General Guidelines for Data Collection and Evaluation

Guidelines:

1. Each principal committee is responsible for collecting and analyzing the data needed for its assigned area.

2. Requests for data should be made on the "Request for Data" form. Requests for "additional data" should be made using the same form.

3. Multiple sources of data provide the best insight for analysis and conclusions. Try to collect data by several methods:

   - inspection of current documents
   - inquiry
   - formal interview
   - focus groups
   - observations
   - data-collection instruments
   - surveys
   - computer-generated reports

4. Copies of all data collection reports should be delivered to the principal committee chair, who will maintain the file until the final draft of the Self-Study Report is completed. After that, the data reports will be stored in the DSC Self-Study Office. The Director of Institutional research and Planning will determine the ultimate destination of these reports.

5. Prior to conducting surveys questions, committees should be convinced that such data is absolutely necessary to ascertain compliance or to obtain key data related to the area of committee concern. It is helpful to keep in mind that other forms of data collection may provide the needed information. Some tips for using surveys include

   - be sure that group responses will provide data helpful in making decisions and taking actions;
   - be sure terms will be clear to the interviewee;
   - be sure that accurate, unbiased answers to questions can be obtained;
   - consider how the data will be analyzed as questions are formulated;
   - keep in mind that an interviewee's just saying that an operation is in conformance doesn't make it so, and that the SACS Visiting Committee will want to see the proof.

Data Analysis:

1. Qualitative and quantitative data must be summarized. Data should be presented in an analytical form. The chairs of the principal committees will guide data analysis and may obtain assistance from the Director of Institutional Research and Planning and/or the Self-Study Director.

2. If appropriate, summarized data should be trended across a 3- to 5-year period.

3. The data must be interpreted, and the interpretation must fit the data, neither distorting nor expanding the meaning.

4. When data are insufficient for interpretation, additional data should be sought. Although it is hoped that returning to sites and personnel visited previously to obtain additional data will be minimal, when such data is required, it must be collected. Such data may be crucial to drawing appropriate conclusions.

5. Focus groups or expert advice may be necessary to provide insight into the meaning of some data. When help from outside the principal committee is required, consult with the Self-Study Director.

6. Once data analysis, trending, interpretation, and conclusions are complete, the written component related to the *Criteria* Section can proceed.

7. Report to the Self-Study Director all criteria identified for lack of compliance or lack of sufficient knowledge to insure compliance by **March 30, 2002.**

Components of Principal Committee Reports:

The Steering Committee will oversee the writing of the reports to ensure that the final self-study document is more that a compilation of reports from the various committees. This Committee will discuss *Criteria* analysis and recommendations with the Self-Study Director, who will provide the results to the President. The Steering Committee and the President will make the final determinations concerning the form and substance of recommendations, suggestions, and proposals, while attempting to resolve any difference with the principal committees.

Sub-committee reports in whole or in part that are deemed ready for Steering Committee scrutiny will be delivered to the Self-Study Director and to the Director of Institutional Research and Planning by e-mail or on disk for entry into the Self-Study Web-site. See **"Format"** below.

<u>Contents:</u>

Each principal committee report should

- identify significant issues, strengths, and weaknesses of the institution in the area assigned to the committee, with descriptions clear enough to enable someone from outside the institution to understand any recommendation that might result;

- present an analysis of issues, strengths, and weaknesses sufficient to justify any recommendations, including adequate documentation and an analysis of the extent to which the institution fulfils the requirements of the *1998 Criteria for Accreditation*;

- make any recommendations about future actions which might be needed to bring the institution into full compliance with the requirements of the *1998 Criteria for Accreditation*;

- include issues of institutional improvement beyond those of minimal compliance;

- take into account the various constituencies that might use the information in the report: regents, administrators, faculty members, staff members, students, external groups;

- constitute a balanced review of the strengths and weaknesses of the institution;

- remain on an objective professional level without reflecting personal biases.

- reflect the consensus of the committee and not the viewpoint of a few.

Reasons for Return of Drafts to Principal Committees:

Drafts will be returned from the Steering Committee to any principal committee if one of the following is true:

- the report does not conform to <u>editorial guidelines</u>

- the committee does not appear to have carried out its assignment fully;

- the committee has not submitted adequate evidence or documentation to support a position;

- the logic of the report is faulty;

- the writing is unclear or requires further revision and/or editing.

Format:

Each complete principal committee report should include the following components in the order listed:

- Introduction to the entire section: if appropriate include a brief paragraph about how the section specifically relates to the College's mission and the strategic plan. These paragraphs may include a brief history or background of the area;

- Narrative describing the current circumstances:

- Methodology: include information about how evidence was gathered - questionnaires, surveys, interviews, examination of files, comparison with 1993 Self-Study, and/or comparison with other colleges and universities.

