

10 Annual Report Questions for Non-Instructional Units

The template for non-instructional unit annual reports is informed by good and best practices in continuous improvement as articulated by The Higher Learning Commission in its Academic Quality Improvement Program [AQIP] elective model and by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools in its Quality Enhancement Plan [QEP] reporting requirements. The continuous improvement process as it is implemented in the non-instructional unit annual report should be developed within the following parameters and orientation.

Best practices in evaluating organizational performance and effectiveness typically examine the following dimensions.

- *Effectiveness* – the extent to which the unit achieves its planned outcomes;
 - *Productivity* – a ratio of the outputs created to inputs consumed;
 - *Quality* – a complex area including quality of upstream systems, inputs, key work processes, outputs, leadership systems, and work life;
 - *Customer and stakeholder satisfaction* – a measure of the satisfaction expressed by external customers, internal customers, and organization stakeholders;
 - *Efficiency* – a measure of resource utilization and costs in relation to benefits;
 - *Innovation* – a measure of creative changes put in place to improve products, services and/or performance; and
 - *Financial durability* – a measure of the organization’s financial health and well-being with consideration of the unit’s contribution to that state.
1. The unit’s annual report should focus on the activities of the unit for the current academic year and be written at the conclusion of the academic and fiscal year, namely covering June 1 through May 31 activity. This roughly corresponds with the dates for reporting annual activity to the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) through the Integrated Post-Secondary Education Data System (IPEDS) and to The Higher Learning Commission (HLC) with nominal reporting periods from July 1 through June 30.
 2. The report should describe, evaluate and plan for the unit’s improved effectiveness and efficiency. The spirit of the report should address the following type of questions.
 - a. What happened?
 - b. What was its impact on the University’s ability to contribute to student learning or to conduct business?
 - c. How well did it work?
 - d. What are the next steps necessary to strengthen the unit’s impact and outcomes?
 3. The report should present aggregated evidence related to the unit’s contributions to student learning or business operations. The focus of such should be on the unit’s collective performance rather than on the performance of individual employees or activities; that is, the level of analysis is on the unit, not on specific individuals.
 4. The report should address trends across time as a context for current performance.
 5. Evaluations of individual employees should not be included in an annual unit report, but should be handled in other confidential media and the annual personnel review process.
 6. The report constitutes a public record of unit activities and outcomes.

Executive Summary

As a methodology of communicating significant achievements, the unit annual report should begin with a one (1) page executive summary identifying the unit and the major accomplishments,

including trends in measures of unit performance, achieved during the academic or fiscal reporting period.

Response to 10 Key Questions

The unit annual report should address each of the following numbered question domains and provide designated evidence to evaluate the unit’s achievements and accomplishments. The lettered sub-questions (e.g., a, b, c, etc.) under the numbered questions (e.g., 1, 2, 3, etc.) are meant to elaborate the intent of the questions. Whether departments respond to the sub-questions directly or include the substance in response to the questions is a department option.

Question	Sample of Suggested Sources of Evidence
Planning and Operating Context	
1. How do the unit’s objectives, activities and outcomes align and integrate with the University’s mission, vision, values and strategic initiatives?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>University Plan Framework</i>, relevant elements of the <i>Academic Plan</i>, and unit student learning outcomes ▪ <i>University Plan</i> ▪ <i>University Enrollment Plan</i>
2. How does the unit monitor external constituencies to determine what those constituencies need from the unit in terms of relevant, future-focused educational support or business practices? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. How does the unit systematically and regularly scan the external environment to ascertain regional educational needs and opportunities, and supporting operational best practices? b. How does the unit anticipate future needs and integrate those needs into current programs and operations? c. How does the unit employ an external advisory group to provide critical feedback and direction to current activities and future initiatives? d. How does the unit engage University employees outside the unit to ascertain effective transition in upstream and downstream work flow? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Connection with relevant professional and trade organizations (e.g., AACRAO, NACUBO, OACRAO, etc.) applicable to the unit ▪ Good and best practices identified by the applicable professional organizations
3. How does the unit engage and collaborate with key stakeholders in planning and implementing its educational support or business processes?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Minutes, recommendations, progress reports and outcome reports on external (to the unit) collaborations and consultations
Unit Activities and Accomplishments	
4. How does the unit support the recruitment and education of students, and essential business services associated with the educational endeavor? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. What action steps need to be taken by the unit to improve its role in the recruitment, retention, and education of students? b. What action steps need to be taken by the unit to improve its frontline and backroom processes? c. How is the unit involved in the reporting and compliance regulations associated with state, federal and accreditation agencies? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Analysis of work flow with focus on upstream and downstream processes and quality of output
5. What special talent development activities has the unit sponsored during the reporting year? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. What special activities had a front line service focus? b. What special activities had a back room activity focus? c. What special activities had a mid-level managers development focus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Training program agendas ▪ Post-training program evaluation summaries

<p>6. What special accomplishments have been noted for the unit for the identified period under report and review?</p> <p>a. What were the noteworthy staff achievements during the reporting period?</p> <p>b. What were the noteworthy unit achievements during the reporting period?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Awards and recognitions related to professional activities of the unit's staff ▪ Outcomes of unit customer satisfaction surveys
<p>7. What evidence does the unit present that it is having its intended impact and accomplishing its identified outcomes?</p> <p>a. What qualitative and quantitative measures provide systematic evidence that the staff members are effective in their educational support responsibilities?</p> <p>b. What qualitative and quantitative measures provide systematic evidence that the staff members are effective in their business responsibilities?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>New Student Satisfaction Survey</i> ▪ <i>College Student Survey</i>
<p>8. What evidence does the unit present that its programs and activities meet industry standards of productivity, sustainability and profitability?</p> <p>a. What are the individual staff members' productivity as related to unit responsibilities?</p> <p>b. What are the trends across time related to unit key performance indicators? What is increasing and what is decreasing? What factors have lead to these changes?</p> <p>c. How are the unit's performance measures related to and aligned with the University's key performance indicators?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>University Plan Framework</i> ▪ <i>University Plan</i> ▪ <i>Academic Plan</i> ▪ <i>Enrollment Plan</i>
Planning for Improvement	
<p>9. What progress has the unit made during this reporting year on its quality improvement plan?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Annual action plans and assessment methodology previously developed
<p>10. What plan has the unit developed and is submitting for improvement of a specific program element or dimension?</p> <p>a. What is the specific problem or improvement area being identified?</p> <p>b. How does this area align with major university initiatives?</p> <p>c. What are the proposed action steps and anticipated outcomes?</p> <p>d. What is the time line and major milestones for the improvement project?</p> <p>e. What resources are critical to implementing the improvement project?</p> <p>f. What evaluation tools and strategies will be employed to determine if the anticipated outcomes are actually achieved?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Plan developed by unit and reviewed by designated university bodies