

# Niagara College of Applied Arts and Technology

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## Program Quality Assurance Process Audit Follow Up Report

**Submitted by: Niagara College**  
**Report submitted on June 1, 2009**

As per requirements of the Ontario College Quality Assurance Service Management Board.

**A PQAPA audit was conducted at Niagara College in October 2007. The audit panel's final report was submitted in December 2007 with the following affirmations and recommendations:**

### **AFFIRMATIONS**

The Panel recognizes Niagara College for its comprehensive Self-study, in particular, the identification of its strengths, areas for continuous improvement, exemplary practices and documentation, initiatives taken to address improvement, and action plans and priorities. The *Summary Action Plan – Top Ten College Action Items* that the College provided for the Panel articulated the College's goals and the Panel encourages the College to pursue and implement these Action Items.

The Panel after reviewing the data and evidence outlined in the Self-study and received from focus groups during the site visit, affirms the following statements from the Self-study:

**Criterion 2:** To what extent does your college's quality assurance process ensure programs conform to the *Framework for Programs of Instruction* and the *Credentials Framework*, are consistent with the accepted college system nomenclature / program titling principles, and maintain relevance?

#### **Criterion 2.6**

The Panel notes that provincial requirements state that programs are comprised of general education requirements, essential employability learning outcomes (formerly, generic skills), and vocational learning outcomes. The Panel reviewed Self-study information and received statements that at this time the QA processes are not yet mature enough to provide evidence of ensuring conformity.

- The Curriculum Committee Practice requires every program to meet yearly about program and curriculum issues, which should include a review/curriculum mapping of how the program meets provincial program standards (vocational, essential employability, and general education)...with a goal of 90% compliance by 2007-2008, no action plan was available for review.
- (Stakeholders) Have focused on the vocational component of the curriculum;
- There needed to be greater integration, conformity, and consistency in the application of General Education; also,
- There is a need for increasing the involvement of the departments that deliver general education, mathematics and English.

#### **Action Taken:**

- a) Deans and Co-ordinators were apprised and reminded of the College Practice on Curriculum Committees. Minutes of Curriculum Committee meetings are required to be posted to the corporate drive. Compliance is monitored by the VPA.
- b) A structure of seconded curriculum coaches was instituted in 2008. Curriculum mapping is lead by curriculum coaches who encourage and request participation from all faculty

teaching in a program. Vocational and essential employability skills are mapped for each program. Curriculum mapping was built into the program review cycle, typically taking place in the year following Program Reports.

- c) The College practice on General Education was revised, ensuring consistency and compliance with the *Framework for Programs of Instruction* and the *Credentials Framework*. A seconded faculty position was created to review all existing programs for compliance with the General Education practice. This review was complete in September 2009 and programs are now General Education compliant. Ongoing compliance with the General Education practice is the responsibility of the Program and Curriculum Committee who review and approve program changes.
- d) The College practice on Course Outlines was revised, and a new template created, to include Vocational and Essential Employability Skills as well as General Education themes. Faculty are in process with revisions of all course outlines to the new format, which also links evaluation to program outcomes, by September 2011.

**Criterion 5.** To what extent does your college's quality assurance process ensure regular program quality assessment that involves a variety of stakeholders, including faculty, students, industry representatives, and others as appropriate for the purpose of continual quality improvement?

**Criteria 5.1 and 5.2**

The quality assurance cycle of program reports and reviews (2003-2011) is relatively new, the evolution of which has not yet removed inconsistency in the formatting and interpreting of data / evidence gathered, the stakeholder areas consulted, and the writing of reports and reviews. Further, at this time the follow-up processes are not yet mature enough to provide evidence that recommendations resulting from the QA process are systematically addressed.

- “The action plan follow-up is still in the implementation stage” (Self-study p. 21).

In support of this statement, the Panel noted above the need for more follow-up in the QA process through a) the continuation of the development of a tracking and reporting process for recommendations arising from reviews and reports, and b) the subsequent communication of the results of the total recommendation-implementation process, and c) expanded formal sharing of identified best practices.

