



Ontario College Quality Assurance Service
Service de l'assurance de la qualité des
collèges de l'Ontario

Program Quality Assurance Process Audit

Final Audit Report – Executive Summary

CENTENNIAL COLLEGE

January 2009

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

A. Conclusions

Throughout this auditing process, it has become increasingly evident that much effort has been expended in recent years at Centennial College in building a policy framework that will serve as the quality assurance backbone for the organization. The challenge facing the College is to organize the raft of new and revamped policies into an integrated and comprehensive quality assurance package that will be easy for all stakeholders to navigate—especially for students if the College is to realize its aspirations to be a “learning college” in the fullest sense of the word. Criterion B has been added to signify the strategic importance attached to the review, renewal and development of all College policies that relate to the working, teaching and learning environment.

Like all its counterparts in the college system, Centennial College is obliged to be as responsive as possible to the socio-economic realities of its surrounding communities, the dependence of students on public transit and the numbers of students who are also working or parenting while attending college. Centennial College, also like its counterparts, is challenged to find ways and means of enabling its students to connect with their chosen college program and experience academic and social success in an environment that is often new and unfamiliar, demanding in terms of time, costs and expectations and the requirement to provide a host of resources and supports in facilities that often require updating and expansion but within stringent resource constraints. Direct entry students from high school may face challenges of socio-economic circumstances (low income, family disintegration, neighbourhood crime rates, etc.), experience as First Generation students, as children of immigrant families, or having experienced lower rates of success in high school. Students who actively choose college program options may also have to overcome in some instances less than positive parental and school perceptions about the value of a college education and its impact on their future career prospects.

At the same time, there are some rather unique challenges that Centennial faces that more closely reflect those of postsecondary education organizations in large urban settings in all English speaking countries at this juncture in time. Many students come to Centennial speaking English as an additional language, are still building their academic English language skills and facing the pressure of re-training themselves quickly to move into gainful employment. Many internationally trained new immigrants also face the pressures of financial hardship, social dislocation and overcoming experiences of war, political unrest, marginalization and the loss of their identity as professionals or accomplished citizens.

As a result of all these variables, it needs to be acknowledged that the environment at Centennial College makes teaching and the delivery of instruction complex. Meeting the needs of such a disparate range of students is challenging in terms of delivery of instruction that is equitable, inclusive, meets current industry or discipline standards and is engaging at the same time. Before sharing its findings from this academic audit exercise, this Audit Panel felt compelled to acknowledge and record all these challenges and commend the staff and leadership of Centennial College for the sensitivity, commitment and responsiveness to meeting these challenges.

B. Overall Findings of Panel

Criterion	Met	Partially Met	Not Met
Criterion 1	X		
Criterion 2	X		
Criterion 3	X		
Criterion 4	X		
Criterion 5	X		

C. Commendations

1. **Establishment of Task Force to prepare for the PQAPA audit.** This decision appears to have greatly facilitated the audit related preparation. The decision that the Task Force will continue to have a life once the audit is completed with a focus on continuing program quality assurance work, is evidence of the commitment of the College to the audit process and its implications for the future.
2. **Signature Learning Experience (SLE).** SLE with its 4 main components anchored in the *Academic Framework* and *Statement of Diversity* is a bold and value based initiative that carries both challenges and opportunities. The College has firmly established the framework for learning associated with a “distinctive, inclusive educational experience that builds on a foundation of global citizenship, social justice and diversity” (P2, Self-Study Report - SSR). Establishing this as a goal appears to have been done with a sense of purpose and direction. The initiative is in its early stages of implementation, and the College appears to be cognizant of associated challenges and opportunities, i.e. use of portfolio based learning, professional development for all college staff and development of competencies related to principles of equity and diversity.
3. **Program Quality, New Program Development, Program Review and Curriculum Modification processes.** Centennial College has developed several policies and procedures, and revised others, to address quality assurance issues related to program development, monitoring and review. The use of check lists and process flow charts identified in these documents are very useful tools. *Draft Program Quality Review Process Guidelines*, revised in March 08; *Centennial Guidelines for New Program Development and Curriculum Modifications* (June 2007); *Annual Program Review Checklist and Report* (P. 3, SSR, with reference to External Stakeholder Review Panels to heighten accountability); *Program Comprehensive Review and Action Plan* and *Streamlining of Program Review and Internal Quality Assurance Process* (January 2008) are a very strong set of policies and procedures that have the potential to form the basis of a robust and integrated quality assurance system. (SSR; Appendix 20; AD# 2&3; AD#5, AD#6). These policies and guidelines are designed to

