

## CAS Update: February 2018

As mentioned in the [January CAS Update](#), we are going to walk AFA members through the process of using the FSAP CAS Standards, including how to conduct self-assessment and program review. Each month in the Association Update, we will identify where you could be in your timeline for such a process. We hope you will join us each of these next 10 months as we provide this advice. **This month, we provide guidance for the months leading up to the launch and implementation of self-assessment and program review.** Three primary considerations during this time are:

- (1) know what you are to do and be clear on definition of self-assessment and program review;
- (2) ensure a culture of FSAP CAS Standards use in your organization; and
- (3) make sure you are collecting the evidence needed to document alignment.

It is important to know what is intended when you decide to do self-assessment and program review. Self-assessment is an effort for an organization to assess how it is doing at achieving goals and outcomes identified as vital for its success. Self-assessment using FSAP CAS Standards means you are using the Standards to compare against how you are doing in general. This can be done formally (collecting evidence and identifying how it demonstrates alignment) or informally (a staff might review the Standards over the course of a few months and ask "how do we think we are doing"). Most FSAP with which we have worked conduct self-assessment both formally and informally. Formally, the process would be:

- (1) the Standards are first well-understood and efforts to ensure programs and services demonstrate the Standards are enacted;
- (2) there is an effort (over time) to collect diverse sources of evidence to document alignment; and
- (3) there is an approach internal to the organization, typically enacted by personnel who conduct this work, to identify how well they are doing in achieving each standard.

Self-assessment becomes program review when there is a pre-determined process to engage others in an evaluation of how well the organization is running against these Standards, and in some cases, the industry in general. Program review typically means the self-assessment report from the organization (in this case a FSAP) is used by a committee consisting of some number of people, generally connected to the institution, who understand but are not in the day-to-day management of the organization/functional area in question. Note that the functional area has little impact on this aspect of program review as many institutions have the same program review process for all their departments (i.e. Multicultural Affairs would have the same process

as FSAP which would be the same as any other functional area). Some campuses will also use external consultants familiar with the functional area to come in and review the reports from the self-assessment and program review and identify their perceptions of alignment. More on how to make up these groups for self-assessment and program review in the March issue of the Association Update.

In addition to understanding self-assessment and program review before launching implementation, we also believe there needs to be a culture of the use of CAS in order to be most effective with this process. To do CAS Self-Assessment and Program Review well, you need to map it out across a ten month period after you have spent some time ensuring the organization is prepared to undergo this process. While self-assessment and program review might be what you're working toward, and this is what you will conduct over 10 months, you have to lay the foundation for implementation of and alignment to the Standards between your actions and what is called for within the FSAP. Such practices will help you be best prepared for and most successful in self-assessment and program review. This means using CAS first as a framework for your FSAP will help the process of self-assessment and program review and help your organization to be almost set up for success.

If you are conducting self-assessment and program review without a culture of use of CAS, the value would be for the FSAP to identify places to more strongly align and to prioritize in planning for future alignment with the Standards. This could be a good thing, but if the division or department in which you work has a clearly laid out plan for CAS usage, then you would know far enough ahead of time when it would be your time for self-assessment or program review. Wouldn't you want to use the FSAP Standards a year or longer out to begin to (1) get operations in order so that you are documented as aligned and (2) collect evidence of how well you are doing in managing the FSAP's congruence with CAS Standards? This is similar to "teaching to the test", a commonly used term for grade school aptitude tests: you know what's going to be on there or at least what key aspects one will be "graded" on, so why not prepare accordingly?

So, if you know what these terms mean and you are building a culture of using CAS for effective implementation of your programs and services, you should also be identifying the ways you will be able to identify how well you are doing. You need to have forms of evidence. While using the CAS FSAP Standards is a form of assessment (answering "are you doing these things or not"), the best way to know if you're doing something is to have existing assessment evidence (numbers, survey results, focus group results, etc.). **A CAS FSAP Standards self-assessment and program review is best conducted when there has been an intentional effort to align practices with Standards and to collect multiple sources of evidence across all of the Standards.** There is such a range of types of evidence: numbers, and survey and focus group data are popular sources. However, think of all the sources to prove you are aligned with

Standards. What about websites, policies, notes from meetings, marketing and communications materials, and pictures in addition to a host of other sources? As you plan for self-assessment and program review, take some time to identify the standards for which you have good evidence and those for which you do not. Having a plan a few months up to a year out about evidence collection will help you to avoid that awkward feeling of "well, we don't really know if we're doing this" and scoring "poorly" on CAS. A reminder that CAS is an internal self-assessment process for which only the institution would enact circumstances if an organization does "poorly". CAS is not an accrediting body and therefore throughout this advice we've used alignment and congruence as your goals. This is not a compliance process though the institution at which you work may have identified circumstances to occur should you not meet a certain number of these Standards. Talk to the person coordinating the self-assessment and program review process at your institution.

We may have scared you off by now. We've learned from talking to FSAP professionals over the years that being thoroughly prepared for the implementation and having the amount of time you need to do this well does not always happen. Sometimes the VPSA says to you: "do a CAS review this semester" (or an even shorter timeline). If you believe they are not open to discussing a longer timeline, you may have to avoid our advice and complete these efforts using tactics identified internally as necessary. Even VPSAs and other institutional leaders do not always understand implementation of (self and external) assessment and program review using Standards. If necessary, you could (1) do CAS self-assessment and program review in 4-6 months and you can (2) do self-assessment and program review without a culture of using CAS FSAP Standards. We just believe these conditions are not ideal. Through our posts this year, you'll see why that would be the case. While we are authoring these pieces over the course of 10 months, your AFA appointed directors to CAS are here to help you plan for and launch your approach at any time: [Dan Bureau](#) and [Monica L. Miranda](#) are your AFA appointees to CAS. Additional resources include our [cas.edu](http://cas.edu) website, as well as other AFA resources (Advance U sessions, etc.).

In the March Association Update, we will talk about what happens during that first month to six weeks in which you assemble and educate your team.