**Action Taken:**

- a) Programs receive all data in the Program Report or Program Review templates from the Educational Pathways, Development & Quality Office, which ensures consistency and completeness of data. In addition, all programs undergoing review receive a KPI Executive Summary Report, provided and funded by the Office of Institutional Research.
- b) All action items from Program Reports and Program Reviews are entered into a database, and are tracked and followed up for action through communication with Deans by the Educational Pathways, Development & Quality Office. In addition, all action items

involving staff outside the program's division are notified of the action involving their participation, for their action.

- c) To ensure recommendations are systematically addressed, action items are reviewed for completeness and further action required each term at Deans Council.
- d) Since the Program review process is now cycling through programs, reports to the Board of Governors at each meeting include the results of actions taken (or not).
- e) An annual report to the Board of Governors on Program Review is made by the Vice President Academic.
- f) Sharing of best practices is incorporated into program reports and self studies as part of program review.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The College, through its Self-study, has identified its strengths as well as areas for continuous improvement. The Panel encourages the College to continue with its implementation of those improvements. As a further, the Panel makes the following recommendations to the College.

- The Panel recommends that the College provide to the report and review teams consistent, standard data and data analysis for use in the program reports and reviews. The provision of the data will contribute to the efficiency of the report and review teams, lessen the burden on them and contribute to more effective reports and reviews.
- The Panel recommends that the College establish and publish a cycle for the review of its policies and note on the policies the dates of establishment, review and revision.

#### **Action Taken:**

- a) See Action Taken re Criterion 5.1 and 5.2 above, item a).
- b) All academic practices are reviewed, according to the revised College practice, at least once every 5 years. Practices requiring revision are identified in the September Academic Regulations Committee meeting, and are subsequently addressed throughout the academic year.

Further, the College Steering Committee on Quality Assurance has identified the following actions taken regarding our *Summary Action Plan – Top Ten College Action Items*:

Action Item	Accomplished	Further Action?
<b>1.0 STUDENT FEEDBACK</b>		
1.1 Increase Curriculum Committee meetings to meet college Practice and academic goal of 90%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Compliance monitored by the VPA</li> </ul>	Ongoing
1.2 Include students on Retention Committee to increase student feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SAC President is a member</li> <li>• Will hold student focus groups as required</li> </ul>	
1.3 Explore opportunities for the use of Course Feedback data to provide program feedback as well	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Due to confidentiality, course feedback cannot roll up to program</li> </ul>	
<b>2.0 CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT</b>		
2.1 Ongoing discussion on developing and implementing a model for curriculum coaching to further enhance, support and improve curriculum development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Curriculum coaches seconded January 2008; facilitated curriculum mapping, Teaching &amp; Learning plans, Instructional Design, and other coaching as required related to curriculum</li> <li>• 2 faculty seconded 40% of their regular assignment</li> <li>• 3 faculty seconded 80-100% of their regular assignment</li> <li>• 22 programs have been mapped</li> <li>• approximately 25 workshops on course outline &amp; teaching and learning plan development</li> <li>• 55 related workshops offered through CEPD and CEDP</li> <li>• In summary, approximately 360 faculty have been involved</li> </ul>	Ongoing
2.2 Implement further curriculum development handbook projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Handbook web page being developed</li> <li>• New content on curriculum mapping and General Education added</li> </ul>	Deans reminded to encourage use of handbook for curriculum development
2.3 Review of CIS practice to improve and clarify expectations and improve consistency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working group established; Course Outline practice revised March 09; new Course Outline template approved and implemented March 09</li> </ul>	Implementation of new Course Outlines till 2011

