



**Fashion Institute
of Technology**

Guidelines: Academic Program Review

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Introduction

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 and best practices;
- comply with the Middle States Commission on Higher Education's mandate to develop a comprehensive program of assessment of student learning;
- provide faculty and the academic administration an opportunity to review operations and services, assess effectiveness, and develop improvement plans; and
- provide valuable information about FIT's academic programs to a wide range of audiences that includes potential donors to the college, and the entire FIT community.

At a minimum, each academic department is required to conduct a review of its program(s) over a seven year cycle. 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, such as Photography (Digital Still Photography) and Jewelry Design (Gemology) 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. Some departments may have significant parts of their mission, such as offering general education classes, which are not related to the degree(s) under review. Programs within larger departments may have to adapt these guidelines to reflect their particular circumstances.

The following document describes the components of the academic program review process. The Office of Institutional Research & Effectiveness has revised these guidelines several times since 2014; updates will be made annually, based on feedback from academic programs, but any revisions will not apply to reviews in progress.

The Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness welcomes comments, as this process continues to be refined to better achieve the goals of the college's assessment program.

Dr. Darrell E. Glenn, Assistant Dean of Institutional Research and Effectiveness
Fashion Institute of Technology
236 27th Street, Suite 301
New York, NY 10001
Office: 212-217-4075
darrell_glenn@fitnyc.edu

Dr. Carolyn Comiskey, Executive Director of Assessment
Fashion Institute of Technology
236 27th Street, Suite 301
New York, NY 10001
Office: 212-217-3596
carolyn_comiskey@fitnyc.edu

Academic Program Review Guidelines Overview

The academic program review consists of three phases:

Phase 1 - a self-study reviewing the academic program and the degrees it awards

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 Institutional Research and Effectiveness 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. Student data outcomes
- c. Learning outcomes, program requirements, and curriculum map
- d. Assessment of program-level student learning outcomes
Review of recent assessments of program learning outcomes; developing additional assessments and presenting the results
- e. Pulling it all together Conducting a SWOT Analysis
- f. Preliminary action plan

Phase 2 - External Review

- a. Selection of reviewers
- b. Reviewer tasks
- c. Site visit
- d. Reviewers' report
- e. Department response
- f. Revisions to action plan (if warranted)

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

a. Program profile

The primary audience for the program profile consists of external constituents/stakeholders and/or new or prospective FIT faculty. In addition to being the first step in the review process, 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.

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 academic degree that is a part of the review. Each degree 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 IR&E webpage. In addition to the mission statement, the program should **briefly** explain how the program supports the college's mission (fitnyc.edu/mission) and strategic plan (fitnyc.edu/strategicplan). Since mission statements should be limited to a single, short paragraph, programs may also include a vision statement if desired.

Program history, present, and future directions

In the review process, it is helpful to understand the program's history, how it has evolved over the past five to ten years, what is happening in the program at present, and its plans for the future. 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. If relevant, briefly describe the most recent program review, what was learned from the process, and what improvements were made as a result.

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.

If the program anticipates changes for the future, those should be outlined. In particular, any changes anticipated or already in progress should be discussed. 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. If the program feels it is important for the review, faculty CVs may be attached to the self-study in an appendix:

- 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

Specialized skills

Discuss the faculty's mix of knowledge, experience, and disciplines and whether any enhancements to the mix are recommended.

Faculty trends

Present five years of trend data on employed faculty (full-time and adjunct reported separately). Briefly discuss the reasons for fluctuations, if any.

Facilities and equipment

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.

Library Resources

In consultation with the assigned library liaison, 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?

Information technology

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?

Budget

Include the total budget for the program in the most recent fiscal year. This should include operating dollars broken out by Personal Services (PS) and Other than Personal Services (OTPS) 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.

b. Student data outcomes

In this section, present and interpret the program student outcomes data provided by the Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness. Information should be presented and discussed for each degree and credit certificate.

