Qualitative Analysis of Academic Program Review Reports

Purpose
Design library enhancements through a collaborative and qualitative research approach that intensively studies our academic departments’ needs.

Approach
- Engage library liaisons to conduct qualitative content analysis of academic program review documentation
- Use collaborative findings to inform the design of strategic library enhancements
- Develop as a replicable organizational learning exercise

Academic Program Review
Berkeley academic departments regularly undergo an Academic Program Review to identify opportunities and challenges, assess their future, and pursue new paths of inquiry and discovery.

The resulting APR self-study reports are a snapshot of academic departments’ strategic plans, experiences, and needs. These reports are shared with the Library, and they serve as a rich data source for library planning and organizational learning.

Methodology
1. After an academic department’s review, the Vice Provost’s Office shares the APR self-study report with the Library.
2. The Library shares the APR reports with library liaisons for internal use via a secure, password-protected digital repository.
3. Liaisons learn to conduct qualitative content analysis of reports through a training session and a research procedures manual.
4. Liaisons analyze reports to identify library needs and relevant library enhancements. This qualitative content analysis is guided by three frameworks.

Value to organizational learning
Reveal departments’ candid perspectives
We saw themes we did not expect to see and collected perceptions of library and information services not previously voiced.
Identify priorities
We detected issues of shared interest across academic departments and disciplines.

Value to strategic planning
Unique compatibility with library liaisons
Liaisons serve as researcher-practitioners to design solutions from their findings and deliver them as part of liaison work.
Efficient and intensive learning
By comparison, short surveys, direct observations, and focus groups have a larger overhead and may not capture the deep insights, community visions, and long-term goals articulated in an APR report.
Pathway for continuous assessment
Our methodology and procedures are extensively documented for future exercises. APR reports are routinely shared with the Library and serve as a continuous data stream.

Best practices
Use qualitative research methods to identify emerging themes and trends
Keep the exercise simple to motivate participation
Use guided activities to scaffold broad exploration by library personnel
Use evaluative frameworks and worksheets to facilitate data collection and analysis
Provide many avenues of support for research training and conduct
Communicate the link between findings and library enhancement ideas

Conclusion
We identified library enhancements in an open, inclusive, collaborative, and research-driven manner. Our methodology, exercises, and frameworks exposed a systematic and research-based approach that is replicable for longitudinal assessment and encourages evidence-based decision making for organizational development.

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