improve documentation, review, monitoring and follow-up processes, and lead to greater accountability by the deans of the schools (P. 22, SSR).

4. **Organizational shift to adoption of the *Learning-Centered College* model.** By adopting the learning-centered approach, the College seems to be accepting all the attendant obligations, challenges and responsibilities of this model. Since 2005, the College has a) re-titled the position of Vice President-Academic and Chief Learning Officer b) set up the Centre for Organizational Learning and Teaching (COLT) and c) initiated a “Leadership and Learning for All” subgroup (P. 5, 6, SSR). The combination of these initiatives presents an opportunity to translate the possibilities inherent in this learning model into a set of integrated and concrete actions.
5. **Comprehensive Enrolment Strategy.** The strategy is underlined by adopting the philosophy that “Enrolment is Everybody’s Business”, and by identifying enrolment as a priority issue (P.8, 9, SSR). The College has taken several steps to implement this strategy. For example, developing the Enrolment Communication Plan for applicants, whose stated purpose is to “integrate strategic enrolment management goals with operational practices through collaboration and teamwork by academic and service areas”; establishing an Enrolment Planning Group that has a good mix of academic and service/support managers, and Pre-Admission student advising.
6. **Commitment to extensive policy development and renewal (P. 10, SSR).** This reflects the priority attached to currency and availability of academic and other policies. The communication strategy, as reflected in *The Respect Campaign*, is evidence of the emphasis that has been placed on the values as well as the processes (P.11, SSR).
7. **Program Indicators Database (P. 14, SSR).** This has great potential and could become a very powerful tool for strategic planning, institutional research, as well as an integrated quality assurance system.
8. **Reflective Practice Guide** (completed in June 2007; P. 19, SSR; Appendix 26 and AD# 24). The emphasis placed on Reflective Practice is timely, with the College adopting a series of communication strategies, staff development activities and process tools that highlight this approach. Teaching portfolios, portfolio based learning and online evaluation tools that are being used in 2 schools at present—applied to contract and part-time faculty- are good examples.
9. **Addition of 2 extra criteria for its internal quality assurance processes.** This introduction of the extra criteria is commendable, as one focuses on faculty development, and the other on continuing policy review, renewal and development (P. 25, SSR).
10. **Implementation Plan for Improvement Initiatives (starting on P. 28).** A useful planning tool, this could also serve as the basis for future internal quality reviews.
11. **Academic Policy and Procedures Committee (APPC).** The setting up of this Committee shows a good mix of faculty, students and managers. Its mandate is to review old policies and procedures, update and write new policies and procedures.

D. Affirmations

The Audit Panel recognizes Centennial College for its comprehensive and thorough Self-Study. The report provided areas for further development as identified below:

1. Within the newly implemented New Program Development, Program Review and Curriculum Modification Processes, there exists the challenge of ensuring that program mapping methodology and the relationships between various forms of outcomes and learning methods are applied across all programs. For existing programs, cyclical reviews provide an opportunity to ensure that programs utilize program mapping during this process. The Centre for Organizational Learning and Teaching will continue to play a significant role in providing faculty with learning opportunities related to program mapping, curriculum design, factors impacting learning and the classroom environment, and in the design of effective evaluation strategies.
2. In order to facilitate effective transitions for students, existing PLAR policies, advanced standing, and fast-track processes are under review. Additional training will be needed for faculty to ensure that implementation is according to policy (p.11).
3. Currently retention strategies seem to be program specific. A need exists to develop an organization wide set of strategies (p.12). The Enrollment Planning Group is in the process of identifying college-wide retention strategies, and recognizing current best practices that could be implemented.
4. As part of a student success strategy and a communication tool, the use of Program Handbooks will be implemented within all schools providing students with current program and college information.
5. Development of an Academic Quality Index Tool is required. The Balanced Scorecard Methodology already in place examines business planning, budgeting process, recruitment and admissions processes. Further development will provide opportunities for measurement of academic quality, student services, accessibility, and employee engagement and learning.
6. As part of on-going quality assurances, the KPI committee will examine issues that impact on the KPI process for the purpose of improving the administration of the process and communicating to students the value of completing the survey in a way that reflects their defined opinions (p.23).
7. A continued commitment to reviewing, renewing and developing college policies and streamlining and improving channels for making that information easily available.
8. Further development of Reflective Practice process management tools and supports. There is a need to form a consistent way of evaluating the use of the reflective practice process by all faculty members (p.25). Formal documentation of faculty activities may include the use of portfolios which would complement the college-wide initiative of student portfolios in the Signature Learning Experience.

9. In order to support students and staff within the learning environment, improvement of the Learning Resource Centres are currently under review (p20).
10. Students' needs are changing and as a result advancement of online course supports to students is required (p.20). This may involve the development of an E-learning strategy.

E. Recommendations:

The Audit Panel respectfully puts forward the following recommendations:

1. A great deal of effort has been expended in recent years putting in place the policy building blocks for a viable and robust quality assurance framework. The different initiatives that have been well documented in the Self-Study Report will need to be linked to show the interdependence of all the various policy initiatives to build the quality chain. This is what the Panel referred to as “connecting the dots.”
2. Following from Recommendation # 1, it is proposed that the College develop a comprehensive Quality Assurance Manual. The purpose would be to integrate all Quality Assurance policies and procedures into a comprehensive framework and serve as the foundation of all Quality Assurance processes.
3. School, departmental and program goals and objectives need to be integrated with, and linked to, College Mission and Goals. Alignments and linkages also need to be mapped to facilitate reviews, assessments and continuous quality improvement.
4. The College has produced evidence that relates to the General Education requirements and has described the monitoring process for meeting these requirements. There is a need for having in place clear documentation of the compliance process as evidence of its application across all programs.
5. Retention strategies at present seem to be mostly program specific. It has been indicated that there is a need to develop an organization-wide set of strategies that apply to both academic and service/support areas. The Panel lends its full support to efforts in this direction.
6. The Program Quality Review Process calls for establishment of External Review Panels (3-5 members). The Audit Panel suggests that the terms of reference and roles of these external review panels be more clearly defined, especially in relation to Program Advisory Committees. The purpose should be to expand external stakeholder engagement and not simply recycle the same people through the different processes.
7. The observation has been made that there is a need to increase capacity and expertise in curriculum design across the College. The Audit Panel notes that the College employs WIDS (Worldwide Instructional Design System) as a tool available for the use of schools and their faculty and staff for curriculum development. However, it is quite a sophisticated tool that requires appropriate staff training and development efforts. To date, it does not appear

to have acquired extensive usage across the College. The program mapping presented to the Audit Panel also did not represent the WIDS format. Mapping is used in the College but is not integrated across all levels of outcomes and all courses. This sort of integrated matrix is required for robust quality assurance and program review purposes. While it is understandable that widespread use of the WIDS tool will take time, it is important that an integrated matrix form of mapping for program/course learning outcomes be used for all programs and courses, whatever tool or methodology is employed for such purpose. A comprehensive QA system would require that course outlines and program mapping support the program development, monitoring and review processes, not just meet the program approval requirements. The Panel mentions WIDS only because that tool is referred to in the Self-Study Report. Any other mapping process that meets the requirements can be used.