2.4 Include evaluation techniques in curriculum mapping exercises	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Curriculum coaches include evaluation in curriculum mapping/ evaluation mechanisms listed in Course Outlines and linked to course objectives and program outcomes</li> </ul>	
2.5 Continue professional development activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 128 related workshops</li> <li>• CEDP – 45 workshops</li> <li>• CEPD – 27 workshops</li> <li>• Blackboard-28 workshops</li> <li>• Total=100 workshops with approximately 358 faculty involved</li> <li>• 22 mapping exercises &amp; curriculum development since June 2008</li> </ul>	
<b>3.0 TECHNOLOGY ENHANCEMENT</b>		
3.1 Continue to develop eLearning plans with more programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 34 faculty have completed hybrid course development training since fall 2007</li> </ul>	
3.2 Present proposal on eLearning Certification to Deans Council September 2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approved 2009 for 2010 implementation; brochure prepared</li> </ul>	
3.3 Improve BlackBoard use at Level 1 at the course level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 99% as of Fall 2008</li> </ul>	
3.4 Ensure a question about use of BlackBoard is included on the Course Feedback survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New question on Course Feedback forms Fall 08</li> </ul>	
<b>4.0 CREDIT TRANSFER</b>		
4.1 Present regarding advanced standing and credit transfer at Coordinators Forum to move toward more streamlined process; review of Credit Transfer Practice to streamline the process further, to be presented at ARC in Fall 2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Revised Credit Transfer practice approved May 2009 reflecting streamlined process</li> <li>• Worked with representative from Brock University to develop advanced standing and transfer credit agreements for our business programs as a pilot.</li> </ul>	
4.2 Identify and document informal advanced standing practices currently granted by programs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transfer credit approvals are stored in the Student Information database</li> </ul>	Request has been made to ITS to further develop this system.

<b>5.0 GENERAL EDUCATION</b>		
5.1 Review the General Education Practice in Fall 2007. It is intended to ensure ongoing compliance with MTCU General Education guidelines. Program conformity and consistency regarding General Education components needs to be reviewed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Revised practice approved March 09; programs are compliant with General Education practice Fall 2009</li> </ul>	
<b>6.0 PLAR</b>		
6.1 Offer training in PLAR to increase awareness and understanding of its intention and the process involved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PLAR Coordinator has made presentations at most division meetings.</li> </ul>	
6.2 Add PLAR table to CIS for future	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Done – on new Course Outline template</li> </ul>	
<b>7.0 PROGRAM REVIEW AND FOLLOW-UP</b>		
7.1 Continue to follow up action plans and analyze success with implementing actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual update completed Sept 08</li> <li>• Action items identified to Deans twice annually; action items discussed at Deans Council each term</li> <li>• Deans to clearly identify budget and resource requests as PRR action items in new initiatives</li> </ul>	
7.2 Continue to encourage greater collaboration in curriculum mapping to program outcomes in Self Study process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Curriculum coaches invite all faculty (cross divisions, as appropriate) to curriculum mapping meetings</li> </ul>	
7.3 Monitor and encourage consistent development of Program Advisory Committee membership that creates relevance, currency, and industry credibility for programs, and ensure PACs consistently meet according to college practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review of PAC Practice and Guidelines at Deans Council; PAC meeting minutes posted to corporate drive – monitored by the VPA</li> </ul>	

<b>8.0 MENTORSHIP</b>		
8.1 Expand staff and faculty mentorship activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 4 partnerships in 08/09</li> <li>• Peer to peer mentoring in groups</li> <li>• Mentorships are established as noted. All new faculty are offered mentoring opportunities with all of our curriculum coached and consultants as well as three experienced faculty, who facilitate workshops at CEDP</li> </ul>	
<b>9.0 SHARING BEST PRACTICES INTERNALLY</b>		
9.1 Share Hospitality Division process/documentation re academic integrity as a Best Practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Academic integrity best practices discussed at Deans Council April 2008 and Coordinator Forum September 2008</li> </ul>	
9.2 Share program and divisional Best Practices in course and program manual development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Program manual template developed; implemented for Sept 2009</li> <li>• Best Practices added to program review template</li> </ul>	
<b>10.0 FACILITIES</b>		
10.1 Continue discussions re access to the Test Centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protocol established to increase accessibility to testing services at both campuses as well as enhancing our ability to balance the variety of requests for service from students with disabilities, CE students, third party service requests and regular, post-secondary students attending Niagara College</li> </ul>	
10.2 Develop the Wine Discovery Centre at NOTL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Construction underway for Fall 2009 completion</li> </ul>	
10.3 Implement Master Plan for Welland Campus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Construction in progress</li> </ul>	

The College Steering Committee on Quality Assurance continues to meet twice annually to determine college-wide continuous improvement actions for implementation.