



Ontario College Quality Assurance Service

Service de l'assurance de la qualité des
collèges de l'Ontario

COLLEGE QUALITY ASSURANCE AUDIT PROCESS (CQAAP)

GUIDELINES AND FRAMEWORK

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1. INTRODUCTION TO THE COLLEGE QUALITY ASSURANCE AUDIT PROCESS (CQAAP) FOR ONTARIO'S COLLEGES

In order to grant greater autonomy to Ontario's colleges of applied arts and technology (CAAT) and with the introduction of *The Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology Act, 2002*, colleges were mandated by government to implement a process to assure quality. Two elements of this expectation were outlined: quality assurance at the individual college level; and, a self-regulating process at the system level.

In the development of an approach to self-regulation, a decision was made to focus on *quality assurance*: the mechanism or procedures used to measure the level or existence of quality. To that end, the Ontario College Quality Assurance Service (OCQAS), a policy-driven, arms-length independent oversight and governance body operating independently of any individual academic institution and of the provincial government established in 2005, focuses on: ensuring that programs leading to an Ontario College credential conform to the ministry's Credential Framework which functions through the Credentials Validation Service (CVS); leading the audit process and evaluating the effectiveness of quality assurance systems within the colleges which operates through the College Quality Assurance Audit Process (CQAAP). OCQAS contributes and enhances the continual quality improvement efforts of the public college education in Ontario.

The audit model that operated between 2005 and 2015, titled the *Program Quality Assurance Process Audit (PQAPA)* was developed through a joint government – college sector working group known as the Coordinating Committee of Vice-Presidents, Academic (CCVPA) / Colleges Branch of the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU) Working Group¹ between 2003 and 2005. Prior to the full implementation of the PQAPA a pilot project was conducted in five of the colleges of applied arts and technology. In the fall 2006 the Pilot Project was evaluated by Dr. William Massy. His evaluation confirmed that the PQAPA reflected global best practices and was well suited to the needs of the Ontario college system at the time.

The Ontario public colleges, through the work of OCQAS have developed a strong, well-received, and effective quality assurance system since 2005. This was affirmed by an external review and evaluation of the PQAPA model by Dr. John Randall in 2010 using international validated criteria.

¹ CCVPA /MTCU Working Group on Charter Program Policy Issues had membership from the Coordinating Committee of Vice-Presidents, Academic (CCVPA) and the Colleges Branch of the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU). This group was co-chaired by the Director of the Colleges Branch and a Vice-President, Academic.



2. QUALITY ASSURANCE FRAMEWORK

i. Guiding Principles

A set of *Guiding Principles* were developed and approved by the Committee of Presidents (COP) and the OCQAS Management Board in 2003. These guiding principles ensure that any quality assurance and improvement model developed for Ontario's colleges must:

- be consistent with international best practices;
- be effective, efficient, and cyclical;
- give appropriate notice to colleges prior to review;
- be described and operate as an audit to provide a review of each college's educational quality assurance processes and policies to ensure that minimum standards are met;
- use an external, competent, mutually-agreeable, objective peer review panel;
- follow a mandatory and clear process that identifies strengths and weaknesses, recommends improvements, and facilitates positive change;
- distribute the preliminary report to the college for their response and include the college response in the final report;
- provide for categories of approval;
- provide a method and system for appeals against its decisions and reports;
- provide for consistency of panel decisions; and,
- be sustainable and affordable for the system as a whole and for the individual colleges in the system.

ii. Defining Quality

The OCQAS defines quality as the alignment and consistency of the learning environment with the institution's vision, mission, and goals (*fit for purpose*) demonstrated by the development of a culture of quality, in other words, the ability of an institution to reach its stated objectives and fulfill them.

- Quality as a 'process' which can be defined in terms of:
 - *Internal quality assurance*, which refers to ongoing activities implemented by an institution to ensure its reaching its stated objectives.
 - An internal quality assurance system begins with the institutions identity and enters a quality cycle of planning, implementation, review, and enhancement. The plan-do-check-act cycle is applied to the institutions capacity: to translate vision, mission, and goals into desired learning outcomes; to establish quality assurance mechanisms and structures; to review against predetermined defined standards and its accompanying requirements; and, to



enhance mechanisms and systems. The cycle continues as the institutions develop into mature institutions.

