

Writing Tips for APASP Authors

Report Content

- The APASP process is similar to that of program, center, and unit standards review. However, do not simply copy unit standards, program handbooks, or accreditation reports. Authors may mine previously completed reports for key information but should write a new report in response to the APASP context.
- These materials will be made available to the public. Keep that in mind when addressing personnel issues or proprietary operational information. Please be advised that all centralized data is also public information.
- You are encouraged to use data you have collected to describe your unit and your impact.
- You should be conveying the role of your unit and its contribution to the university or to a component of the university.

Formatting

- The length of responses is limited. Concise language and prioritization of the most important information will be crucial elements of your report. There is no penalty for not using all of the allowed words if you have addressed the criteria.
- Consider using a table or chart to represent complex information.
- Submit final versions in Exceed but develop drafts in Word or another software program that you can share with colleagues.
- Using bullets with supporting data for some sections can be effective.
- Describe data sources with specificity (e.g., According to the 2015 American Association of Engineering Student Survey...) Links will use up your word count.
- Don't assume that readers will look up data outside of your report. Do not link to annual reports or write "available on request." The committee will not have time to review additional material or websites.

Writing Strategies

- Orient the report positively, focusing on possibilities for the program and not past wrongs impacting your unit. Reports that come across as primarily complaining can be read negatively by reviewers reading hundreds of reports. There is a tight economy in the reader-writer relationship; the readers are already expending a ton of energy, so we need to avoid making them expend more. For example, instead of dwelling on deep cuts you may have experienced, shift the frame of that discussion to explain the unmet demand that currently exists and how, if you had the resources, you could meet that demand. You can, of course, acknowledge the constraints on what you have been able to do, but keep the overall tone positive.
- Be efficient in mentioning errors in data and focus instead on why your program is structured the way it is and how that structure helps the students and university. Argue for your program's positive contribution to the institution.
- Similarly, address the unit's past performance and/or budgeting but connect that information to the rationale for future opportunities and needs of the unit.

- Avoid subjective assertions regarding quality. Unverifiable information must be avoided. Instead, support claims with relevant data.
- Write for a general audience; APASP reviewers will not be specialists in your discipline or field and represent a broad sample of the campus community. Avoid jargon that will limit general comprehension and explain acronyms. Keep your language accessible by imagining an audience of intelligent readers who are not familiar with your content area or program. Writing in the first person is allowed. Use straightforward, simple prose emphasizing actors, actions, and outcomes/those impacted.
- We each feel everything we do is critical. Prioritize which information will be most important for reviewers to know. Think about how you feel in an on-campus interview when you know someone does great work, but they are not fully describing it in the interview. APASP reviewers will only use the information within reports to assess units and not use their prior knowledge.
- Be sure to look not only at the criteria but also at the rubric and definitions. These indicate what the reviewers will prioritize.
- Test the clarity of your writing by having others from outside your program read your report. Ask these readers whether they feel you have answered the questions and whether there is sufficient evidence to support the answers.

Workshops

- We are offering author workshops where you can get feedback on your responses from peer authors and share strategies for addressing criteria and metrics. We also have report polishing sessions for fine tuning your writing with peers one week prior to the deadline.