

# A Higher Standard

## Accreditation Self-Study Guide

### Instructions for assembly and submission of the Self-Study On Flash Drive

(As of July 2011, all Self-Studies must be submitted electronically. These instructions replace chapter 5 in the Accreditation Self-Study Guide.)

#### What is a flash drive?

A flash drive (sometimes called a USB drive, data key thumb drive, jump drive) is a key-size portable storage memory device which hold files from 154 MB to 8 GB that connects to a computer's USB port. The memory is contained on the device after the power source is removed from it. It looks similar to this:



#### How is the Self-Study submitted on a flash drive different from the hard copy submission?

The content (the questions, etc.) is exactly the same. The only difference is that the information is submitted electronically rather than printed out. Instead of three printed copies of the Questionnaire and one set of physical attachments, you now submit one printed copy of the Questionnaire plus the flash drive(s) (which includes electronic copies of the Questionnaire and all the attachments).

#### In what format do the documents need to be submitted?

The Self-Study Questionnaire is provided to you as a Microsoft Word Fill-In document and should be submitted as one pdf document. The required attachments must be in Microsoft Office 2003

applications (Word, Excel, PowerPoint) and/or portable document format (PDF).

#### When is the Self-Study due?

The due date is included in the cover letter to your museum from the Accreditation Program staff that accompanied the Self-Study materials. The program staff can also provide you with this information at any time. The standard Self-Study period is one year. The Self-Study should be **postmarked** by the due date.

#### Finalizing, Assembling and Submitting the Self-Study

Once the Questionnaire and supporting documentation is complete, the director, a member of the governing authority, and the Self-Study coordinator (if the museum has appointed one) should review the entire document to make sure it is:

- Complete

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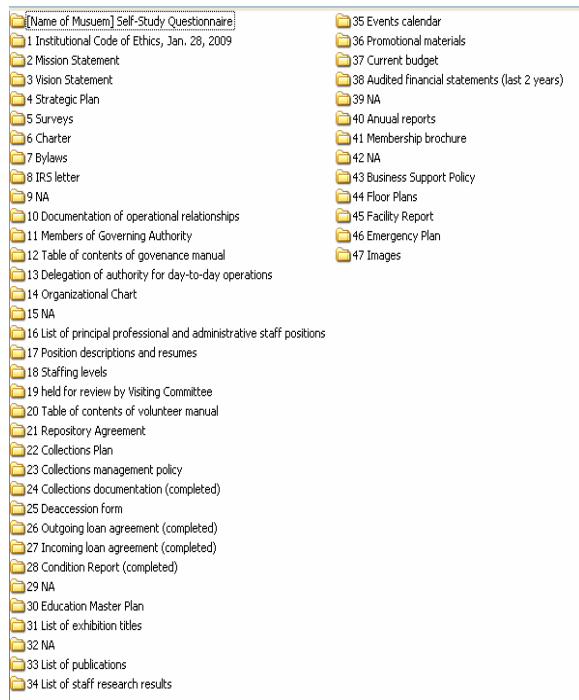
- Clear and Concise
- Accurate
- Internally consistent in content, tone, and style
- Well-edited
- Professional in appearance
- Signed by the director and head of the governing authority
- Assembled in accordance with instructions

A complete and well-organized Self-Study helps to speed your review process.

## Assembly

Please follow these instructions carefully. Submissions not compiled per the instructions will be returned. The museum will need to purchase as many flash drives as needed to compile all of the necessary data (2mb at least) to submit **two complete copies** (each one on a separate flash drive or separate set of flash drives) of all the materials. Any materials submitted in applications not supported by most computer systems will be considered missing or incomplete and the entire submission will be returned.


**The overall organization of the flash drive will look similar to this:**



## The Self-Study Questionnaire:

- Include one complete pdf version of the Self-Study Questionnaire on the flash drive, titled “[Name of Museum] Self-Study Questionnaire” (you will also need to email this pdf version to the Accreditation program staff).
- Pagination may be either continuous across the entire Questionnaire, or start over at the beginning of each section.
- In addition you will need to provide **one full physical** printout of the original signed Questionnaire (*NOT* the attachments).