- *External quality assurance*, which refers to activities implemented by an external body to evaluate, based on agreed and predetermined quality standards, the ability of an institution's quality assurance processes to ensure its meeting its objectives.
- Quality as a 'system' which consists of a structured yet dynamic organization of different quality assurance mechanisms.
- Quality as 'improvement' which refers to the ability of the established quality assurance system to be effective by demonstrating and ensuring continuous growth.

iii. Outcomes-based Evaluation Approach

The OCQAS adopts an outcomes-based evaluation of the institutions objectives through an audit process. The audit is based on agreed upon and predetermined standards and its accompanying requirements to determine whether the institutions quality systems are sufficiently robust and effective to ensure that all programs and support services are well designed and achieve the expected outcomes.

Such an audit does not make direct judgments on academic programs, but considers program-level evidence to the extent necessary to establish that institutional systems are functioning properly.

This approach respects an institutions' culture, values, principles, and evaluation methods that allow each institution to demonstrate its ability to meet the established standards, thus takes into consideration the vision, mission, and goals of the institution.

The audit process itself is both systemic and cyclical, and implemented according to a predetermined calendar. Thus every five years, each institution is required to submit a self-study and receives a prearranged on-site visit from OCQAS. Following the audit site visit, all institutions are required to report on its quality assurances activities 18-months following the site visit.

3. OVERVIEW OF THE QUALITY ASSURANCE PROCESS

i. The Quality Assurance Mechanisms

In a college, the quality assurance mechanisms can take many shapes and forms, and cover different requirements of the standards. For OCQAS, a quality assurance



mechanism is both mandatory and guiding from an institutional perspective and has been documented and implemented and ensure quality and continuous improvement. Mechanisms most often take the form of (but not limited to) structures, policies, practices, processes, programs, guides, plans, committees, forums, regulations, legislation, by-laws, and various tools.

ii. The Quality Assurance System Submitted to an Audit

Ontario's public colleges have over the years implemented a diverse range of mechanisms that assure and measure the existence and level of quality within their institution. The institutional quality assurance system includes an institutional management system designed to collect the evidence required to demonstrate the implementation of these mechanisms and their effectiveness.

The audit examines the effectiveness of those mechanisms ensuring quality.

iii. Evaluation Criteria

The standards and its accompanying requirements provide the framework for Ontario's colleges in assessing the extent to which their quality assurance mechanisms meet the established standards.

The six standards to be applied are the following:

- Program Quality Management System;
- Program Development;
- Conformity with Government Requirements;
- Program Delivery and Student Assessment;
- Existence, Monitoring and Communication of Academic Policies and Practices;
- Availability and Allocation of College-Wide Resources.

It is expected that the determination of the effectiveness of a college's quality assurance system, therefore its ability to ensure continuous improvement in quality in reaching its stated objectives, will be based on the following:

- The implementation of quality assurance mechanisms;
- The effectiveness of these mechanisms, that is, their ability to ensure a continuous improvement in quality by:
 - conducting a critical assessment of the achievement of the stated objectives of these mechanisms;
 - identifying areas of strength and areas for improvement to ensure meeting these objectives;
 - implementing corrective measures for improvement, namely through an action plan, in a context of continuous quality improvement;



- The review and updating of these mechanisms to ensure their effectiveness.

The following provides details of the standards and its accompanying requirements pertaining to each component of the quality assurance system.

STANDARD 1

PROGRAM QUALITY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Effective quality assurance mechanisms ensure the quality of a program management system and demonstrate continuous improvement.

REQUIREMENTS

A college-wide program quality management system:

1.1 Facilitates the evolution of programs to maintain their relevance and fitness with the College Mission.
1.2 Ensures that established policies and procedures for all programs of instruction offered by the college, regarding their development, review and maintenance, are monitored (approved and revised) regularly, and applied consistently across all programs of instruction.
1.3 Gathers, collates and analyzes data and information from stakeholders (e.g. graduates, industry representatives, faculty, students, and professional bodies), program maintenance records (e.g. program review) and program indicators (e.g. graduation rates, retention rates).
1.4 Uses program indicators, program maintenance records and stakeholder data to measure program performance.
1.5 Manages changes to programs and courses to keep them current and relevant with provincial standards and relevant professional body requirements, and to ensure that recommendations arising from previous program reviews have been considered and addressed.
1.6 Manages program maintenance records arising from program quality management processes.

