Guidance for Self-study

The Council for Interior Design Accreditation (CIDA) encourages all programs to undertake planned, regular, and systematic self-study. Guidance is provided to assist programs that need help organizing self-study efforts.

Guidance is not intended to mandate a particular format for self-study for every program. Programs may choose a variety of methodologies for self-study as appropriate within the context of their institution and program.

A thorough self-study to analyze achievement of CIDA Standards is particularly critical for programs undertaking an initial accreditation review. Self-study is encouraged well in advance of applying for accreditation (approximately 2 years). The program is then able to make changes as necessary to demonstrate achievement of Standards at the time of an accreditation review.

Introduction

Continuous self-study and improvement are integral to quality educational programs. In order to successfully identify program strengths, weaknesses, gaps, and demonstrate improvement, a program should proactively engage in an ongoing structured process of discovery, analysis, and improvement.

Successful programmatic self-study:
- Is planned and includes set *objectives* and a schedule for completion
- Measures achievement of specific criteria (for example, CIDA Standards, program *goals*, community needs, etc.)
- Uses multiple measures and methods to determine whether criteria are achieved
- Involves faculty members and administration in the planning
- Engages program and community resources
- Involves input from all communities of interest and expertise (i.e., students, design communities, Advisory Boards, internship employers, etc.)
- Uses results to improve the program
- Evaluates success of self-study measures and methods
- Is ongoing and builds on previous self-study results

Italicized words are defined at the end of this section

Overview of Self-study

Step 1. Determine self-study *purpose(s)* and *objectives*
Step 2. Create a plan and timetable for completion of steps 3-9
Step 3. Identify self-study criteria
Step 4. Identify self-study measures and methods
Step 5. Implement self-study measures and methods
Step 6. Analyze gathered data
Step 7. Plan and implement improvements
Step 8. Evaluate the quality of self-study methods
Step 9. Go back to step 1

1. Determine self-study *purpose*(s) and *objectives*	2. Create a plan and timetable for completion	3. Identify self-study criteria	4. Identify self-study measures and methods
8. Evaluate the quality of self-study methods	7. Plan and implement improvements	6. Analyze gathered information	5. Implement self-study measures and methods
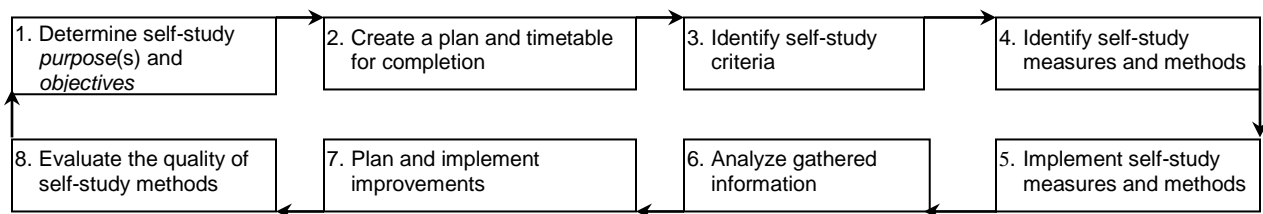
Step 1. Determine Self-study *Purpose* and *Objectives*

Your program may conduct self-study for a variety of *purposes*. For example, you may conduct a self-study as part of an institutional directive for self-study. You may conduct self-study in preparation for review of your institution for continued accreditation, either regional or national. Finally, you may conduct self-study in preparation for a programmatic accreditation review.

Quite often, conducting self-study for one *purpose* will not yield results that are useful for another *purpose*. CIDA suggests that you give careful thought to your *objectives* prior to undertaking any self-study endeavor. With appropriate planning you may develop a self-study plan that allows you to achieve multiple *objectives* without having to reformulate your approach for each self-study *purpose*.

If you are conducting self-study for multiple *purposes,* for instance institutional accreditation and programmatic accreditation, you may wish to consider separate plans and schedules for each *purpose*. This may help ensure that deadlines are met for each *purpose* and may also help you coordinate self-study efforts to the greatest extent possible.

