5. Wrap-up meeting  | April, AY 1  |
| 6. Submission of final action plan  | One month after wrap-up meeting  |
| (follow-up period: tracking of action plan progress and follow-up meeting about a year later)   |  |

*Note: when a review is held late during the spring term, the wrap-up meeting will be held early the following fall semester.*

Programs planning for a visit in the fall will generally complete a draft of the self-study and select reviewers prior to the end of the previous spring term.



Updated and finalized on 10/23/2023

## **Academic Program and Administrative Program Reviews (APR), final action plan processes for the Academic Affairs Division**

Goal: To identify and to clarify the processes through which objectives from APR Action Plans are implemented with the Dean and/or Supervisor's assistance.

The final action plans from APRs, in addition to serving as a multi-year plan for improvement and moving the unit or program forward, also serves as the documentation for wrapping up the self-study process. Further, the action plan lists requests for resources that are new as a result of self-study, currently planned and recently implemented. ([Guidelines: Academic Program Review](#)).

### **Guidelines for Academic Units**

The APR includes a chart entitled "resource requests supported by self-study." In the chart, program chairs list resource requests they plan to make through the budgetary process, such as requests for newly vacated staff, facilities or equipment and changes they plan to make to the curriculum as well as the need for consequential faculty and staff training. Requests for full time classroom faculty lines route through the Dean.

#### Budgetary Resource Request Categories:

- 1. Requests for replacing newly vacated positions in the current fiscal year.** (Submitted monthly to Academic Operations en route to the Critical Position Review Committee. The submission schedule is to be followed). The purpose of the Critical Position Request (CPR) Process is to provide a consistent method by which Senior Administrators (including AVPs, Executive Directors, Directors, and Deans) analyze and potentially propose consideration of a critical position.
- 2. Any dean approved replacements of vacated personnel lines requests need to be prepared by the chair and delivered to the dean.**
- 3. Facilities and Personnel.** Critical Needs Request (CNR) (November submission)  
It is expected that the new fiscal year will require specific, targeted investments in critical initiatives. These may include initiatives that are mission-critical, identified through the Academic Program Review, or are health and safety-related. To address these needs, each Dean's proposed budget request for new needs that cannot be self-funded and are critical for the re-imagined environment of a particular fiscal year are submitted to Academic Operations each November and are then prepared and shared with the President and VPFA. The VPAA carefully reviews all requests upon receipt, schedules meetings with deans and directors, and follows up with a decision on what has been identified to move forward to the president (see sample [CNR form](#) from FY 2022)
- 4. Peripheral Equipment.** VPAA Equipment Requests (January submission)  
Academic Operations meets with Deans and Directors to discuss peripheral equipment needs for instructional spaces. A list is generated, itemized costs are assessed, then a discussion and determination to procure with VPAA, and finally

purchases are processed for delivery by or before June 30th, the end of the fiscal year.

5. **IT Hardware/ Software** (December submission) –Critical needs inside the classroom. IT queries chairs and faculty via electronic survey, in consultation with their respective deans, to submit requests for the coming year for new or upgraded hardware and software in the classrooms and labs.

### Faculty Support

Faculty support for excellence in teaching, improvement of technical skills, research, scholarship activities and grants is available:

1. Excellence in Teaching  
Pedagogical Activities (Learning Activities that support unit content)  
<https://www.fitnyc.edu/gateways/employees/faculty-academic-support/cet/fdga/index.php>  
The CET calendar: <https://www.fitnyc.edu/gateways/employees/faculty-academic-support/cet/calendar.php>
2. Improvement of Technical Skills  
There are several opportunities available for faculty. Contact Jeffrey Riman in the CET and James Pearce in IT/DT, for the latest development and training events.
3. Research, Scholarship and Conference Presentations  
Faculty Development Grants and Awards(FDGA) are available for faculty:  
<https://www.fitnyc.edu/gateways/employees/faculty-academic-support/cet/fdga/index.php>
5. Grants  
Office of Grants and Sponsored Programs:  
<https://www.fitnyc.edu/about/administration/academic-affairs/grants/index.php>
6. Global resources for Faculty  
<https://www.fitnyc.edu/academics/global/resources/faculty.php>
7. Training Opportunities offered by SUNY  
[SUNY Center for Professional Development \(CPD\)](#)  
[SUNY SAIL](#)  
[Department Chair Resource Center](#)  
[Leaders Learning Live](#)
8. LinkedIn Learning  
Log into [MyFIT](#) Click on “Web Resources” and then the “LinkedIn Learning - formerly Lynda. com” link