STANDARD 2

PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

Effective quality assurance mechanisms ensure the quality of the programs of study being developed and demonstrate continuous improvement.

REQUIREMENTS

A college-wide program development system:

2.1 Ensures the existence, articulation and use of clear statements of program vocational learning outcomes as a starting point for any program of instruction regardless of the location or method of delivery; and that they are consistent with the program's intended purpose.
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2.2 Ensures that program requirements (courses, work placements, admission requirements) stated for each program of instruction are derived from, and flow coherently from, the program's vocational learning outcomes.

2.3 Ensures that program vocational learning outcomes are operational in that they provide a sound basis for curriculum development and the design of teaching and learning activities and student learning assessments; are internalized and used in the day-to-day work of program faculty; and are used in prior learning assessments.

STANDARD 3

CONFORMITY WITH GOVERNMENT REQUIREMENTS

Effective quality assurance mechanisms ensure the conformity of programs of study with relevant government requirements and demonstrate continuous improvement.

REQUIREMENTS

A college-wide program implementation system:

3.1 Ensures that program titles are consistent with established college system titling protocols and validated program standard titles.

3.2 Ensures that programs of instruction are consistent with (meet or exceed) the credential framework requirements (i.e. scope of program vocational learning outcomes, essential employability skills (EES), general education, duration for completion, admission requirements, name of credential).

3.3 Ensures that programs of instruction are consistent with the current workplace expectations (i.e. essential vocational skills, attitudes, knowledge, and competencies).

3.4 Ensures that programs of instruction provide reasonable opportunities for students to achieve the vocational and non-vocational program outcomes.

3.5 Ensures that changes to provincial program standards are communicated to all relevant stakeholders and implemented in a timely manner so to maintain the relevance of the program.

STANDARD 4

PROGRAM DELIVERY AND STUDENT ASSESSMENT

Effective quality assurance mechanisms ensure the quality of program delivery and student assessment, and demonstrate continuous improvement.

REQUIREMENTS

A college-wide program delivery and student assessment approach:

4.1 Ensures consistent delivery of programs of instruction regardless of the program delivery strategies (hybrid, on-line, full-time or part-time, or are delivered with a third-party or other



postsecondary institutions), including those programs which take place offsite.
4.2 Engages teaching staff in regular experimentation with new methods of teaching and learning that are consistent with best practices; and that these new methods are reviewed and widely shared to support currency and relevancy of teaching and learning across all programs of instruction.
4.3 Ensures fair and equitable evaluation of student achievement through valid assessment methods, accompanied by prompt and constructive feedback on student performance.
4.4 Assesses the capabilities of program graduates (recent and/or imminent) consistent with the established program vocational learning outcomes.

STANDARD 5

EXISTENCE, MONITORING AND COMMUNICATION OF ACADEMIC POLICIES AND PRACTICES

Effective quality assurance mechanisms ensure the communication and monitoring of established academic policies and practices related to academic issues that support program implementation and delivery, and student achievement of vocational learning outcomes, and demonstrate continuous improvement.

REQUIREMENTS

A college-wide monitoring and communication system of existing academic policies and practices:

5.1 Ensures that academic policies and procedures regarding: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• specific pre-and co-requisites;• mandatory and optional/elective components in the vocational and non-vocational areas of study; practical/work-based components;• advancement in programs and maximum periods for completion; and,• alternative entry and exit points, are established for all programs of instruction offered by the college.
5.2 Ensures that academic policies and procedures regarding: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• requirements for admission to the program and to courses in the program;• provisions for awarding credit towards a credential or exemptions from specific course requirements as a result of cross-crediting, exemptions, transfer credits, and/or recognition for prior learning, are established for all programs of instruction offered by the college.
5.3 Ensures that academic policies and procedures regarding: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• instances requiring accommodations;• assessment, including provisions for re-assessment and appeals;• requirements for awarding the credential (i.e. title of any program or series of courses); and,



<ul style="list-style-type: none">• rules and criteria governing any awarding of merit, distinction, and other grades, are established for all programs of instruction offered by the college.
5.4 Ensures that academic policies and procedures regarding formal arrangements with any relevant external body (ies) exists to govern additional credentials, certifications, etc., are established for all programs of instruction offered by the college.
5.5 Ensures that academic policies and procedures regarding changes to programs (i.e. courses, vocational learning outcomes) are established for all programs of instruction offered by the college.
5.6 Ensures that established academic policies and practices for all programs of instruction offered by the college are published, communicated and applied consistently across all programs of instruction.
5.7 Ensures that established academic policies and practices are reviewed and monitored regularly and consistently.