Applications and Enrollment

Applications Report: The application chart shows the five year history of applications for each degree. It lists the number of students that began an application, and how many completed one. "Accepted applications" indicates the number of students accepted each year by each degree, while "enrolled" reports how many of the accepted students actually began the program. The "acceptance rate" is the percentage of students accepted from the total number of completed applications. The "yield rate" indicates the percentage of students who were accepted that chose to join the program.

Enrollment Reports: "Fall entering cohort" indicates how many students began in each degree each fall term. "Total program enrollment" is the total number of students enrolled in the program each fall, from all cohorts.

Application Chart: To be inserted by IRE

Fall Entering Cohort Enrollment Chart: To be inserted by IRE

Fall Total Program Enrollment Chart: To be inserted by IRE

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.

Diversity

Diversity chart: This chart compares the diversity of the program's students in terms of race, ethnicity, and international student status (i.e. nonresident alien) to the general FIT student body, the SUNY enrolled students, and New York City residents.

Diversity Chart: Inserted by IRE

Please comment on the diversity of the program's students.

Retention and Graduation

Fall to Fall Retention: This chart provides the number of students enrolled in a given fall term, and compares this to the number of students who either graduate that year, or return the following fall. The number of students who do not graduate or continue with the program the subsequent year are categorized as "attrited." The final percentage is the retention rate (the % of students that were "retained" by the program).

Graduation Reports: The three-year graduation rate chart provides the number of students entering the degree program in a given fall and looks to see how many of them graduated from the program within three years. It also provides the number of students that graduated in another program at FIT, that are still at FIT but haven't graduated ("persist at FIT"), and those that have transferred to another institutions. While most degree programs are one- or two-years long, an extra year's leeway is included since occasionally a student will need a little more time; this is how the federal government collects information on graduation rates. The chart presenting the time to graduate for the most recent cohort for which information is available is an in-depth picture of what happens to that cohort in terms of graduation; this chart presents data on how many students graduate in one year, two years, or three years, and how many students fail to graduate in that time period. These two charts must begin with a cohort that entered FIT at least three years previously, and is the most recent information available. "Graduates during the Academic Year" provides data on how many students graduated for each degree each year for the last five years.

Chart: Fall to Fall Retention: To be inserted by IRE

Chart: Three Year Graduation Status: To be inserted by IRE

Chart: Time to Graduate, Most Recent Available Cohort: To be inserted by IRE

Chart: Graduates during Most Recent Academic Year Available: To be inserted by IRE

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?

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?

c. 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. The description should be provided in three parts.

Part 1 - List the learning outcomes for each degree and credit certificate program.

Part 2 - Describe the program requirements for each degree and credit certificate program.

Part 3 - Relate the program requirements to the learning goals through the use of a curriculum map for each degree. In addition, list course learning outcomes which support the program learning outcomes.

Part 1 -- 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 IR&E's webpage, <http://www.fitnyc.edu/ire/>.

Part 2 – Program Requirements

Insert the curriculum chart (used in the FIT catalog and on the FIT website) reflecting degree requirements for each degree under review. The Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness will provide the course descriptions for the self-study in the Appendix, as well as the course learning outcomes for each required course.

After each curriculum chart, provide a **brief** explanation regarding the curriculum for each degree. What was the logic behind the curriculum’s design, in terms of course requirements, sequencing, etc.? When was the curriculum last updated? Does the current program reflect that on file with the State of New York? As part of this review, IRE will provide with the program with information as to the curriculum registered with the state.

Part 3 – 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 IR&E’s webpage (<http://www.fitnyc.edu/ire/>).

d. Assessment of program-level student learning outcomes

Program learning outcomes constitute a concise list of the most important knowledge, skills, and attitudes that faculty expect students to learn and demonstrate as a result of the program. Through assessments, programs gather information about the extent to which students accomplish the learning outcomes. When programs gather reliable information about relative strengths and weaknesses in student learning, faculty can use that information to make improvements to assist students in their learning.

