



Academic Program and Departmental Operations Evaluation Handbook

October 2023

Preface

Colorado State University maintains responsibility for the quality of its academic programs and operations within its academic units (colleges, departments, schools, or Special Academic Units) and regularly evaluates them as part of our continual improvement and quality assurance efforts.

The process, is faculty led, as described in [Section C.2.4.2.2.d of the Academic Faculty and Administrative Professional Manual](#) of the Academic Faculty and Administrative Professional Manual. The vice provost for institutional planning and effectiveness serves as the provost/EVP liaison for the process and supports faculty with their work.

This handbook serves as a resource and includes a timeline of activities and describes the report structure approved by the provost/EVP. Should you have questions, please contact the vice provost for planning and effectiveness (laura.jensen@colostate.edu).

Purpose

[Section C.2.4.2.2.d](#) of the Academic Faculty and Administrative Professional Manual (hereby referred to as the *Manual*) requires that evaluations of academic programs and departmental operations be conducted concurrently. While the departmental faculty may initiate a request for interim evaluations, they are ordinarily conducted every five to seven years. Every effort is made to coordinate the evaluations with specialized accreditation cycles should the unit maintain any.

The purpose of the *Evaluation of Academic Programs* is for the unit's faculty to assess the demand for and quality of the degrees/certificates they deliver. The Office of the Provost has operationalized this to include a review of student learning outcomes and attainment thereof, review of the curriculum, and outcomes after graduation. Evidence of learning equivalency across instructional modality and course/program delivery location should also be provided as well as indicators of student success from an equity perspective. Further, the academic programs' contributions to the All-University Core Curriculum and Institutional Learning Objectives should be discussed. Should any exist, a review of formalized agreements (2+2 agreements, partnerships, etc.) related to the curriculum should be reviewed and updated as necessary.

The purpose of the *Evaluation of Departmental Operations* is for faculty to evaluate the human resources, facilities, work environment, organization, administration of the department, and other aspects of the unit's operations to maintain and improve morale, effectiveness, and productivity. The Office of the Provost has operationalized this to include a discussion of centers, institutes etc. The evaluation is not intended to be an evaluation of the unit's head/chair.

The evaluation process culminates in an *Action Plan* developed by the unit's faculty and approved by the department head, dean, and provost. Together with an executive summary of the evaluation, the improvement strategies within the *Action Plan* will be considered in college and/or university strategic and academic planning. In the past, strategies for improvement have included such things as the creation/discontinuation of academic programs, refinement of learning outcomes and/or assessment activities, faculty hiring, facilities upgrades, recruitment initiatives, and creation/expansion of professional development opportunities.

The Committee on Strategic and Financial Planning and the CSU System Board of Governors will be forwarded a copy of the *Action Plan* and executive summary signed by the unit head/chair, the dean, and the provost as an indicator of their review and approval.

Process

Each fall the vice provost for planning and effectiveness will, in consultation with the provost/EVP, create a schedule of units that will participate in the evaluation process that year. The provost/EVP will submit that schedule as a consent agenda item for the CSU System Board of Governors. Academic units, and their college dean, will be notified via email that they have been selected to take part in the process.

In accordance with the *Manual*, **evaluations are to be faculty led and conducted with broad faculty participation. The unit head/chair is not to complete the evaluation, that is the responsibility of the faculty.** A culminating final report should be written and provided to the unit head/chair and the college dean for feedback. The dean may forward the report (or sections thereof) to internal or external reviewers for additional feedback. Any feedback will be provided back to the unit faculty and will become part of the record. Faculty may respond to the feedback but are not required to do so. The dean will provide the final executive summary and *Action Plan* to the provost/EVP.

The timeline for the process is as follows:

Timeline	Activity
September	Academic units are notified of their required participation in the evaluation process and provided with an overview.
October-May	Faculty draft their evaluation report and provide it to the unit head/chair and dean who will meet to discuss and provide feedback. The dean may choose to forward the report to others for feedback. All feedback will be provided back to the faculty, and they may edit the report based on that if desired.
June	Faculty finalizes the report and provides it to the dean who will forward the executive summary and Action Plan to the provost/EVP.
August	The strategic initiatives of the Action Plan are considered in strategic and financial planning for the following budget cycle.
September-December	The executive summary will be provided to the Board of Governors. The faculty will document the Action Plan and student learning outcomes in the online tool and provide updates annually thereafter until the next evaluation.