- Analysis;

- Recommendations, suggestions, proposals, commendations;

- Self-Study goals, analysis, proposals;

- Supporting documentation;

- Description of follow-up plans and deadlines.

For format and organization, see the DSC Self-Study Editorial Guidelines. For a model, see the equivalent section of the University of North Florida Self-Study Report (www.unf.edu).

Recommendations, Suggestions, Proposals, Commendations:

These four terms are used to describe methods by which the Self-Study Committees indicate in the Self-Study Report a need for correction or improvement and a recognition of exemplary performance.

Definitions:

RECOMMENDATIONS: Recommendations report that the College is not in compliance with **must** statements**.**   They are the strongest of the responses to the self-study and require action to bring **the College into compliance.**

SUGGESTIONS: Suggestions address the need for dealing with **should** statements and are not requirements as recommendations are but are used for significant concerns.

PROPOSALS: Proposals are indications coming from the principal committee's own judgment that some change or changes are needed but are not related in any way to the *Criteria*. Proposals, however, should be clearly related to the Colleges mission and purpose statements or to the strategic plan. Dealing with **must** and **should** statements will probably generate explanation and discussion that may result in proposals for institutional enhancement. These proposals come from the principal committee's own judgment relative to the individual and distinct philosophy and policy of the College. Proposals should benefit the college and advance its cause. Such proposals may have to do with student life and welfare, academics, faculty welfare, the physical plant, or any other element of the College. Relate these proposals to the College's Mission and Purpose Statements or to the Strategic Plan.

COMMENDATIONS: Commendations are made for any area or operation that the principal committee believes is exemplary.

Incorporate recommendations, suggestions, proposals, and commendations in a logical fashion. Explain whatever needs explanation and point out any changes that might improve the College, even though those changes, in the case of proposals and commendations, may not relate directly to **must** or **should** statements.

Supporting Documentation:

Keep specific records of all documents used to support the committee's analysis and conclusions concerning compliance or non-compliance, including documents generated by the committee itself, i.e. surveys, interviews etc. The precise location of all such documentation will be included in the Self-Study Report in order to guide the SACS Visiting Committee.

Copies of all documents except those deemed too sensitive (personnel records, perhaps certain financial documents, etc.) should be available to the SACS Visiting Committee in the files located in the Self-Study Office.

Procedure for Submission of Reports:

1. Each principal committee reviews the *Criteria* to determine the extent to which the College is in compliance and to determine the type of data and evaluation tools that will be needed to prove compliance and to complete the study.

2. Each committee discusses issues that need to be addressed during the 2001-2002 Academic Year. These issues should be brought to the attention of the Self-Study Director as soon as they are noted. At each Steering Committee meeting, time will be allotted for chairs to present these issues and to solicit suggestions for addressing or for solving the issues.

3. Each committee discusses methodology for analysis of the criteria. The chair, in turn, discusses methodology with the Director if Institutional Research and Planning, who will provide feedback and suggestions.

4. Transmission of report materials should be done by e-mail to allow for easy revision and editing.

5. The committees will work with the principal committee editors as the analysis and interpretation of the data is completed and the reports are written up to put the information into the proper format and style. When a substantial block of a committee's report is completed, it will be submitted to the Self-Study General Editor for evaluation. A cover page should accompany the report and should contain the following: the draft number (first draft, second draft, etc.), the name of the committee, the committee chair, and the date of submission.

6. The General Editor may return the draft to the principal committee for failing to meet all criteria, with suggestions and recommendations for revision. The General Editor may make use of the Editorial Committee at any time in order to solve unusual problems or to ensure that all committees are producing properly formatted material. If the draft being edited is acceptable or requires only minor revisions, the General Editor will return the approved copy to the principal-committee chair and forward a copy to the Director of Institutional Research and Planning.

7. The Director of IR&P will enter the first draft into the DSC Self-Study Web page and will send any suggestions and recommendations for additions, deletions, and revisions to the principal-committee chair.

8. As the completed drafts are added to the SS Web-site, the Must-Statement Auditor will review them and will determine whether the data and documentation reported satisfy the criteria in the SACS Commission on Colleges *1998 Criteria for Accreditation*. Problems with inadequate data and/or documentation and problems with precision in reporting will be directed to the Self-Study Director and to the appropriate principal committee chair.

9. When the entire portion of the SS Report for which a committee is responsible is completed, edited, and approved by the General Editor, the Must-Statement Auditor, and the Director of IR&P, the Steering Committee will review and will discuss it in a meeting specifically called for that purpose. The report may then be approved as it stands, be returned to the principal committee for further data collection, analysis, and revision or for further editing. Matters about which the Steering Committee cannot reach a consensus will be referred to the President for guidance or final decision.

10. Reports returned to the principal committees with suggestions and directions from either the President or the Steering Committee will be appropriately revised and returned to the SS Director, who will review the changes and will present the revised report to the Steering Committee for approval.