## Attachments:

- When an attachment is called for in the Questionnaire, it is highlighted with the “folder” icon .
- Each attachment should be clearly labeled and placed in a folder on the datakey, in numerical order with the **attachment number** (not the question number), and a title of the document. If there is more than one attachment for that number (i.e., attachment #10), the folder will have the overall title, such as “10 Operational Agreements”, and both attachments will be placed in the same folder clearly labeled as *a.* and *b.* Example: *10a Memorandum of Understanding* and or *10b Contract with X agency.* (Attachment #47 is an exception to this rule, see below for details).
- For visual images (#47 a-d), it is easiest to view them in one file as opposed to separate folders (we recommend one PowerPoint presentation). This allows the viewer to see all of the images without searching through multiple files. Label each image with a description and the date the picture was taken.

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(Please see Chapter 3 of the Self-Study guide for more about images).

- If an attachment does not apply to your museum or you do not have it, include an empty folder with the attachment number and title “NA”.  
**Do not include the title of the document requested.** (*Hint:* Do a consistency check between the Self-Study Questionnaire and the documents attached. If you checked off a document in the questionnaire, please include that document on the flash drive).
- Label each flash drive with the institutions name and date of submission (month and year). A key chain ring with a laminated tag would suffice.
- Scanned documents should not exceed maximum standards (pdf, jpeg 300dpi).
- For section G of the Education and Interpretation section under Sample Materials, each institution is allowed to (but not required to) submit physical samples of each of the 3 categories. These must be secured in a binder which is clearly labeled with the museum name and description of what is included. Each institution is allowed to submit **only 3 physical publications** for attachment 36c. Do not send large posters (or anything else rolled up/in a tube) as sample publications/educational materials. Send a maximum of four samples for each of the three categories.

## Other special notes:

- If your museum is a system with multiple sites, you may create separate folders for each site.
- If you are submitting a binder, make sure the contents are secure and do not extend beyond the cover.

## What to send to AAM

Your complete Self-Study should consist of:

- One signed print copy of the Self-Study Questionnaire.
- Two labeled, complete copies of the Self-Study on flash drive, including:
  - An electronic copy of the completed Self-Study Questionnaire (including the signed signature page)
  - The attached supporting documents, assembled per the instructions above (i.e., in labeled, numbered folders).
- Email one pdf copy of the Self-Study Questionnaire to accreditation@aam-us.org

## Where to send the Self-Study

American Association of Museums  
Attn: Accreditation/Self-Study  
1575 Eye Street,NW, Suite 400  
Washington, DC 20005

## How to send the Self-Study

### *Packing*

Make sure the labeled flash drives are secure in whatever packaging to ensure they do not get lost. If you are submitting a binder you may secure the flash drives by hooking them to one of the binder rings. Secure the binder itself with two large rubber bands—one horizontal and one vertical. Pack the materials securely inside a box—add packing material if needed—and be sure to tape the box securely top and bottom.

### *Shipping*

You can send your Self-Study by whatever method of shipping is most economical and convenient for you (U.S. Postal Service, UPS, FedEx, etc.) If you use the U.S. Postal Service, you are strongly encouraged to send it with some tracking

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mechanism in the event that it does not arrive.

**The museum should keep an entire copy of its submission not only for reference throughout the review, but also in the event that the original is lost or damaged in transit.**

### **What will happen after I turn in the Self-Study?**

The Accreditation Program staff will send you an e-mail acknowledging receipt of the Self-Study shortly after it arrives.

Then we thoroughly review your submission. Depending on timing of submissions, about one to two months after you submit your Self-Study, you will receive a Self-Study Checklist from the program staff, flagging any problems that might cause delays later in the process.

The staff use this checklist to identify anything that is missing or unclear, does not meet the Accreditation Commission's Expectations or the program requirements, or may need additional attention from the Visiting Committee.

You have the opportunity at this point (as well as later on) to submit additional materials that will make your presentation stronger and potentially minimize delays later in the process. You will have about four weeks to submit additional material if it is requested.

If your museum is undergoing a subsequent review, a few weeks after you submit the Self-Study, you will receive a separate email with materials and information to get you started on the next phase of the process—the site visit. (Applicant museums must first be reviewed by the Accreditation Commission).

At the conclusion of the accreditation process, the Self-Study materials are returned to the museum. Museums are

encouraged to keep a copy of the Self-Study in the museum's archives for reference purposes.

### **What if I have questions or problems submitting on the datakey?**

Please contact program staff (accreditation@aam-us.org or 202-218-7713) for help or to discuss options.