The next step in the self-study process is to provide evidence and discuss the results of assessments of program-level student learning outcomes since the last review, as well as to design and conduct additional assessments to enhance understanding of student learning in the program. Programs review assessment results that are on file, and they work closely with the Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness to design additional assessments that can be conducted as a part of the review. Beginning with self-studies completed in 2019, programs will submit assessment reports on program learning outcomes annually to IRE; these reports should be attached to the appendix of the self-study. Programs that assessed all outcomes within the last 3-4 years, using the assessment process to interpret the information, make improvements, and see whether the improvements are successful, may have all of the information needed for this section on hand.

Program learning outcomes can be assessed in a variety of ways, a few of which are discussed broadly here. The most compelling evidence about what students have learned comes from evaluations of students’ work; this is known as “direct evidence.” Students demonstrate their learning through a wide range of assignments, such as projects, papers, capstone projects or theses, portfolios, performances, and exhibitions. Faculty evaluate how each individual student

does on an assignment by assigning a single grade. However, in order to evaluate how students across the program are doing in terms of a particular skill or learning outcome, faculty usually need to track how students perform on different aspects of an assignment and aggregate the information together for a larger group of students, perhaps using a “tool” such as a rubric. Information on developing and using rubrics can be found on IR&E’s website, <http://www.fitnyc.edu/ire/>.

Other methods that provide strong evidence regarding student learning include feedback or ratings from professionals invited to FIT to critique student work, as well as employer ratings of student interns or recent alumni. This information must be analyzed and aggregated in ways that relate the information to learning outcomes for a group of students.

Programs may also gather “indirect evidence” regarding student learning. Students and alumni may share their perceptions about what they’ve learned through surveys, exit interviews, or focus groups. Other information, such as job placement, starting salary, retention rates, and more, provide insights about student learning, but may not provide information regarding specific skills and types of knowledge, as expressed in the outcomes. It is useful to incorporate this information in the analysis but it is not sufficient evidence as to what students have learned on its own. Student grades provide general information about overall student performance in the program and in particular courses, but grades are broad, global indicators that do not provide specific information regarding which learning objectives students met.

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. Annual assessment reports for program learning outcomes, or other assessment results, should be attached to the appendix. Below the chart, the program should highlight significant findings and improvements made from these assessments, using the guiding questions provided.

Please complete one chart for each academic degree or certificate under review.

Assessments Completed	Academic Year	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?

Developing Additional Assessments

Programs may need to conduct additional assessments of student learning, depending on how much assessment information is on hand:

- Programs will need to develop additional assessments of student work for learning outcomes that have not been assessed within the last four years.
- Programs that have not gathered information on student perceptions of the program in the last four years through means such as through surveys, focus groups, or exit interviews will do so as a part of this review.
- Programs with plentiful assessment information may find Academic Program Review to be an opportune moment to conduct research around questions about student learning or other issues about which the faculty want information.

When conducting additional assessment, the program should work closely with the Office of Institutional Effectiveness to determine the methods and design the assessments.

Describe the additional assessments and present and analyze the results (if applicable)

Describe the additional assessments done as a part of academic program review. Prepare a summary of results and an analysis of their meaning for the department's program(s).

e. Pulling it all together

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**.

f. Preliminary Action Plan

Based on all of the information gathered in the department 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 Institutional Research and Effectiveness 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: 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 the established channels.

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

g. 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. Those questions may be listed here.

Phase 2: The External Review

After the program's profile, assessments, SWOT analysis, and action plan are completed, 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.

It should be noted that misunderstandings can arise related to the external reviewer selection step of this process. Suggested reviewers can be called into question either for lack of expertise or an excessively close relationship with the program or the College. 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, people who have worked at the College previously will be closely scrutinized since they will have preconceptions about FIT. External reviewers can be professionally known by department members, but close personal associations would require disqualification. 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. The reviewers must be able to judge whether or not the program meets prevailing academic standards and is preparing graduates for employment related to their education. In some cases, the school's dean may require a certain degree level as a qualification.

The reviewers will be asked to provide evaluative feedback regarding alignment of the self-study with the action plan and areas needing strengthening or improvement.

a. Selection criteria and selection process

The selection of appropriate external reviewers is key to the success of the review. The department chair should assess the external landscape and identify three to five individuals with expertise in the field who have no meaningful current relationship with faculty in the program. In most cases, at least one individual should have expertise in the application of the work in an academic setting. The second individual may have such experience in a non-academic setting (e.g., industry professional).

