

Suggestions for Proposal Writers
From a Member of a Proposal Review Committee

Proposal Organization

- While you are not required to use the outline provided by WASC, the proposal review committee members have worked with WASC staff to refine the proposal content outline to enable them to easily identify the types of information that are necessary to consider in evaluating the quality of the proposal.
- Remember, it is easier on the reviewers if they don't have to go hunting to find it.
- Following the numbering and titling provided in the WASC proposal outline makes it easier for the reviewers to find information.

Notes on Proposal Content

Throughout the Proposal:

- There should be consistent references to the WASC Handbook Standards and Criteria for Review (CFRs). Make it obvious to the readers that you have studied the CFRs and have systematically related your planned self-study tasks to them.
- The proposal should “connect the dots” from one section to the next. The proposal outline is organized so that the content in each section flows logically from the previous section. The institutional context, accreditation history, and institutional self-review should drive the self-study outcomes for the review. Self-study goals should, in turn, determine the themes the institution chooses to focus on, which should dictate the self-study activities and work plan. All of the above should be clearly tied to the Standards and CFRs.

Description of institutional response to recent Commission letters:

- While not intended to be a major section of the proposal, don't gloss over it with a short summary statement.
- Reviewers hope to see evidence that the institution has been actively addressing the recommendations outlined in the action letters.
- It is useful in this section to enumerate the specific Commission recommendations and then briefly describe the institutional response to each.
- Consider using a summary table format either in the proposal body or in an appendix.

Initial Self-Review Process:

- Reviewers do look for your description of the internal self-evaluation process you went through as an institution in deciding on the self-study goals and tasks.
- You are encouraged to make use of the WASC-provided tools.
- Be sure you describe how you have involved all constituency groups in the self-review process.
- Make the connections between the preliminary self-review results and the self-study goals clear.

EER themes and tasks should clearly tie to educational effectiveness:

- Make it obvious to the reviewers how pursuing your proposed EER themes will result in your students being educationally better equipped at the end of their degree programs. How will the EER themes

result in higher level of learning by a broader portion of the students in relation to key educational outcomes that you've defined for them to master?

Work Plan:

- The work plan needs to be more than just a rehearsal of your C/PR and EER review dates. It needs to describe the planned tasks, identify who will be organizationally responsible for the tasks, define the milestones, and give deadlines for task completion.
- It is recognized that the self-study will often have initial investigatory tasks whose purpose is to help determine what needs to be done in a particular area. It would still be good to identify the schedule for the initial investigatory tasks, and then a projection for the timeline to implement recommendations and solutions.

Try to examine your proposal from the reviewers' perspective:

- Reviewers may know something about your institution, but will have to rely almost entirely on what is in the proposal to evaluate its quality, responsiveness to WASC standards, and appropriateness to your organizational setting.
- Will the reviewers get a complete and accurate picture of who you are and what you intend to do in the self-study process based only on the materials you submit to them?
- Consider having someone outside of your organization review your proposal. Choose someone who is familiar with your organization, but not intimately involved in it. The reviewer should know higher education and the accrediting process in this region.

Proposal Mechanics

Formatting:

- The proposal should have a professional appearance but shouldn't come across as a slick advertising brochure.
- Would not recommend use of color printing and/or imbedded pictures.
- Consider producing a document along the lines of a published white paper in regard to the visual look.
- Do use the type fonts styles and sizes, block indenting, bulleting etc., to make the organization and relationship between paragraphs and sections ideas clear.

Binding:

- It is easier for the reader if the proposal is spiral bound.
- Stapling the proposal is ok, but not a very professional look.