"The heart of the accrediting process is the self-study, a systematic examination by the unit of the environment in which it operates, its mission, range of activities, accomplishments, and plan for the future."

2026-2027 Journalism and Mass Communications Handbook, Part IV Process of Accreditation, Page 27

SELF-STUDY TIPS

Style and Presentation

Self-studies are often a compilation of work by several individuals. Attention to writing and style will help create a cohesive report.

✻ Use a singular voice or tone throughout the report.

✻ Do not write from a first-person point of view. The self-study should be representative of the entire unit, not one person's perspective.

✻ Be consistent in editing style and word use. For example: adviser vs. advisor; em dashes with spaces around them vs. no spaces; reaccredit vs. re-accredit; % vs. percent. We recommend using AP style.

✻ Use a consistent approach throughout the report when referencing supporting documents. When referencing a digital file, make sure the name of the document used in the narrative matches the digital file name.

✻ Be mindful of FERPA and privacy laws. Do not include names of students and their grades and avoid using names when writing about personnel issues. If needed, this information can be shared in one-on-one conversations with the site team.

✻ Use page numbers.

✻ Use course titles; don't rely solely on course numbers. The site team will not be familiar with course numbers.

✻ Use a **bold** typeface for prompts to help set them apart from your responses.

✻ **Do not remove, rewrite or reorder the prompts and indicators. Follow the self-study template.**

✻ Double-check your math.

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Digital Format and Delivery of Your Self-Study

In 2018, ACEJMC transitioned to an all-digital format and delivery requirement. Self-study reports and all supporting documents should be saved as MS Word documents and/or PDF files. As for the delivery method, ACEJMC does not stipulate that one particular delivery method must be used.

Self-studies are generally submitted as email attachments or via cloud sharing platforms like Google Drive or MS OneDrive.

Here are some guidelines to keep in mind as you develop your primary self-study document and supporting materials:

- **Ease of Access** – Ensure the site team can easily access the report and can open and close the primary document and all supporting documents as often as needed.

- **Ease of Navigation** – Avoid using a system that requires exiting the primary document to view supporting documents. Also, be sure to include a table of contents and double-check the accuracy of all page numbers.

- **File Name –** Make sure the name of the institution appears in the self-study file name. File name example: eastern_state_univ_self_study.pdf

- **Hyperlinks** – Embedding live links in the report is an excellent way to provide reviewers with quick access to supporting documents and evidence; however, please adhere to the following rules:

All linked material should be accessible to those outside the university's email or file-sharing system. All reviewers (ACEJMC administrative staff and site-team members) should be granted access to linked documents prior to submitting the self-study.

Make sure all hyperlinks are active and working. If the final document is converted from an MS Word file to a PDF prior to submission, double check that all links in the PDF are "live." When converting a Word doc to a PDF, using the "Print to PDF" option instead of exporting or using "Save As" can strip away interactivity and deactivate hyperlinks.

All linked material should be set to open in new windows or tabs.

Narrative Responses

Responses to prompts and directives in the self-study should be concise, candid and detail oriented. Avoid making rhetorical statements without referencing supporting evidence; focus on specifics.

Several directives ask for a description of policy or process. Avoid inserting lengthy formal documents directly into the narrative as the response. Doing so disrupts the flow of the narrative. Provide a brief narrative response along with a link to the formal supporting document(s).

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Many prompts comprise multiple questions and directives. **Make sure all questions and directives are addressed in the responses.**

Don't dump raw data as a substitute for narrative discussion. There are prompts in the self-study, particularly under Standard 3 Assessment of Learning Outcomes, that ask for findings from data analyses. The site team expects that the unit will have collected the data, analyzed the data, and will be able to write about the findings in a narrative response. Raw data can be provided separately as supporting evidence. Similarly, assessment reports are evidence; they do not take the place of narrative discussion.

Several prompts ask for details about faculty. Be consistent within the narrative when reporting the number of faculty. For example, check, faculty numbers provided in Part I General Information against faculty numbers provided under Standard 5 Faculty.