The department chair generally makes the first contact with potential external reviewers, to verify the potential reviewers' interest and availability, and ask for credentials; IRE will provide sample text and the "Scope of Work" document to assist in this process (Scope of Work is included in attachment 5 to this document). After this, **the chair should forward the names, contact information, credentials and a rationale for selecting the individuals** to the Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness. 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 Institutional Research and Effectiveness will forward the names and credentials to the Dean for review. The Dean will make recommendations regarding which potential reviewers are acceptable, which will then be forwarded to the Vice President for Academic Affairs. The Vice President for Academic Affairs

will select two reviewers and the department will be notified. After this point, IR&E will handle communication with reviewers and manage the 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 efficiency and effectiveness;
- An evaluation of how well the program's mission and goals support the FIT's mission and strategic plan;
- 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 and alumni of the program;
- Meeting with Institutional Research and Effectiveness staff;
- A tour of the instructional facilities and physical working spaces of the program;
- A visit to the library to assess informational resources; and
- Time allotted for conferring with each other throughout the day as needed.

A sample site visit schedule is included in **Attachment 2**.

d. Reviewers' report

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

e. 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. IRE 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.

f. Revision of preliminary action plan

The department will revise its preliminary action plan at this point, based on the findings of the reviewers' report.

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.

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 Institutional Research and Effectiveness.

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. These minutes, after review by the participants, will be maintained as a record of the discussions and recommendations made during the meeting.

Program representatives will prepare a final action plan based on the recommendations, using a template provided by IRE (below). This will be approved by the school dean and IRE. The final action plan can be viewed as a framework for ongoing assessment of the program’s initiatives. For each action identified, the program will propose ways to evaluate whether the actions have been successful. Each year, the department will report progress to the school dean regarding the action steps. The dean will report on the progress of the action plan annually to Academic Affairs, as part of the annual report for the school.

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.

Academic Program Review: Action Plan and Executive Summary

The final action plan serves as the documentation for closing the loop on the self-study and assessment process. It is posted for the community on MyFIT, along with a brief summary of the self-study process and the findings.

Overview of Self-Study: Provide the timeline for the self-study (including dates of visit and wrap-up meeting) and reviewers' names and affiliations.

Brief Summary of Key Findings:

Overview of Action Items: Explain rationale behind selection of the agreed-upon action items.

No.	Action Steps: Actions to be taken to improve student learning and program outcomes. In addition, please note whether this action is: New as a result of self-study; currently planned; recently implemented	Lead Responsibility	Implementation Plan with Timeline	Intended results: What observable changes are expected as a result of the step? How will this action improve student learning in the program?
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				

Note: Version published on MyFIT will only include the Action steps and Intended results; other columns will be hidden.

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 the established channels.

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

Attachments

1. Instructions for Conducting a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) Analysis
2. External Review Process
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 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 external factors beyond your control that could place your strategy, the program or FIT itself at risk. You 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

External Review Process

Phase 2 of these guidelines focused on the purpose and components of the external review portion of the academic program review process. This attachment focuses on the timing, logistics, and the delegation of responsibilities of the various departments involved in the external review.

Selection of reviewers

Departments are strongly advised to start searching for potential external reviewers very early in the academic program review process. A “scope of work” is available from the Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness that describes the responsibilities of the reviewers. This can be used in the reviewer recruitment process.

The department chair should forward the names, contact information, credentials and a rationale for selecting the individuals to the Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness, which will forward the information to the Dean for review. The Dean will make recommendations regarding which potential reviewers are acceptable, which will then be forwarded to the Vice President for Academic Affairs. The Vice President for Academic Affairs will select two reviewers and the department will be notified. The reviewers will then be contacted by the Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness to arrange the details of the reviewing engagement.

It is very likely that the department may wish to contact potential reviewers to gauge their level of interest and suitability for the reviewing engagement. Departments can use the External Review Scope of Work to describe the nature of the work to potential reviewers and to inform them about FIT’s reimbursement and compensation policies.