Appropriate engagement of faculty members and program administrators in this step helps ensure that all appropriate *objectives* are identified prior to embarking on the self-study process. Depending on your program's resources and culture, you may find it appropriate to engage other groups as well in identifying the *objectives*.

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Step 2. Create a Plan and Timetable for Completion of Steps 3-9

Once you define your *purpose(s)* and *objectives*, you can begin to build a plan and timetable for completion of steps 3-9. Project your deadline for accomplishing your *purpose(s)* and *goals*. Then determine your approach to accomplishing each step of the self-study process. For instance, you will need to determine how you will go about identifying your self-study criteria, measures, and methods. What data will you collect and what approach will you take to analyze data collected from your self-study? With whom and how will you share the results of your self-study?

In determining approaches to steps of the self-study process, be sure to consider your deadline for results. Establishing a timetable and using approaches that can reasonably be accomplished by specific deadlines will help ensure that you meet your *goals*.

Rather than designing a self-study plan to achieve multiple purposes and goals, you may find it of value to develop distinct plans and timetables for each *purpose* in order to ensure that deadlines are met. For example, your timetable for completing self-study for an accreditation review may not be the same as your timeline for completing an institutional self-study. In this type of situation, you may find it easier to create two distinct plans; identify common *objectives*, measures, and methods between the two; and set deadlines that produce results on time for both.

Step 3. Identify Self-study Criteria

Criteria define what you are evaluating based on the *purpose(s)* and *objectives* of your self-study. In the case of preparing for an accreditation review, CIDA Standards and expectations form the primary criteria you will use as the basis for self-study. A useful tool CIDA provides in order to assess the *curriculum* in relation to Standards and expectations is the Curriculum Matrix required for the Program Analysis Report. The Matrix is a good tool to use when investigating your *curriculum* to determine which course(s) emphasize, reinforce, and support content described in the Standards.

CIDA also evaluates programs within the context of the program's stated educational *goals*. Therefore, your program's educational *goals* also serve as self-study criteria. Key faculty members and administrators should agree upon educational *goals* and goals should be clearly articulated in writing in order to serve as self-study criteria.

Italicized words are defined at the end of this section

Step 4. Identify Self-study Measures and Methods – The What and How

Identifying self-study measures and methods is a critical step in which you determine what and how you will evaluate program achievement of criteria. Measures describe "the what" – evidence or data you are seeking, whereas methods describe "the how" – ways in which you will collect evidence or data. Not all measures are suited to all criteria. In the same respect, not all methods are suited to all programs. You will need to identify the most appropriate measures for specific criteria and what methods best suit your program's culture and resources.

Measures describe what evidence or data you are seeking in order to evaluate achievement of criteria.

Common measures in evaluating achievement of CIDA Standards include:
- Quality of student learning and skills
- *Curriculum* content
- Employer satisfaction
- Student satisfaction
- Community satisfaction
- Faculty credentials and evidence of competence
- Employment types and rates of graduates
- Grades

CIDA uses the terms "program expectations" and "student learning expectations" to further define measures of achievement in the Standards. In this way, CIDA helps you identify appropriate measures by which to evaluate achievement of Standards and expectations.

Italicized words are defined at the end of this section

- **Program Expectations**

    Program expectations refer to program context, structure, and resources (Standards 1-3) or to learning experiences or information presented to students in the program (Standards 4-16).

    In Standards 1-3:

    Information provided by the institution and program is the source for evaluating program expectations and includes, but is not limited to:
    - Information provided in the Program Analysis Report
    - Facility tours and site visit observation
    - Institutional communications (e.g., website)

    In Standards 4-16:

    The curriculum, teaching methods, learning experiences, and opportunities made available to students are sources for evaluating program expectations and include, but are not limited to:
    - Course syllabi, including lecture topics
    - Course materials and resources (e.g. readings, texts, handouts)
    - Examination questions
    - Assignments including purpose, objectives, and requirements
    - Field trips
    - Guest lecturers and juries
    - Work experiences and/or internships
    - Community service
    - Service Learning

Italicized words are defined at the end of this section

Student Learning Expectations

Student learning expectations are evaluated through examination of various forms of student work, as well as interviews and interaction with students during the site visit. The quality of student work is evaluated by a team of interior design educators and practitioners trained as peer evaluators (site visitors), who are appointed by CIDA and approved by the program. Site visitors will consider the preponderance of evidence presented by the program, not focus on the work of one or two students. Not all students will produce excellent work. All students should, however, show sufficient progression of learning.