Best Practices

- The evaluation process should be conducted by the eligible faculty of the unit (defined in the departmental code as eligible to vote on departmental issues), or a representative committee thereby selected. **The unit head/chair is not responsible for completing the evaluation or writing the final report; both are the responsibility of the faculty.**
- Do not delay organizing the evaluation process and distributing the workload. To be useful, the process should be introspective and that will take time and effort.
- There are resources and support available to units throughout the process (see Appendix A)
- Once the final report is complete, it (and all supporting evidence) should be uploaded to the online system by the unit.
- Soliciting feedback from reviewers is highly recommended, although not required, prior to the unit finalizing the evaluation report.

The Final Report

The final report will include an executive summary (no more than 3 pages), introspective self-study of the unit (no more than 30 pages), and an Action Plan for continuous improvement (no more than 2 pages). All evidence should be summarized in the narrative and appended to the report in the online tool.

Executive Summary (no more than 3 pages)

The executive summary should give a brief overview of the self-study and Action Plan. It will be forwarded to the provost/EVP and the Board of Governors as evidence of the evaluation process. It should inform both about the accomplishments and challenges since the last evaluation as well as the strengths and opportunities of the unit and the programs it delivers.

Self-Study (no more than 30 pages)

The self-study is organized into the following six sections to help guide the reflective process across our land grant tri-part mission.

Departmental Operations

- The unit should present its mission and review its code to ensure that it incorporates current institutional policy. Describe any updates since the last evaluation. The code should be linked within the self-study as evidence.
- Describe the human resources, financial resources, expenditures, facilities, work environment, organization, and administration of the department with an eye toward making CSU the best possible place to work and learn. Note that this is not an evaluation of the performance of the department head/chair, which is the responsibility of the dean.
- Provide a faculty hiring plan for the next 5-7 years that anticipates faculty attrition, disciplinary shifts, and enrollment trends.
- Review the previous Action Plan and mark the attainment of (or progress toward) those strategic initiatives. A discussion of the impact of those activities is expected.

Research and Creative Artistry

Reflect on the excellence and growth opportunities in research, creative artistry, and other scholarly accomplishments as central to the mission of CSU and described in [Section E.12.2 of the Manual](#). A summary of inputs and outputs (research expenditures, publications, performances, citations, etc.) is important but more important is the reflection of the unit's impact and how research is integrated with service and teaching/learning.

Service

Discuss the various forms of service in which faculty engage (as defined in [Section E.12.3 of the Manual](#)). This should be more than a list of activities but should reflect on the impact of those activities and include a description of how service is distributed across the TTF from an equity perspective. Consider if the unit has particular areas of strength and/or opportunity related to service and how service is connected to teaching/learning.

Teaching, Learning, and Mentoring

As described in [Section E.12.1 of the Manual](#), CSU is dedicated to providing a quality educational experience for undergraduate, graduate, and professional students (both degree-seeking and non-degree seeking). “Evaluation of teaching should be designed to highlight strengths, identify deficiencies, and improve overall teaching and learning.” The evaluation of teaching, learning, and mentoring in this process should include multiple aspects as follows:

- List the academic degree/certificate programs delivered by the unit as documented in the [Official List of Colleges, Departments, Degrees, Majors, and Minors](#) along with the established Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs) that reflect the skills and knowledge students should possess at graduation. Each PLO should be sufficiently specific to differentiate the program from all other programs and degree levels at CSU.
- Submit a curriculum matrix for all undergraduate and graduate degrees/certificates (online and on campus) delivered by the unit that identifies where each PLO is introduced, practiced, or mastered in the required course work. Include in the matrix the required course work that contributes to the [All-University Core Curriculum Learning Outcomes](#) and the [Institutional Learning Objectives](#).
- Analyze the complexity of the curriculum by reviewing the *Eight Semester Plan* and the degree programs in the online [Curricular Analytics](#) tool. Consider the number of pre-requisites, co-requisites, course availability and course alignment with PLOs and how the complexity compares to similar programs at other institutions with an eye for reducing complexity without compromising quality.
- Provide a summary of assessment methods and outcomes to demonstrate at what level PLOs are being attained. Include a discussion of how assessment results were used to update the curriculum, pedagogy, or learning environment.
- Discuss the formative assessment faculty use to monitor and improve the educational experience for students as well as the professional development in which faculty have participated as they continue to hone their teaching skills.
- Discuss evidence demonstrating equivalency in the educational experience for students regardless of where or how courses are delivered.
- Reflect upon how, when, and to what extent [High Impact Practices](#) (experiential learning, service learning, collaborative assignments, seminars, internships, etc.) are integrated into the undergraduate degree programs. Include a discussion of the integrative learning of the capstone experience.
- Describe how faculty are involved in advising and/or mentoring both undergraduate and graduate students.

