

**NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS OF THEATRE**

## **Optional Supplemental Questions for Self-Study**

**Membership Procedures  
September 2016 Edition**

**Applicable for Visits:  
2016-2017 through 2023-2024**

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*No institution is required to use the questions contained in the Optional Supplemental Questions for Self-Study to conduct or write its Self-Study. For further information, please see the "Introduction" on page IV of this document.*

Documents required to apply for accredited institutional Membership are: (1) *NAST Procedures for Institutions*; (2) *NAST Procedures for the Self-Study Document – Format A, or Format B, or Format C*; (3) *Instructions for Preparing Curricular Tables in the NAST Format*; and (4) the latest edition of the *NAST Handbook*, including any current addenda. These texts are available on the NAST Web site.

Information contained herein concerning programs, procedures, requirements, standards, and fees is subject to change without notice by the appropriate body of NAST.

Permission is hereby granted to copy this document for use in the accreditation process.

# Optional Supplemental Questions for Self-Study

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Please Note: No institution is required to use the questions contained herein to conduct or write its Self-Study. For further information, see the Introduction that follows.

## NAST Procedures Documents 2016

### Optional Supplemental Questions for Self-Study

#### INTRODUCTION

This document provides an optional supplement to the required 2016 NAST Membership Procedures.

It contains several optional sets of questions that can be used in various ways during a Self-Study.

It is intended for institutions that want to explore one or more issues in greater depth during the course of the Self-Study.

Institutions with long histories of achievement and NAST Membership may find these and similar questions to be especially useful.

No institution is required to use this document or questions contained within it.

Each question set is separate. Each must be used in conjunction with a Self-Study Format – A, B, C, or custom.

Determinations about use of any, one, or several of the question sets are solely the prerogative of each institution.

Determination should be based on the goals of the Self-Study and a cost/benefit analysis.

Each question set can be the basis for focusing the Self-Study or any portion of it on a particular purpose, goal, or objective.

A question set may be used in the course of the self-study process and/or as a basis for writing the Self-Study document. Each question set indicates at least one appropriate Self-Study document location.

Institutions are welcome to add, subtract, combine, and otherwise alter any question set to make it applicable to their needs.

Questions and issues presented are primarily springboards or catalysts to further questioning and planning.

They provide ways of taking a focused look at particular issues that are normally addressed during self-study.

The institution determines the scope, depth, and time investment of any inquiry associated with items chosen from the question sets.

NAST has many additional documents that provide optional lists of questions and issues associated with specific topics. A list of these resources is provided.

The Association may add new information or sets of questions during the validity period shown on the cover of this document.

## QUESTION SET 1

### Curriculum Content and Futures of Fields

These questions may be useful with regard to item B. “Specific Curricula” in the *Instructional Programs Portfolio* in all Self-Study formats, and Section II. “Programs Futures Analysis” of *Format C*.

- A. Choose a single field or a specialization within it; for example, school theatre teaching or early childhood theatre teaching. Another example: acting or directing.
- B. Choose a degree or credential you offer in the field or specialization you have chosen in A.
- C. Evaluate the effectiveness of the relationships or correlations among items 1. through 5. with regard to the degree or credential in the field or specialization you have chosen:
  1. Present and immediate future knowledge, skills, and attributes necessary for:
    - a. fundamental content preparation in the field or specialization;
    - b. professional career entry in general (i.e. for practice throughout the nation);
    - c. professional career entry into specialized areas of the field that our curricula addresses;
    - d. advanced professional practice for a lifetime as the field or specialization evolves; and/or
    - e. advanced study or continuing professional development.
  2. Competencies required and assessments of potential made for admission into or candidacy for a degree or credential.
  3. Content of and weight given to various curriculum, course, and program requirements and experiences, particularly in terms of knowledge and skills development.
  4. Content and means used for student evaluation.
  5. Competencies required for graduation.
- D. If relationships are not deemed satisfactory, what changes are needed?

Note 1: Normally, it is prudent to be cautious about accepting often-repeated predictions about the future without careful consideration of the local situation. It is important to avoid what is sometimes called “the tyranny of prophecy.”