Definitions of Student Learning Levels

Student learning expectations are evaluated through examination of student work, as well as interviews and interaction with students during the accreditation site visit to the program. The quality of student work is evaluated by a team of interior design educators and practitioners trained as CIDA site visitors, who are selected by CIDA and approved by the program. Site visitors will consider the preponderance of evidence presented by the program, not focus on the work of one or two students.

Definitions of Student Learning Levels

Student learning expectations include an expected learning level: awareness, understanding, and application or ability. These describe the degree of content mastery students should achieve by the time of graduation in order to be prepared for interior design practice.

<u>Aware/Awareness</u> – familiarity with specified data and information that is demonstrated either in student work or in student interviews.

<u>Understand/Understanding</u> – a thorough comprehension of concepts and their interrelationships.

1) When the student learning expectation reads, "Student work demonstrates understanding…" completed student work must evidence understanding. Student work is broadly defined to include all tangible work produced by students, such as projects, research papers, completed exams, class exercises, recorded presentations, etc.

2) When the expectation reads, "Students understand…" the visiting team may also consider as evidence students' answers to questions during site visit interviews. In some instances, students' answers to questions may be the sole source of evidence found that demonstrates the expectation is met.

Italicized words are defined at the end of this section

Apply/Ability/Able – competent entry-level skills that must be demonstrated in completed student work.

Common examples of completed student work include, but are not limited to:
- Drawing and design communication such as matrices; bubble diagrams/schematics; sketches/drawings
- Concept development
- Exploration of alternative design ideas
- Design refinement
- 2 and 3-D basic creative work
- Drafting
- Manual or digital drawings
- Perspectives
- Design proposals
- Detailing and working drawings
- Design research documents (programming documents, etc.)
- Business documents
- Research papers
- Completed and graded student assessments with compiled performance data
- Student presentations (viewed in person or via recording)

Italicized words are defined at the end of this section

Methods describe how you will collect the evidence or data you are seeking.

Common methods for collecting evidence include:
- Review of student work by internal and external groups (For instance, faculty and employers)
- Surveys (of students, faculty, graduates, employers, Advisory Board members, etc.)
- *Curriculum* or *syllabus* analysis
- Interviews
- Panels or focus groups
- Documentation of jurors' comments during regular presentations in class

In determining what methods are appropriate for collecting evidence, you will likely discover that you already have some routine methods in place. For instance, many programs conduct student course evaluations, faculty performance reviews, and alumni surveys. Results of these may be ready for you to analyze if you have routinely collected the data. You will want to consider the quality of the data and determine whether additional methods would enhance the information available for analysis.

For areas where no pre-existing method is in place, you will need to determine what methods you will use to collect data for various measures of program success. As a rule of thumb in designing methods, ensure that a variety of perspectives are engaged (faculty, students, employers, alumni, community members, etc.) and optimally use resources available to the program. For instance, consider how to effectively engage your Advisory Board in assessing student learning or other aspects of the program. Consider a variety of ways to engage students or outside reviewers in evaluative activities.

Conducting self-study can be time-consuming and, while a valuable application of resources, should be done thoughtfully and efficiently. Consider methods that allow you to collect data on an on-going basis. For instance, consider scheduling Advisory Board meetings so that those individuals can be engaged in a self-study exercise during their time on campus, whether it be listening to student presentations or reviewing portfolios. Collecting their feedback during a time they are already scheduled to be on campus is an efficient use of everyone's time. Small efforts on an on-going basis add up to less effort when data is needed for self-study.