8. The Audit Panel proposes that the Academic Advising Policy be more clearly articulated to address issues of evaluation, review and improvement. The proposed Balanced Scorecard methodology might be helpful in this regard. Also the College might consider membership in the National Academic Advising Association for faculty development, staff training, best practices and identifying different frameworks of academic advising. The College may also find it helpful to address the following issues towards enhancing the quality of its academic advising policy: relationship to College mission and goals; relationship to learning outcomes; developing process details (e. g., number of advisors per department/program/student, etc.); outcome measures and indicators.
9. The College's Organizational Mission, College-level learning outcomes, program-level outcomes, employability skills, the Signature Learning Experience, credential validation, and course-level outcomes need to be weaved and integrated into a hierarchy.
10. Much attention in recent years has been focused on extensive development of policy from a largely internal perspective. There remains some room for strengthening engagement with external stakeholders: communities adjoining the campuses of the College; business, industry and community organizations, especially those organizations representing the multitude of ethno-cultural communities in the region served by Centennial College who were not conspicuously present during the course of this audit.
11. Expanding on the Signature Learning Experience and Statement of Cultural Diversity, it is recommended that the College consider extending a process of Internationalization across the organization as part of upcoming efforts to develop a new Strategic Plan (the work of Dr. Jane Knight, Visiting Professor at the University of Toronto is worth citing here).
12. Again, as the College prepares to begin work on a new Strategic Plan, it is proposed that a formal e-learning strategy be developed that provides clearer strategic direction for the College to follow for integrating technology into curricula in a more systematic fashion across all schools including the impact this will have on future professional development priorities for faculty and staff. It is envisaged that COLT would play a key role in spearheading such an initiative.

**Addendum to the Program Quality Assessment Process Audit (PQAPA) Report for
Centennial College
January 28, 2009**

In June 2008, the Ontario College Quality Assurance Service (OCQAS) Management Board, through their approval process, identified the need for more evidence before determining approval of the Centennial Audit Report. This evidence was required to meet the Board's standard regarding documentation of evidence to support a 'criterion met' rating.

Subsequently, additional evidence was gathered and led to the following observations and conclusions:

a) Evidence Related to Program Review and Criteria 3 and 5:

Additional program review process documentation dated between 2005 and 2008 included review guidelines, policy manuals, review reports, and follow-up data. This documentation contained evidence that the college has had in place for a number of years a robust program review process that has been fully implemented and is influencing positive change to curriculum, the allocation of funds, and the refinement of learning facilities. The evidence also shows that while the process has undergone recent changes the pre-existing practice was also driving program improvement.

b) Evidence Related to English Instruction and Criteria 3 and 4:

A decade of college documentation supports the conclusion that Centennial has committed to the systematic assessment of student performance and improvement of the English language instruction provided to its particularly diverse student population. This documentation includes position papers, meeting minutes, testing practices, placement procedures and student English proficiency tracking. Program data demonstrates significant English improvement in some program areas and confirms the college's commitment to monitor language acquisition and to evidence-based continuous improvement of the English curriculum.

c) Evidence Related to Teaching Effectiveness Criterion 4:

Documentation provided by the college, a 'spot audit' of one school and several interviews support several conclusions. First, there is broad campus, faculty, and administrative understanding of and support for Centennial's 'Reflective Practice' policy. Second, the policy is managed in a manner that ensures compliance – those who opt out of the Reflective Practice process are obligated to be evaluated each semester following the process for probationary faculty outlined in the college faculty collective agreement. Third, this process has been implemented across the college. Fourth, it is reported that the process has reduced faculty performance-related student complaints.

The Management Board has requested that this Addendum be attached to the Centennial Audit Report to support the conclusion that Centennial has met the five PQAPA quality assurance criteria.