The self-study template contains some general directives pertaining to document availability both on the unit website and during the site visit. These directives are often removed from the final self-study report and are sometimes forgotten entirely. It's best to acknowledge these directives in the self-study report with information on where these documents appear on the unit's website and/or how they will be made available.

Information required to be displayed prominently on the unit's website:

- Unit's mission statement and strategic plan (see Standard 1)
- Unit's student enrollment, retention, and graduation data (see Standard 1)
- Unit's assessment plan (see Standard 3)

Part I. General Information

This section becomes a part of the site team report and is shared with the Accrediting Committee and Accrediting Council. This section should include the most up-to-date information available, particularly regarding the unit's full- and part-time faculty roster.

Part II. Supplementary Information

"Table 2. Full-Time Faculty" should capture information on each faculty member, including number of years of professional industry experience and years of academic teaching experience. Report industry experience and teaching experience separately. Do not count years of college teaching as years working in industry.

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Table 2. Full-Time Faculty

XXXXXX SEMESTER 20XX										
NAME	YEARS FULLTIME IN PRO-FESSIONAL INDUSTRY	YEARS TEACHING COLLEGE FULLTIME	YEARS ON THIS FACULTY	YEARS AT PRESENT RANK	HIGHEST DEGREE EARNED	TENURED (Y/N)	CREDIT HOURS TAUGHT PER TERM	ALLOCATION OF EFFORT %		
								TCHNG	RSRCH	SRVC
Unit Administrator(s)										
J. Doe (Assoc. Professor), Chair	7	15	9	3	EdD	Y	0	0	20%	5%
Professors										
Jan Kowalski	18	13	13	1	MFA	Y	9	75%	20%	5%
Zhang San	3	17	14	5	PhD	Y	6	50%	45%	5%
Associate Professors										
Assistant Professors										
Instructors/ Lecturers										

Prompt No. 6 under Part II Supplementary Information includes several questions about the unit's self-study process, strengths and weaknesses discovered during the unit's self-evaluation, and steps taken to address weaknesses. The response to this prompt should be thorough and honest. A good self-examination elevates strengths and uncovers areas that need attention. It's OK and even encouraged to write about both in the self-study report. Don't shy away from celebrating a program's strengths. Likewise, don't gloss over weaknesses or areas that may need improvement. The self-study should address such issues thoroughly and honestly. More importantly, **the self-study should provide compelling evidence of actions taken or concrete plans to address the areas that need improvement.**

Standard 1: Mission, Governance and Administration

Please note ACEJMC's searchable database was discontinued in 2026. Accordingly, the directive that required units to enter enrollment, retention and graduation figures into the database has been removed from the standard.

As for the requirement to publish enrollment, retention and graduation data on the unit's website under Indicator (c), units are advised to update this data well before the site visit. Obtaining up-to-date census data, etc., from institutional

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offices on campus can take a long time. Plan accordingly. The same applies to the mission statement and strategic plan, which are both required to be published on the unit's website under Indicator (a).

Make sure all Standard 1 publication requirements are addressed well before the site visit and are updated regularly throughout the six-year review period in keeping with ACEJMC accreditation requirements.

Standard 3: Assessment of Learning Outcomes

Prompt No. 7 asks for a matrix that aligns student learning outcomes with the courses where they are taught, and the direct and indirect measures that assess the outcomes. An example of this matrix appears on Page 6 below.

Note: This is just one example. Units don't have to follow this model. Units should present this information in whatever format works best for the unit.

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Standard 3 Assessment of Learning Outcomes, Prompt 7: Sample Matrix

Each measure includes three digits. The first digit refers to the Standard number. The second digit refers to the key performance indicator number within that Standard (listing and description can be found in the section above). The third digit refers to the individual measure number within the KPI. For example, the measure 4.2.3 indicates that the measure is from Standard 4, KPI 2 (Faculty), and that it is the third measure in that KPI.