11. Throughout the process any faculty or staff member or any student may provide written input, recommendations, suggestions, and/or observations to the Steering Committee through the SS Director.

12. The SS Director will be responsible for keeping the administration and the college community informed of the self-study progress through the *DSC Self-Study Newsletter*.

SACS Self-Study Data Analysis and Evaluation Procedure

1. Principal Committee Subcommittees—>requests for data and interviews–> all units of DSC
                                |
                                |---->inspection of documents
                                |
                                |----> interviews and inquiries
                                |
                                |----> observations, surveys, etc.

2. Subcommittee analyzes data for completeness and interprets (*):

          adequate to satisfy **must** and **should** statements?
                          |
          exemplary performance noted that should be in the Self-Study Report?
                 No | Yes
                  | |
                  | |-------> write report and submit
                  | to Principal Committee
                  | Chair
                  |
                  |
          revisits to previous data sources or visits to new data sources required?
                 No | Yes
                  | |
                  | |------->collect necessary data
                  | and return to step 2.
                  |
          report(s) of non-compliance required?

          committee suggestions required?
                  |
          |---->fill out a Non-Compliance Report and/or a Report of Committee Concern and
                submit to the Principal Committee Chair.
                          |
                  |----->write report and submit to Principal Committee Chair
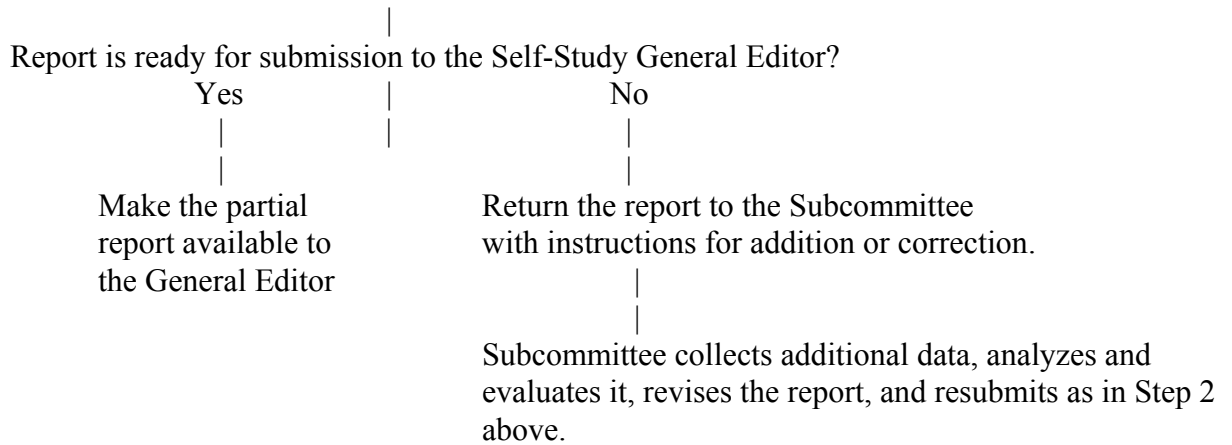
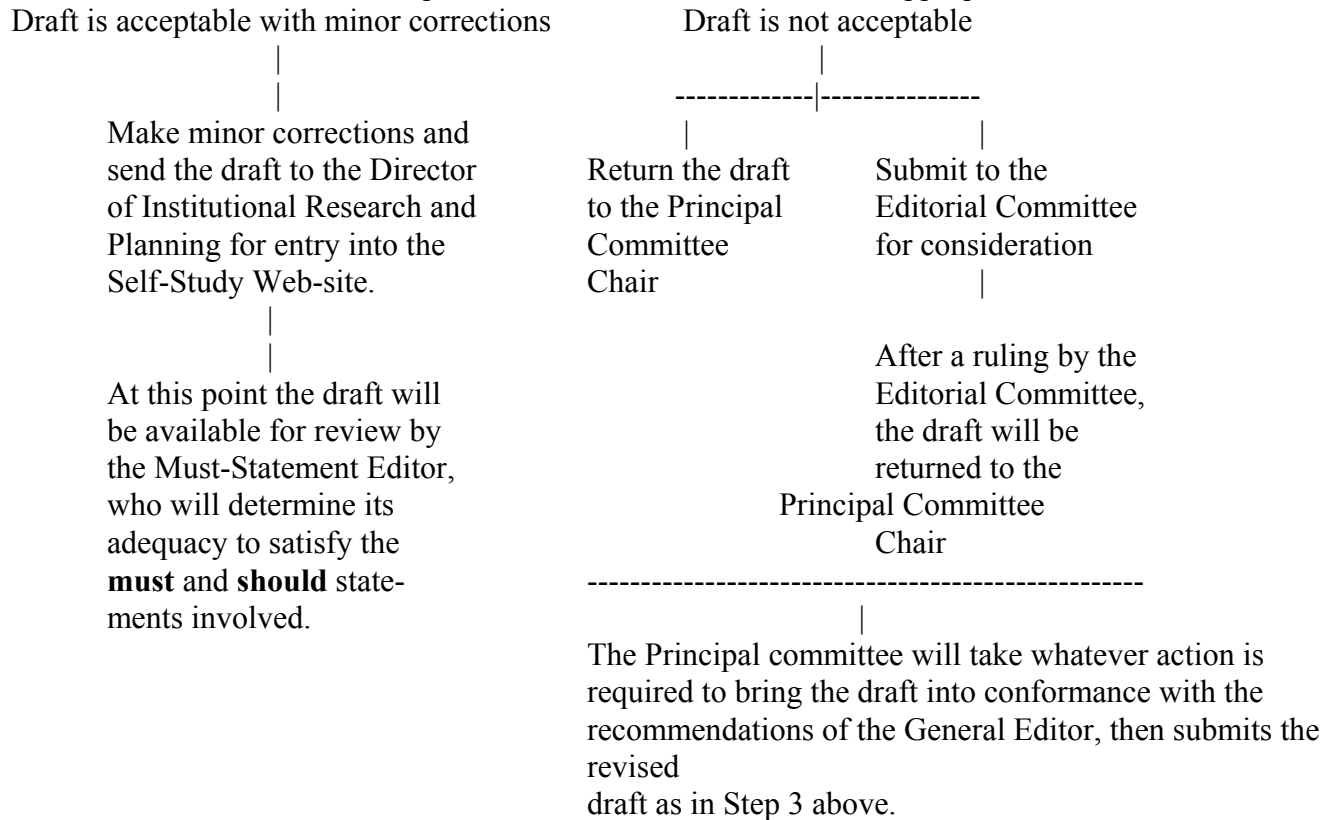
* Interpretation should include such things as the efficiency with which a unit is performing the operation under review, the way the operation serves the unit's mission and the mission of the College, and the way in which the data indicates a trend or trends, i.e. whether the operation is increasing or decreasing the unit's service to the College and its mission.