Note 2: Users of these questions will confront the fact that knowledge and content are expanding, but curriculum time is not. This raises questions about breadth and depth, and about what is fundamental or “transcendent” knowledge and skills for the field. What knowledge and skills enable graduates to work effectively with an ever-expanding knowledge and practice base?

## QUESTION SET 2

### Individual Student Achievement at Advanced Levels – Short Version

These questions are particularly applicable to institutions with graduate students, or with large numbers of undergraduate students who are well advanced beyond basic career entry-level competencies in the major area, or who are creating original work.

The questions may be useful in considering item B. “Specific Curricula” in the *Instructional Programs Portfolio* in all Self-Study formats, and Section II “Program Futures Analysis” of Format C.

- A. Choose the scope of your inquiry – a specific degree or program curriculum, program area, field of endeavor, an evaluation technique or system, or a set of one or more of these.
- B. Ask the following questions, or variations of them that you create, about what you have chosen to review:
  1. To what extent do our aspirations for student achievement, content requirements, pedagogical approaches, requisite experiences, evaluations, and so forth ensure or nurture the following in our graduates:
    - a. Basic professional-level knowledge and skills (as defined by NAST and the requirements of our institution);
    - b. Personal vision evident in student work;
    - c. Conceptual acuity – creativity/virtuosity at multiple levels of complexity;
    - d. Imagination and ability to channel it to reach artistic goals; and
    - e. Conceptual and technical command of integration and synthesis.
  2. Understanding that much development in these areas is personal and individual, do we see ways we can improve how our program nurtures one or more of these capabilities?
  3. What is necessary to make the improvements we believe are necessary or desirable?
  4. What are the prospects for testing our assumptions, experimenting, or making changes outright once we have started?
  5. How much, in what ways, and in how much time can we know that the changes we propose are working?

### QUESTION SET 3

#### Individual Student Achievement at Advanced Levels – Expanded Version

These questions are particularly applicable to institutions with graduate students, or with large numbers of undergraduate students who are well advanced beyond basic career entry-level competencies in the major area, or who are creating original work.

The questions may be useful in considering item B. “Specific Curricula” in the *Instructional Programs Portfolio* in all Self-Study formats, and Section II “Program Futures Analysis” of *Format C*.

- A. Choose the scope of your inquiry – a specific degree or program curriculum, program area, field of endeavor, an evaluation technique or system, or a set of one or more of these.
- B. Ask the following questions, or variations of them that you create, about what you have chosen to review:
  1. To what extent do our aspirations for student achievement, content requirements, pedagogical approaches, requisite experiences, evaluations, and so forth ensure or nurture the following in our graduates:
    - a. Basic knowledge and skills in the discipline and any area of specialization as defined in NAST Standards demonstrated by level of accomplishment or work. These include fundamentals of the field in terms of practice, history, analysis and their applications in various areas of specialization (see Achievement and Quality on the NAST Web site at: <https://nast.arts-accredit.org/accrreditation/standards-guidelines/basic-competency-index/>, “Basic Competency Index by Discipline and Specialization – Undergraduate Degrees”).
    - b. Development of a personal vision and/or purpose—sometimes called “artistic voice”—that is evident in terms of work produced in the discipline or specialization. Verbal articulation of the vision or purpose is virtually immaterial if the vision is not manifested in the work produced. Vision or purposes are realized in terms of content or process in one or more of the following fields: artistic, humanistic, scientific, pedagogical, therapeutic, and so forth. Visions or purposes can change from work to work.
    - c. Conceptual acuity and ability to:
      - (1) create, sustain, realize, and evolve personal vision and purposes;
      - (2) identify and achieve specific and associated ideas and/or goals at various levels of scope and complexity;
      - (3) work creatively with relationships among ideas, structure, and expression;
      - (4) understand multiple perspectives;
      - (5) create using the process of discovery inherent in making a work.