Student Success

Student success is a major focus of the [University Strategic Plan](#). Discuss the unit’s intentional efforts to increase the graduation rates of undergraduate and graduate students, particularly of student populations traditionally underserved in higher education (first-generation, low income, racially minoritized, etc.). This should include a multi-dimensional review of metrics such as course completion trends, progression through the major, graduation rates, time to graduation etc.

Provide assurance that graduates (undergraduate and graduate) are prepared for life after CSU. Evidence may include, but is not limited to, employment rates (including volunteerism and military service), licensure pass rates, wages, and further education admissions as well as employer and alumni feedback.

Inclusive Excellence

As stated in the [University Strategic Plan](#), we will “exhibit, throughout the University, a respect for diversity, inclusivity, and the value of every individual to ensure that CSU is the foremost institution at which to work and/or learn.” Discuss how diversity adds value to the unit and academic program(s) therein as well as how the department intentionally recruits, welcomes, and supports faculty/staff/students from historically marginalized populations and how issues of equity are examined/resolved.

Action Plan (no more than 2 pages)

After the self-study is drafted, the unit should develop an Action Plan for the next 5-7 years to focus its continuous improvement efforts. The plan should delineate major initiatives that, if accomplished, have the potential to incrementally improve the unit and/or the degree programs delivered. The connection of the initiatives to the [University Strategic Plan](#) should be explicitly stated. At least one of the initiatives should be focused on the enhancement of student learning.

The Action Plan, along with an initial draft of the self-study and executive summary, should be provided to the department head and dean. They will meet to discuss and may solicit feedback from other areas of campus as they deem necessary (OVPR, Graduate School, VPUA, VPFA, etc.). All feedback will be provided back to the unit and may be incorporated as desired before finalizing the report.

What's Next?

The dean will forward the final executive summary and Action Plan to the provost/EVP for consideration in the planning and budgeting process for the following fiscal year. For example, if the provost/EVP receives the Action Plan in August 2024 (FY25), the planning and budgeting process that begins that fall for FY26 will consider the initiatives described in the Action Plan. Therefore, if additional funding is necessary include that estimate in the Action Plan.

The unit will document the Action Plan and the Program Learning Outcomes in the Planning Module of the online tool. Please contact the Office of Institutional Research, Planning, and Effectiveness for training in how to do this. Annually, updates should be provided in the tool to document progress toward the Action Plan initiatives and the assessment of student learning.

Appendix A: Resources and Contacts

Questions about the process or expectations?

Laura Jensen

Vice Provost for Planning and Effectiveness

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Questions about the online tool?

Lindsey Laverentz

Executive Assistant, Vice Provost for Planning and Effectiveness

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Questions about learning outcomes and assessment?

Stephanie Foster

Director of Assessment

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Rebekah LeMahieu

Associate Director of Assessment at The Institute for Learning and Teaching (TILT)

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Assessment at CSU

<https://assessment.colostate.edu/>

Program Learning Outcomes Assessment

<https://assessment.colostate.edu/program-assessment/>

Looking for data?

Heather Novak

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Doug Leavell

Director of Research Analytics

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CSU Institutional Research

<http://www.ir.colostate.edu/>

CSU Departmental Dashboard

<https://www.ir.colostate.edu/program-review-and-planning/>

CSU Sponsored Programs Research Analytics

<https://www.research.colostate.edu/research-analytics/>

US Census Post-Secondary Employment Outcomes

<https://lehd.ces.census.gov/applications/pseo/?type=earnings&specificity=2&state=08&institution=00135000°reelevel=05&gradcohort=0000-3&filter=50&program=00>

Colorado Department of Higher Education Postsecondary Degree Earnings Outcomes
<https://cdhe.colorado.gov/data-and-research/research/education-workforce/postsecondary-degree-earnings-outcomes-tools>

Looking for curricular support or faculty professional development?

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Katy Little
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TILT Professional Development
<https://tilt.colostate.edu/prodev/>

TILT Teaching Effectiveness Framework
<https://tilt.colostate.edu/prodev/teaching-effectiveness/tef/>

TILT Teaching Resources
<https://tilt.colostate.edu/teaching-resources-for-all-delivery-modes/>

TILT Faculty Resources
<https://tilt.colostate.edu/faculty/>

Inclusive Excellence Employee Trainings
<https://inclusiveexcellence.colostate.edu/trainings/employee-dei-trainings/>

Talent Development
<https://training.colostate.edu/>