

**USM Accreditation Self-Study Writing Guidelines  
January 2009**

Key words that describe a successful Self Study Report:

Candid, Evidence-based, Analytical, Participatory, Clear, Useful

The narrative for each standard should reflect a coherent story line: What is the primary story to be told about how USM has addressed and will address the standard? What major themes are pertinent and distinctive to USM?

- 1) Each standard's narrative should perform these functions:
  - a) Follow the prescribed structure
    - i) Description (clear and succinct overview)
    - ii) Appraisal (honest reflection of strengths and concerns)
    - iii) Projection: (specific future plans & institutional commitments)
  - b) Provide specific evidence for assertions and observations, and provide timelines and assigned responsibility for projections
  - c) Address the sub-standards that comprise the standard, incorporating each sub-standard clearly into the narrative (drafts should could include explicit sub-standard numbers in parenthesis in the text)
  - d) Make creative and effective use of visual documentation, such as charts, photographs, etc. For example, classroom upgrades can be addressed with a brief descriptive sentence and substantiated with a "before and after" picture; enrollment growth over time by school can be summarized in a bar graph, etc.
  - e) Include comparative institutional benchmark information as applicable
  
- 2) The narrative for each standard should emphasize appraisal and projection, providing sufficient quantitative and qualitative evidence for each substandard
  
- 3) The final Self-Study Report (incorporating all eleven standards) can be no longer than 100 pages. Therefore, working draft length should follow these general guiding parameters (excluding supporting documents or links to evidence):

Standard	Recommended length
1. Mission and Purposes	2 - 4 pages
2. Planning and Evaluation	6 - 8 pages
3. Organization and Governance	4 - 6 pages
4. The Academic Program	18 - 20 pages
5. Faculty	10 - 12 pages
6. Students	8 - 10 pages
7. Library and Other Information Resources	3 - 5 pages
8. Physical and Technological Resources	7- 9 pages
9. Financial Resources	7 - 9 pages
10. Public Disclosure	3 - 5 pages
11. Integrity	3 - 5 pages

Remember that the narrative prepared for each standard will be in draft form. Drafts may be revised to assure that the final document is clear and consistent, so focus on the substance of description, appraisal, projection, and evidence for each.

Adapted from UVM Self-Study Writing Guidelines, October 2007 accessed at [http://www.uvm.edu/~accredit/?Page=writing\\_guides.html&SM=writingmenu.html](http://www.uvm.edu/~accredit/?Page=writing_guides.html&SM=writingmenu.html) on 01/05/09

For additional information, please refer to

[http://www.usm.maine.edu/accreditation/Writing\\_the\\_Report.pdf](http://www.usm.maine.edu/accreditation/Writing_the_Report.pdf)