

Council for the Advancement of Standards Update: Implementing the Results

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Over the course of the last eight months, we've provided an article for each step of the self-assessment and program review process for Fraternity and Sorority Advising Programs (FSAP) standards provided by [CAS](#) in partnership with AFA. This update for September focuses on summarizing that process and laying the foundation for life after completion, which is focused on implementation.

Review of Steps and Key Points

Each month we have written one document to help a CAS user implement that step. The documents have hopefully been helpful to you, but we recognize there's a LOT in them. That was intentional because this process is to be entered into with some level of understanding about not only the process but the situations that can arise within each step. In this section, we provide a short summary of each step. Links will direct you to the respective overview on this area. As a reminder, AFA maintains [a resource page](#) for CAS that includes each of the articles we have written this year.

Recall that the difference between self-assessment and program review is that within self-assessment there is an internal focus on alignment with the CAS Standards. This is typically conducted by the department in isolation of other reviewers. During your self-assessment, you must be preparing for program review. Program review occurs when an internal team of persons external to, but with at least some level of familiarity with, the department conduct their review. Often, program reviews include external reviewers who are experts in the respective functional area.

There are seven steps in the CAS self-assessment and program review process. The first three focus mainly on self-assessment and steps four and five are most relative to program review. Steps six and seven lay the foundation for using the program review process to develop a plan for the future. In this section, we provide one key and vital attribute of each step. For a more thorough review, we encourage you to read each document outlining the individual steps.

1. [Plan the Process](#): 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.

2. [Assemble and Educate the Team](#): The two questions to guide decision making here are “what is the ideal size given our office” and “**who can best represent the perspectives we need to carefully examine how our FSAP is aligned with these standards.**” The ideal size depends on your needs, but we encourage never having more than nine and preferably around six — and that might be too large as well. This step does not conclude when you identify the team: you must educate them on the work ahead. **Three important educational components to consider include (1) what is the overall purpose and functions of the FSAP, (2) why is this process being conducted and what factors are influencing not only the process but how this work will end up influencing the future success of the FSAP, and (3) how to properly review the evidence at hand.**
3. [Identify, Collect, and Review Evidence \(primary purpose of self-assessment\)](#): Self-assessment requires the review and understanding of the Standards within the FSAP and compiling evidence to demonstrate the extent to which your functions are aligned with the Standards. As you examine the standards, you must also identify sources of evidence that indicate how well you are doing meeting the Standards. We have found that those closest to the FSAP, meaning those who are administrators in the unit, often believe they are doing something, but do not necessarily have evidence to prove. **It is important as you identify and collect the evidence that you are honest about how you think you do with each standard. You may think you are hitting all the marks on a standard, but do you have evidence to demonstrate so?**
4. [Conduct and Interpret Ratings Using Evaluate Evidence](#) (launches FSAP into program review): **As you get all of the scores compiled from each rater, you can imagine some of the issues that could arise.** For example, someone never gives threes may have a challenge understanding someone who is more inclined to score favorably. At what point is the failure to meet about evidence provision versus just the fact that even with all the evidence provided, the rater just does not think the FSAP meets this standard? **These challenges must be addressed by the committee’s chair who has the responsibility to compile scores and identify areas of dissent across the group.** The chair’s task early on is to address this potential for conflict in the internal review committee (so, what can we do to come to consensus on what constitutes meets versus exceeds for example). Once scores are submitted, they will be tasked with examining scores provided and seeing how they match up against each other. Once the committee chair has the scores compiled into one document (recommended is an Excel

spreadsheet) it is time to have the committee meeting to determine consensus. For some items, the simple shared score of the team will be enough for consensus, as if there's pretty much agreement across members then there is not necessarily much need to discussion. However, if scores are low as a result of rater variability in scores or there are outliers that need addressing, then it is important to have a careful conversation to determine consensus. Ultimately, once the chair provides the FSAP with their assessment of the evidence, there should be one agreed upon score from the committee.

5. [Develop an Action Plan](#): The questions that drive action planning include: what trends or issues do we see that need our attention, can we get a sense from reviewers about priorities, and how do we go about doing more than just putting ideas on paper to create a culture of ongoing attention to whatever plans we create. **As you do CAS program review, it is important to have a planning culture. Our perception of a planning culture is that participants understand the normal cycle of reviewing information to identify plans for both the short and long-term and this is done as part of the natural day to day operations of running a department.** A planning culture can be guided by, but is not only the development of a document called a "strategic plan." Having a plan and living by it to ensure ongoing attention to the trends/issues and evaluate how to address them are two different things that are often perceived as synonymous.
6. [Prepare a Report](#): **The report should achieve three primary objectives: summarize the process** used to arrive at the point of identifying action items (and moving into strategic planning); **summarize perceptions of strengths and areas of improvement** in order to represent how you plan to respond to the needs of the FSAP as well as those of the larger interfraternal and higher education world; and **convey to a range of stakeholders that the FSAP has (1) examined its effectiveness and structure, (2) identified areas in which to improve, and (3) has developed recommendations to enhance its overall operations.**
7. [Close the Loop](#): By definition, to close the loop means four very important actions in your implementation: (1) developing plans to make changes to influence the achievement of outcomes; (2) ensuring that ongoing assessment is infused into your enactment of the action plan; (3) develop the process for keeping the action items updated, including timelines and steps to evaluate if the action items are no longer relevant; and (4) finding ways to keep key stakeholders involved and informed. Consider

that each year you may close the loop on the current implementation of the plan's priorities, but that the next year aspects may continue on. Approaches (new and old) to collect information about success will be implemented. **Possibly most important to all of this is that this annual consideration of "the loop" is a chance to revisit progress toward the goal of using the self-assessment and program review process to improve the overall delivery of services and programs for the fraternity and sorority community by the FSAP.**

We often get questions about the roles of an external review team in the program review process. In October, we will focus on the function of an external review team, which will also include a listing of AFA members who indicate some level of competence in conducting a CAS external review. In November, we will focus on how to integrate CAS into your work in order to implement your plan as well as lay the foundation for ongoing success within implementing the FSAP Standards.

CAS as a consortium exists of up to two appointees from 41 higher education and student affairs associations. By the end of 2019, we will have 50 sets of standards cutting across diverse functional areas. If you have any questions about the work we are doing for CAS on behalf of AFA, please contact [Dan](#) or [Monica](#).