For Program Learning Outcomes, a letter may follow the third digit. The letter indicates the option that particular measure is applied to. Specifically, A=Advertising, M=Multimedia Journalism, P=Public Relations and T=TV/Film. These letters are applied to PLOs that require option-specific assignments for measurement. For example, 2.5.1.P indicates the Public Relations assignment measure of the fifth PLO (Writing), which is in Standard 2. Together, 2.5.1.A, 2.5.1.M, 2.5.1.P and 2.5.1.T constitute the first measure of the fifth PLO (which is the fifth KPI) in Standard 2.

Measure Type & Number	Measure Number	Description	Collected From	Measurement Type
PLO1	2.1.1	Performance on Legal Brief assignment in MC401	Canvas assessment	Direct
PLO1	2.1.2	Trend on understanding of law item	MC001 — Senior Exit Survey	Indirect
PLO1	2.1.3	Average on post-test items 1, 2 and 3	MC001 — Post-test	Direct
PLO1	2.1.4	Average on law portfolio measures	MC001 — Portfolio evaluation	Indirect
PLO2	2.2.1	Performance on Media Milestone essay in MC382	Canvas assessment	Direct
PLO2	2.2.2	Trend on understanding of history item (role of professionals)	MC001 — Senior Exit Survey	Indirect
PLO2	2.2.3	Average on post-test items 4, 5 and 6	MC001 — Post-test	Direct
PLO3	2.3.1	Performance on Digital Research Presentation in MC304	Canvas assessment	Direct
PLO3	2.3.2	Trend on understanding of diversity item	MC001 — Senior Exit Survey	Indirect
PLO3	2.3.3	Trend on understanding of identity item	MC001 — Senior Exit Survey	Indirect
PLO3	2.3.4	Average on post-test items 7, 8 and 9	MC001 — post-test	Direct
PLO3	2.3.5	Average on diversity portfolio measures	MC001 — Portfolio evaluation	Indirect
PLO4	2.4.1.A	Performance on Client Project 2 assignment in MC312	Canvas assessment	Direct
PLO4	2.4.1.G	Performance on production assignment in MC367	Canvas assessment	Direct
PLO4	2.4.1.M	Performance on story design assignment in MC322	Canvas assessment	Direct
PLO4	2.4.1.P	Performance on Media Guide assignment in MC333	Canvas assessment	Direct
PLO4	2.4.1.T	Performance on Capstone Production assignment in MC469	Canvas assessment	Direct

(Sample matrix courtesy of Southeast Missouri State University)

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Standard 5: Faculty

The "Scholarship, Research, Creative and Professional Activities" table that appears in the self-study template is designed to capture faculty productivity during the review period. The Individual Totals count (second column from right) and the Unit Totals count (far-right column) are sometimes confused as being the same. They are not. For example: If three faculty members within the accredited unit collaborated on one academic paper, the Individual Total count would be three and the Unit Total would be one.

Please note **the grid should only capture relevant activity completed by full-time faculty members while they were employed by the unit under review.** Provide the total number of individual contributors in each rank in place of the XX.

Scholarship, Research, Creative and Professional Activities	**Individual Counts**					**Unit Totals****
	Full Professors (XX)	**Associate Professors** (XX)	**Assistant Professors** (XX)	**Other Faculty*** (XX)	**Individual Totals**	
Awards and Honors						
Grants Received Internal						
Grants Received External						
Scholarly Books, Sole- or Co-authored						
Textbooks, Sole- or Co-authored						
Books Edited						
Book Chapters						
Monographs						
Articles in Refereed Journals						
Refereed Conference Papers						
Invited Academic Papers						
Encyclopedia Entries						
Book Reviews						
Articles in Non-refereed Publications						
Juried Creative Works						
Non-juried Creative Works						
Other (please specify)						

*Includes all full-time faculty members who do not hold one of the three faculty ranks listed in the table, such as lecturers and instructors and others on term appointments. Many faculty appointments in this category do not come with significant scholarship, research or creative requirements.

**Co-authored work should be counted as a single publication under Unit Totals. This means the individual total and unit total for a given activity won't necessarily match. If, for example, two faculty members are co-authors on the same journal article, it would be reported as an individual publication for both authors and would count as two publications under Individual Totals, but it would only count as one publication under Unit Totals.

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