



# Academic Quality Improvement Program

The Higher Learning Commission **NCA**

# Self-Evaluating Your Systems Portfolio

Creating and maintaining a Systems Portfolio provides your organization with an invaluable opportunity to both *describe* itself now and *evaluate* where it needs to focus its attention in the future. Doing both is essential.

To craft your Portfolio, you must first identify and describe your key systems by inventorying the activities and processes that make them up. But you then also need to decide whether each system, as presently organized or performing, represents a strength of your institution or an opportunity for you to improve it. If you halt after simply *describing* your key systems, results, and improvement processes, you will severely limit the potential benefits you could derive from your Systems Portfolio and from your involvement in AQIP.

An *evaluative* Systems Portfolio will provide your organization with a thoughtful agenda for continuous improvement. It does this by identifying which systems are strong and healthy, distinguishing them from the ones that demand attention and improvement. It engages *your own people* — faculty, administrators, and staff — in determining which processes and results can be left alone, and which ones require your focused improvement efforts — Action Projects.

The Systems Appraisal will provide you with this information from the perspective of a group of outside continuous quality improvement experts who have read your Systems Portfolio in order to appraise your institution. Their feedback on your strengths and improvement opportunities is valuable because, as objective outsiders, they can often see things that you are too close to recognize.

## Completing the Self Evaluation Chart

To download a blank template for the Self-Evaluation Chart, a two-page document, visit [www.AQIP.org/Downloads/SystemsPortfolio/](http://www.AQIP.org/Downloads/SystemsPortfolio/). (A completed sample page is pictured here.)

First, write the name of your institution at the top of the sheet, and the date you fill it out. AQIP does not expect you to make your self-evaluations public, so you do not need to include them in the Portfolio itself, but we do want you to send us the completed sheet at the time your Systems Appraisal will begin. Your actual Systems Portfolio must be public, and the **http://** link on your website where people can read it should be entered on the sheet.

Next, go through your Systems Portfolio and, in the column headed “In-Depth?” write the word **YES** next to each item for which you provide an in-depth response. (The rows for Context items are grayed-out, to indicate that your Portfolio must address each of these items, and that self-evaluating your responses to C items is not appropriate.) If you’ve provided only a cursory “placeholder” response to an item (such as “We’ve not yet developed a

Self-Evaluation of Significant Strengths through Outstanding Opportunities

Institution: Dewey University Date: 2/29/2010

Item	In-Depth?	SS	S	?	O	OO	Item	In-Depth?	SS	S	?	O	OO
1							211	NO					
1C1							212	NO					
1C2							3						
1C3							3C1						
1C4							3C2						
1C5							3P1	YES		X			
1P1	YES					X	3P2	YES		X			
1P2	YES		X				3P3	NO					
1P3	NO						3P4	NO					
1P4	NO						3P5	YES					X
1P5	YES				X		3P6	NO					
1P6	YES					X	3P7	NO					
1P7	NO						3R1	YES		X			
1P8	YES	X					3R2	YES					X
1P9	NO						3R3	NO					
1P10	NO						3R4	NO					
1P11	YES			X			3R5	NO					
1P12	NO						3I1	NO					
1P13	YES				X		3I2	NO					
1R1	YES		X				4						
1R2	NO						4C1						
1R3	NO						4C2						
1R4	NO						4C3						
1I1	NO						4C4						
1I2	NO						4P1	YES				X	
2							4P2	YES		X			
2C1							4P3	NO					
2C2							4P4	YES				X	
2C3							4P5	NO					
2P1	YES					X	4P6	YES		X			
2P2	NO						4P7	NO					
2P3	YES		X				4P8	NO					
2P4	NO						4P9	NO					
2P5	NO						4P10	YES	X				
2R1	YES	X					4R1	NO					
2R2	YES					X	4R2	NO					
2R3	NO						4R3	NO					

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system for this” or “We have no measures of performance in this area”) write the word **NO**. There should be a **YES** or a **NO** in this column next to every P, R, or I item. (Remember that AQIP expects you to provide in-depth responses to at least 1/3 of the total number of P, R, and I items in each category. In addition, if you have no in-depth responses to *any* of the R items in a particular category, then AQIP expects you to have an in-depth response to the final P item in that Category — the one that asks about measures. Your Portfolio should explicitly respond to every Category item, but up to 2/3 of the total responses for P, R, and I items in each Category may be cursory, brief, “placeholder” responses.)

Finally, next to each item where you’ve written YES to indicate that you’ve provided an in-depth response, place an X in one of the five columns to explain how your institution *currently* views its activity and performance in this area, whether it perceives its response to the item as an institutional strength or opportunity. (The box at the right explains the meaning of the symbols.) You can have the individuals, teams, or groups that created your Portfolio do the assessment. Or you can use others --administrators, faculty, staff, trustees, even students -- if you make sure those who rate each item have actually read your responses in your Systems Portfolio. Stress that the purpose of this self-assessment is for those who own and run the institution to articulate where *they* think current performance is good, and where *they* think it can and should be improved.

- SS** — A significant or “super” strength, something the institution does so well that it should be the model of *good practice, efficient operation, or effectiveness* for others.
- S** — An institutional strength — a process that is well designed and operating effectively, a performance result that everyone is proud of, an improvement system that consistently find and implements effective improvements.
- ?** — A system or performance result that people in the institution are unsure represents either strength or an opportunity for improvement.
- O** — An opportunity for improvement, an area that everyone agrees can and ought to be done better.
- OO** — An outstanding improvement opportunity, one that urgently needs attention, either because it represents a opportunity to diminish a significant risk to future effective operations, or because it represents an opportunity to innovate in a way that would significantly strengthen the institution in the future.

Your self-evaluation of these items will help AQIP’s Systems Appraisal team to give you better and more useful feedback when it reviews your Systems Portfolio. AQIP will not share your self-evaluation with the Appraisal team members until they all have independently read and rated (SS to OO) each item. At that point, the team will use *your* self-evaluation to determine how clearly and specifically it needs to explain its appraisals and perceptions. For example, if the team agrees with you that your personnel evaluation process is an outstanding strength, it may need to write only a short sentence or two explaining why it agrees. But if you think your system for improvement, the burden is on the team to explain clearly why it sees the system as an opportunity that it is in your interest to improve. Differences between your self-evaluation and the team’s appraisals signal the team to explain, clearly and specifically, how and why they reached a different judgment than you did. This is true whether the team’s appraisal is more or less favorable than your own.

In the end, the value you get from preparing your Systems Portfolio, and from receiving feedback in your Systems Appraisal, lies in what the people who operate your organization can learn from these experiences. Involving your organization’s administrators, faculty, and staff in evaluating the ways you do things now and the results you now get from those processes deeply engages those who “own” the organization in thinking intelligently about its future and the choices upon which that future depends. Moreover it prepares them, when they read the feedback from your Systems Appraisal, to interpret it astutely — because they themselves will have applied the same critical thinking to judgments as the Appraisal Team, when they self-evaluated your processes, results, and improvement techniques. Self-evaluating your Systems Portfolio will make your AQIP entire experience a richer and more rewarding one.