Systems Portfolio/Systems Appraisal

SYSTEMS PORTFOLIO

The Systems Portfolio is a 75-100 page (double-spaced) public portfolio describing fundamental institutional systems.

The Systems Portfolio covers the nine AQIP Categories, describing context, processes, results, & improvement in each system, and shows evidence that the institution continues to meet the Higher Learning Commission's five Criteria for Accreditation.

Created once (gradually through the first four years of AQIP involvement) the Systems Portfolio is continually updated to reflect changes in the institution's systems and processes.

The Systems Portfolio is a valuable resource, both internally, and for the institution's external audiences audiences, including accrediting organizations, state higher education agencies, prospective employees, and other stakeholders.

SYSTEMS APPRAISAL

The Systems Appraisal is a review of the institution's Systems Portfolio conducted by a team of Commission-trained, experienced Reviewers knowledgeable about quality. The team, through consensus, generates a detailed Feedback report the institution can use as it plots it future quality Strategies and plans for its next Strategy Forum.

Systems Portfolios and Systems Appraisals

AQIP calls upon institutions to undergo a Systems Appraisal every four years. This is an opportunityfor your institution to get expert, objective, third party feedback on its strengths and opportunities for improvement. In turn, what you learn from the Systems Appraisal will help you determine your next targets for advancing quality in your institution through Action Projects and other plans.

Your Systems Appraisal is based on a Systems Portfolio your institution assembles during the first four years of its participation in AQIP. The Portfolio presents an overview of your institution, and answers explicitly all of the questions under each of the nine AQIP Categories.

In combination with the Strategy Forum and Action Projects, which drive concrete improvementactivities within your

institution, the Systems Portfolio and Systems Appraisal are a means of "taking stock" of your progress in your never-ending effort at continuous improvement. It is this combination of activities for improving quality and taking stock that makes AQIP different from quality awardprograms and from standard accreditation processes.

The Systems Portfolio

Your institution will assemble its Systems Portfolio during its first four years of AQIP participation, broadly involving your institutional colleagues. This document will be essential for the SystemsAppraisal that AQIP will conduct within three years after your first Strategy Forum. Crafting your Systems Portfolio will be an enlightening activity, an opportunity for your institution to look at its systems and processes in newand revealing ways.

Your Systems Portfolio will explicate each of the major systems your institution currently employs to accomplish its mission and objectives. Most Systems Portfolios will be web-based hypertext documents, and may have connections and links to other resources, but the Systems Portfolio itself is limited in length to the equivalent of 75 single-spaced pages. It will tell your institution’s story clearly and concisely.

To present its systems, your institution will answer specific questions for each of the nine AQIP Categories. For each system, the questions deal with context for analysis, processes, results, and improvement. (All of the actual questions can be found under the AQIP Categories link at left). You will share your completed Systems Portfolio, electronically or in print, with all of your institution’s faculty, staff, and administrators — and with the public your institution serves. AQIP intends that all Systems Portfolios will become public documents.

Your Systems Portfolio as a valuable resource. Once you have assembled it, your Systems Portfolio will serve you as an always up-to-date account of your key systems and processes. Your completed Systems Portfolio should effectively supply your institution with a credible, ready-to-use accountability report for all constituencies interested in institutional performance — specialized accrediting agencies, state regulators, funding and grant agencies, voters, legislators, and various public groups.

Your Systems Portfolio will paint an accurate, vivid, unifying portrait of your institution’s operations that will serve as a common ground for internal discussions of where and how to best direct efforts for improvement. If dissention and conflict now result from differing perceptions of where current strengths and opportunities lie, having a shared, believable foundation for discussion can be invaluable.

Your Systems Portfolio can also inform newcomers to your institution
—
both potential employees and new representatives of critically important stakeholder groups
— with a quickly absorbable picture of how the institution works and what it is achieving.

What a Systems Portfolio includes. Your Systems Portfolio will consist of an Institutional Overview and sections on each

of the nine AQIP Categories. The Institutional Overview will present readers with a capsule picture that helps them understand your institution's key strengths, ambitions, distinctions, and advantages — and explain the challenges, competitors, contests, and conflicts you face. It will provide readers the context for appreciating your institution's choices and decisions as they learn more about your systems, processes, and performance.

Because of the central importance of educational design and delivery processes, the Helping Students Learn section will occupy twice the space of any of the other eight Categories in your Portfolio. Approximately five pages of the total text should be devoted to the Overview, and no more than 70 to the nine Categories.

If an institution hasn't yet developed a systematic approach to an area covered by a particular Category (e.g., Building Collaborative Relationships), or if it believes the questions do not apply to the institution or are unanswerable, strategies for responding may be found by joining the Systems Portfolios Forum on the AQIP Website. Within the AQIP Forum, those working on Portfolios can share their experience, insights, and questions.

In combination with other information you share with the Commission, your Systems Portfolio will provide the basic information AQIP needs to review your institution and assure the public of its quality. The fact that you are sharing your Systems Portfolio openly with your faculty, staff, and administrators helps guarantee its accuracy and veracity

The Systems Appraisal

The Systems Appraisal complements the intensive work embodied in your institution's 3-4 Action Projects by asking the institution to step back and take stock of its overall systems for maintaining quality. It is also the lead-in for your institution's next Strategy Forum, which it will attend within six months of redeipt of the Systems Appraisal Feedback Report.

The AQIP Systems Appraisal is a consistent, cost-effective process designed to provide an AQIP organization with professional feedback representing the consensus view of a team of higher educators and others experienced in continuous quality improvement and systems thinking. The process begins when an organization submits its Systems Portfolio for review, and ends 12 weeks later with the delivery of a 35-45 page Systems Appraisal Feedback Report that includes three components: a Critical Characteristics Analysis, which shows the organization how the team understood its distinctive mission, context, and goals; Category Feedback on each of the nine AQIP Categories, identifying what the team sees as the organization's strengths and opportunities for improvement; and a Strategic and Accreditation Issues Analysis, in which the team identifies what it views as the highest strategic priorities for the organization's future. In addition, the team will provide the organization with a potentially publishable two-three page Appraisal Summary that captures the team's appraisal of the organization's developmental maturity on each of the nine AQIP Categories.

Appraisal Feedback Report

The goal of the Systems Appraisal Feedback Report and Appraisal Summary is to provide the organization with actionable information it can use to improve its processes and performance. AQIP expects organizations that participate to demonstrate overall improvement from one Systems Appraisal to the next. AQIP bases its seven-year Reaffirmation of

Accreditation decision on an organization's overall pattern of improvement (including information from Systems Appraisals, regular reports on Action Projects, and other data), and thus leaves it up to the organization to decide whether, when, and how to address the opportunities for improvement and Strategic and Accreditation issues identified in a Systems Appraisal.

In the rare case where there is strong evidence that an organization is no longer committed to continuous improvement or in a position to benefit from AQIP participation, the Systems Appraisal team can alert AQIP. When such a case occurs, AQIP will work with the organization to gather information that will allow the AQIP Standards and Admissions Panel to recommend appropriate action– perhaps even the return of the organization to the more traditional PEAQ accreditation process.

No site visit from the AQIP Corps or Commission personnel is planned as part of the Systems Appraisal process, though a Quality Checkup site visit must be scheduled after the Appraisal process is completed, at least a year prior to Reaffirmation of Accreditation.

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