- d. Ability to:
    - (1) use imagination as a means of creation and discovery with regard to specific content or subject matter, and as a means for communicating through the art form what is created or discovered;
    - (2) channel imagination to reach specific artistic goals;
    - (3) apply imagination to all aspects and levels of a work in ways that enhance its communicative power.
  - e. Technical ability to:
    - (1) create, sustain, realize, and evolve a personal vision and/or purposes;
    - (2) realize specific works or projects or elements of concepts at an advanced or professional level;
    - (3) analyze one's own work with sophistication using various methods and perspectives.
  - f. Ability to combine knowledge and skills, personal vision and/or purpose. Conceptual acuity and clarity, imagination, and technical ability to function independently in the creation and production of high-level work in the area of specialization, including but not limited to the capability and capacity to:
    - (1) define, analyze, and solve problems;
    - (2) make effective choices;
    - (3) evaluate critically and effectively the work in process;
    - (4) critique and learn from the work of others;
    - (5) understand and work with layers of structure and meaning;
    - (6) combine, integrate, and synthesize elements into works with internal conceptual and structural integrity.
2. Understanding that much development in these areas is personal and individual, do we see ways we can improve how our program nurtures one or more of these capabilities?
  3. What is necessary to make the improvements we believe are necessary or desirable?
  4. What are the prospects for testing our assumptions, experimenting, or once we have started, making changes outright?
  5. How much, in what ways, and in how much time can we know that the changes we propose are working?

## QUESTION SET 4

### Strategic Evaluation and Planning

These questions are particularly applicable to institutions and programs that want to compile and review relationships among present conditions, future prospects, and next steps.

These questions may be particularly useful in considering Section III “Evaluation, Planning, Projections [for the theatre unit]” in all Self-Study formats, Section I “Purposes and Operations [of the theatre unit]” of *Format B*, or Section II “Program Futures Analysis” of *Format C*.

- A. Choose an entity; for example, the theatre unit as a whole or a program or curriculum within the theatre unit.
- B. Choose a time frame or planning period.
- C. Ask the following questions or variations on them that you create, about the entity you have chosen to review:
  1. What are our strengths? What have we done right up to this point?
    - a. Where are we most effective, productive, even renowned?
    - b. What are the sources of the strengths we have?
    - c. Why are we strong where we are?
    - d. What strengths have we and our predecessors created?
    - e. What external and institutional advantages do we enjoy?
  2. What are the several absolute make-or-break fundamentals necessary to remain as strong as we are, particularly as the basis for further improvement or development?

*Note:* These are the things that we cannot give up under any circumstances if the entity we are considering is to continue to function. Consider intangibles as well as tangibles. For example, in most circumstances, one such fundamental intangible is the institution’s belief that the program is necessary, important, or valuable. Make distinctions among what is essential to exist, sustain, and improve so that gradations of danger are clearly understood as the basis for determining risk.
  3. What is the nature and scope of our ability to influence others on our own behalf?
  4. Where do we see problems, challenges, opportunities or other potential change indicators both internally and externally?
    - a. What change factors and change mechanisms may influence the work we are doing? Consider particularly the content, processes, means, and resources associated with teaching and learning.

*Examples of change factors are:*

Ideas/Values  
Information  
Knowledge  
Economic Conditions  
Technology  
Demographics  
Political Climate  
Religious Climate  
Cultural Climate  
Governance Patterns in Education and Culture  
Presence, Will, and Commitment of Visionaries  
Etc.

*Examples of change mechanisms are:*

Funding Patterns  
Reward Systems  
Legislation/Regulation  
Governance/Administrative Systems  
Standards-Setting Mechanisms  
Policy Analysis/Development Mechanisms  
Consultant/Advisory Systems  
Industry Decisions  
Technological Applications  
Advertising  
Publications/Studies/Research Reports  
Content of Formal Education  
Pathbreaking Conceptual Work in the Field  
Etc.

- b. Are there probable occurrences - in our program, institution, field of specialization, state, region, nation, etc. - that we need to consider? Again, consider change factors and change mechanisms, internal institutional contexts as well as external ones.
  - c. Are there opportunities for leadership in one or more aspects of our field that are appropriate for us to consider?
  - d. Are there areas of vulnerability that need watching or immediate attention?
5. How can we make sure that the externally produced information, projections, concepts, etc. that we are using are accurate or valid for our situation?
  6. What can and cannot be changed in the entity we are considering without harming its capacities to meet old and new challenges effectively?