3. Principal Committees─>the Committee Chairs, Committee Editors, and the full Principal Committees will review Subcommittee reports for completeness, thoroughness, language, and format.

Report is ready for submission to the Self-Study General Editor?

Yes | No

Make the partial
report available to
the General Editor

Return the report to the Subcommittee
with instructions for addition or correction.

Subcommittee collects additional data, analyzes and
evaluates it, revises the report, and resubmits as in Step 2
above.

4. General Editor---->reviews the completed first drafts and forwards as is appropriate:

Draft is acceptable with minor corrections Draft is not acceptable

Make minor corrections and
send the draft to the Director
of Institutional Research and
Planning for entry into the
Self-Study Web-site.

Return the draft
to the Principal
Committee
Chair

Submit to the
Editorial Committee
for consideration

At this point the draft will
be available for review by
the Must-Statement Editor,
who will determine its
adequacy to satisfy the
must and **should** state-
ments involved.

After a ruling by the
Editorial Committee,
the draft will be
returned to the
Principal Committee
Chair

The Principal committee will take whatever action is
required to bring the draft into conformance with the
recommendations of the General Editor, then submits the
revised
draft as in Step 3 above.

5. Steering Committee---->when the complete first draft of a Principal Committee is reported complete and on the Self-Study Web-site, the Steering Committee will meet to review and discuss it. The Steering Committee will analyze the completed draft for completeness, thoroughness, content errors, format problems, DSC compliance with must and should statements, and the need for Self-Study Report recommendations, suggestions, proposals, and/or commendations.

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                                 |
                                 |
                             Approved
           --------------------------------------------------------
               No                                      Yes
               |                                        |
Steering Committee agrees on corrective      The draft will be available for review by
        measures to be taken?                the President and all administrators, faculty,
----------------------------------------     and staff.  Suggestions and recommendations
Yes                            No            must be submitted to the Self-Study Director
 |                             |             for distribution to the appropriate office.  As
Draft will be sent back        |             Other drafts are completed the Self-Study .
to the Principal Committee      |            Report will come to completion
for revision and               |
resubmission as in Step 2       |
above.                          |
                        Draft will be sent to
                        the President for
                        a decision.
```

6. When all sections of the Self-Study Report are completed and on the Web-site, the Self-Study Director, the Must-Statement Auditor, the General Editor, and the Steering Committee will review the final product and approve the document for publication. Any fine-tuning that is required at this time will be assigned to the appropriate Principal Committee if it cannot be handled by the Steering Committee.

The Self-Study Director will notify the President when the Self-Study Report is ready for publication and will await his response before sending the document to be printed.