Materials to be sent to reviewers

After receiving confirmation from the reviewers that they are willing and able to undertake the review, the Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness will send the following materials to the reviewers at least one week prior to the site visit:

- Departmental self-study
- External reviewer’s Scope of Work
- Link to FIT Strategic Plan on www.fitnyc.edu
- Contract/payment information
- Directions to campus
- Agenda

Arranging the site visit

The agenda for the site visit will be developed jointly by the department and the Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness. In cooperation with the department, the Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness will schedule the meetings and events that will take place during the site visit.

The site visit should be at least a full day. Depending on the nature of the program and the nature and timing of the events, a longer visit may be scheduled. Evening events could also be scheduled, depending on the availability of students or other participants.

The Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness will serve as the overall guide and time keeper during the visit, adjusting the schedule as needed.

Site visit events and meetings

- Meetings with the departmental chair and those within the department who had significant roles in producing the self-study;
- Meetings with academic administrators, including the Dean of the department's school, the Vice President of Academic Affairs, and other senior administrators in academic affairs;
- Meetings with current students and alumni of the program
- Library tour and meeting with library staff
- Meetings with Institutional Research and Effectiveness staff;
- A tour of the instructional facilities and physical working spaces of the department; and
- Time allotted for conferring with each other throughout the day as needed.

Example site visit schedule, single day format

8:00 am – 9:00 am	Breakfast meeting with department chair and faculty
9:30 am – 10:30 am	Meet with senior academic administrators (Vice President for Academic Affairs and the Dean)
9:00 am – 9:30 am	Tour of instructional facilities
10:30 am – 12:00 pm	Meetings with students and alumni
12:00 pm – 1:00 pm	Lunch and discussion
1:00 pm – 2:00 pm	Library tour and meeting with library staff
2:00 pm – 3:30 pm	Additional meetings with department faculty
3:30 pm – 4:00 pm	Meet with Institutional Research and Effectiveness staff
4:00 pm – 4:30 pm	Wrap-up meeting with Vice President for Academic Affairs
5:00 pm – 5:30 pm	Reviewers' meeting

Reviewers' report

The external reviewers' report should be completed within two weeks of the site visit and sent directly to the Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness. Upon receipt of reviewers' report, the Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness forwards copies to the department head, the school's Dean, and the Vice President for Academic Affairs.

Reimbursement and compensation

Costs for the external review and site visit will be paid through the Institutional Research and Effectiveness budget with payments being made to the reviewers after their report is received.

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, the FIT Strategic Plan, 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.
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, lodging, and meals expenses associated with the site visit.

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.

Mission, Past History, and Future Directions

- Is the program's mission clear and appropriate? Does it align with FIT's mission and strategic plan?
- 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?

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? Is student support offered by the program through orientation, advising, and other programs appropriate?

Curriculum and Student Learning

- 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?

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?

Support Services

- Are administrative, library and other supportive services appropriate to ensure the program's success?

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 goal is to start the review process in March of each year, and finish by the end of the spring semester of the following year. 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.

In the early stages of the review process, staff from Institutional Research and Effectiveness will work with the program to create an individualized timeline for the review.

1. Annual Cycle is determined. Department chairs and deans are notified.	March, AY 1
2. Kick off meeting with the Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness	April, AY 1
3. Self-study	
a. Departmental profile	September, AY 2
b. Learning outcomes, program requirements, curriculum map	October, AY 2
c. Assessment plan; meeting with the Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness to review parts a, b and c	October, AY 2
d. Conduct assessments (Can be done in either fall or spring semesters)	November, AY 2 through February, AY 2
e. Pulling it all together (SWOT)	January/February, AY 2
f. Preliminary action plan	February, AY 2
4. External review	
a. Selection of reviewers	Begin selection process early in fall AY 2, complete selection by January AY 2
b. Site visit and report	March, AY 2
c. Department's response to external reviewers' report	April, AY 2
d. Revisions to action plan	April, AY 2
4. Wrap-up meeting	April, AY 2