*Note:* Consider make-or-break fundamentals mentioned above, but go beyond them to other critically important conditions, values, or resources. As much as possible, consider first, second, third order consequences.

7. What do we need or want to address, improve, change, or create?

8. What do we need either to evaluate what we want to do or to do it?
  - a. What must we accomplish ourselves? Where must we convince others to help? Consider organizational needs, research and projective studies, planning, financing, resource issues, initial and sustained commitment prospects, and so forth.
  - b. To what extent can the necessary resources be found, obtained, deployed, and managed?
  - c. What are the impacts of what we propose on the entity we are considering, and on larger entities of which it is a part?
9. What results are we expecting? When?
  - a. To what extent can we probe to discover the possibility of results that we are not expecting? How can we best avoid unintended negative consequences?
  - b. Have we made provisions to make adjustments if circumstances warrant?
  - c. As we begin, what are the major indicators that what we have proposed is or is not working at least as well as intended?
  - d. What means do we have to test unfolding developments against make-or-break fundamentals?
10. What is our immediate course of action? Our timeline for next steps?
11. Are we ready to proceed?

## QUESTION SET 5

### Twelve-Point Outline for Action Planning

These questions may be particularly useful in considering Section III “Evaluation, Planning, Projections [for the theatre unit]” in all Self-Study formats, Section I “Purposes and Operations [of the theatre unit]” of *Format B*, or Section II “Program Futures Analysis” of *Format C*.

- A. Choose an entity, for example, the theatre unit as a whole, or a program, or a curriculum within the theatre unit.
- B. Choose a time frame or planning period.
- C. Complete the following outline or variations thereof that you create, about the entity you have chosen:

#### Consider:

1. current mission, goals, objectives, and operational policies;
2. environment and resources of the institution, including program strengths and weaknesses;
3. trends and critical issues to be faced by the unit and/or institution;
4. projected opportunities and obstacles.

#### Determine:

5. priorities for action;
6. assessment of projected actions(s);
7. planning procedure—questions, time frame, process;
8. action plans.

#### Examine:

9. consistency among mission, goals, objectives, action plans;
10. potential conflicts with existing and projected programs or conditions;
11. resource requirements, availability, and continuity;
12. prospectus for short-term/long-term success.

For further explanation of this outline and possible uses in various situations, see *NAST Sourcebook for Futures Planning, Supplement IV: Creating Your Self Study*.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES AND QUESTION SETS

The following resources are recommended for additional development of approaches and enhancement of the self-study process:

- A. The *Sourcebook for Futures Planning – Supplement IV: Creating Your Self-Study* is especially recommended. This text may be downloaded from the NAST Web site (see “Publications,” “Assessment and Policy Studies,” “[Sourcebook for Futures Planning and Supplements](#)”).
- B. Each NAST Annual Meeting features a workshop on self-study.
- C. The following documents contain sets of assessment or planning questions and may be useful. All are available for download or purchase from the NAST Web site:
  1. *Assessment of Undergraduate Programs in Theatre*
  2. *Assessment of Graduate Programs in Theatre*
  3. *Local Assessment of Evaluation and Reward Systems for Arts Faculties in Higher Education*
  4. NAST *Sourcebook for Futures Planning* and Sourcebook Supplements II, III, and, as mentioned in item A. above, Supplement IV.
- D. The Achievement and Quality section on the NAST Web site (see “Publications,” “[Achievement and Quality](#)”) has additional resources and sets of questions concerning evaluation of individual and institutional work.

Resources include:

- ◆ Evaluation Mechanisms in the Arts
- ◆ Evaluation Cautions
- ◆ Numbers and Evaluation in the Arts: Critical Questions
  - Introductory Information
  - Questions
  - Boyle's Counting Paradoxes
  - Resources Regarding Numbers and Evaluation in the Arts
- ◆ Crafting Unique Evaluations
- ◆ Optional Resources and More Information
- ◆ 1990 Briefing Paper: Outcomes Assessment and Arts Programs in Higher Education
- ◆ Basic Competency Index by Discipline and Specialization – Undergraduate Degrees
- ◆ Operational Standards Index by Discipline