Italicized words are defined at the end of this section

Step 5. Implement Self-study Measures and Methods

In order for your self-study to yield good results on time, attentive management during the implementation phase is key. Following are some tips for keeping your self-study on track:

- Set deadlines and clearly communicate priorities
- Schedule regular meetings to report on progress
- Design methods that engage outside resources at set times
- Be flexible – if a particular method is proving cumbersome or is not yielding good results, consider making adjustments or determine what alternate value can be gained. For example, if you have designed a survey and are getting a poor response, determine alternate methods to reach that audience or consider whether other measures can be used to evaluate the criteria.

Step 6. Analyze Gathered Data

Self-study methods will produce information that needs to be analyzed in relation to your predetermined criteria. Remember, in the case of a CIDA review, your predetermined criteria are Standards and expectations and your program's educational *goals*.

If well planned and executed, information gathered from various self-study methods will form a comprehensive view of program quality. You will be able to identify program strengths in relation to criteria. You will also be able to identify areas of weakness or gaps in achievement. Reviewing all the information gathered, you should be able to identify cause and effect. How is it that you achieve your strengths? Why are there weaknesses or gaps?

In the planning stage (step 2), you will have determined in advance how to accomplish the task of data analysis. Similar to other steps of the process, engaging multiple perspectives ensures thorough and comprehensive results. One individual or group should not conduct this step of the process in isolation. Interpretations of information will differ based on perspective.

Step 7. Plan and Implement Improvements – Closing the Self-study Loop

Analysis will yield results. You will know where your program falls short in relation to achieving criteria. You may find some areas for improvement beyond the scope of achieving criteria. Now is when you are in the position to reap the greatest benefit of the self-study process through improving your program. We refer to this as "closing the loop" because your self-study is not really complete unless you use the results to improve your program.

Program improvement should follow similar steps to those described for the self-study process. It is important to identify *purpose* and *objectives*, plan the steps and timeline for improvement, and determine implementation methods and approach for self-study and analysis of results. Acting on self-study through implementing improvements forms the basis for a continual cycle of self-study and improvement.

Italicized words are defined at the end of this section

Step 8. Evaluate the Quality of Your Self-study

As part of your self-study, you should evaluate the quality of the approaches, measures, and methods you chose as part of your plan. Taking the time to consider some basic questions and document your answers will help improve future self-study endeavors.

Questions to ask:
- Did you achieve the initial *purpose* and *objectives* set out in the self-study plan?
- Were there any gaps in the measures of achievement you identified?
- Did your self-study methods yield quality information?
- Did you meet deadlines set out in your initial plan? If not, what prevented you? Is there something you could have done differently to meet the deadline?
- What resources did you miss or not engage to the maximum potential in planning, implementation, or analysis?

Step 9. Go Back to Step 1

If you follow the above steps you will likely find yourself engaged in a continuous process of self-study and improvement that naturally expands and builds upon itself. Initial self-study efforts set you on a course for future success; however, it's up to you to maintain the momentum. Good planning and follow through are essential.

Through continuing your self-study efforts, your program will benefit through:
- Ready answers to questions about program quality and value asked by institutional administrators, prospective students and their parents, accrediting bodies, and the community at large
- A documented process that helps maintain continuity through times of transition, such as changes in staff, departmental affiliation, or budget cuts
- Faculty, students administrators, and community members engaged in improving program quality
- Well-articulated educational *goals* that help you communicate your program's vision for the future.

Additional Resources

A list of consultants available to assist with program self study efforts is available on the CIDA website at www.accredit-id.org, under Faculty/Programs, Program Consultants.

The annual CIDA Accreditation Workshop includes presentations and case studies about program self study in preparation for an accreditation review. Please contact the CIDA office for more information about the accreditation workshop. Self-study presentations from past CIDA workshops are available on the CIDA website at www.accredit-id.org, under Faculty/Programs, Resources.

Italicized words are defined at the end of this section

Definitions of Italicized Words

curriculum	a course of study in a program; all the courses of study
goals	Broadly stated methods to fulfill a mission; program goals should address the components identified in the definition of a professional interior designer and any additional components unique to a given program
objective	aim or goal, defines what will be accomplished
purpose	a result which is kept in mind in performing an action
syllabus(i)	outline(s) of the main points in a course, or courses

Italicized words are defined at the end of this section