STANDARD 6

AVAILABILITY AND ALLOCATION OF COLLEGE-WIDE RESOURCES

Effective quality assurance mechanisms ensure the existence, availability and allocation of resources (human, physical, financial) and technological infrastructure to support student achievement of program vocational learning outcomes, and demonstrate continuous improvement.

REQUIREMENTS

A college-wide planning system:

6.1 Ensures that teaching staff involved in the program: possess the combination of experience and credentials appropriate to, and required by, the program credential and the field of study; have the level of expertise and ability to provide the published learning experience; participate in reflective practice; undergo initial and continuing professional development to enhance their teaching expertise and to ensure currency in their subject matter; and, are oriented, coordinated, and evaluated.
6.2 Ensures that teaching staff execute their professional responsibilities; work within structured instructional plans; are accessible and available for student inquiry; meet the needs of the students and facilitate the achievement of the program vocational learning outcomes; provide prompt and constructive feedback to students; promote a positive attitude to learning for students.
6.3 Ensures a faculty and staff base (full-time and non-full-time) to carry out both classroom and non-classroom support roles for student success.



<p>6.4 Ensures that academic support and advising services meet the needs of the students and facilitate the achievement of the program vocational learning outcomes.</p>
<p>6.5 Ensures that staff members providing student support services such as tutoring, financial and academic advising, and co-curricular activities are appropriately qualified, trained, and supported.</p>
<p>6.6 Ensures that learning facilities (including Learning Resource Centres), equipment, and technological infrastructure support the promised modes of delivery and the learning process, and are accessible to students.</p>
<p>6.7 Ensures that the process of reviewing leadership, organization, and management of human resources, financial services, learning resources, information technology resources, and academic facilities are done in such a manner that all relevant factors are taken into account such as quality, efficiency, effectiveness, optimal use, financial responsibility, etc.</p>

iv. The College Self-Evaluation Process

Each college is required to conduct a comprehensive assessment of the effectiveness of its quality assurance system, according to the standards and its accompanying requirements.

To do so, OCQAS would assume that the college will first establish a self-assessment plan to steer its operation. This plan should define the main issues, the distribution of duties and responsibilities, data collection and analysis procedures, methods of consultation, as well as a time frame for completing the self-assessment process.

The college can collect data documenting the implementation of its quality assurance mechanisms as well as any corrective measures undertaken to improve quality. The analysis of this data will allow the college to track and review the effectiveness of its mechanisms. This analysis must be based on valid and sufficient data to provide an effective critical assessment and demonstration of strengths and areas for improvement in the effectiveness of its quality assurance mechanisms. Based on the results of this exercise, the college can then draw conclusions for each component of its quality assurance system, and the system as a whole.

The college's conclusions are presented in a self-study report, which will include the necessary supporting evidence/documents. The college will then draw up an action plan to ensure follow-up on the corrective measures identified to address any deficiencies observed in its quality assurance system.



The OCQAS staff will assist the college in preparing for their audit by reviewing various documents (i.e. current state of quality assurance activities report, self-study report) and providing the required support and feedback to the college. This process is not mandatory, but highly recommended.

v. The College Quality Assurance Audit Process (CQAAP)

Colleges are required to undergo a quality assurance audit every five (5) years. The audit year is determined by the college's previous audit year. An audit year is from September to August.

The audit process is comprised of several stages: a self-study carried out by the college, a site visit, an audit report by the audit panel, a review of the report and approval by the OCQAS Management Board and a follow-up by the college.

At the end of an audit, the OCQAS Management Board renders a decision on each of the standards assessed, sets forth recommendations for improvement, where applicable, and provides a decision on the overall effectiveness of the quality assurance system. The OCQAS publishes audit decisions and any stipulations accompanying that decision at the end of the audit cycle.

vi. Auditor Training

The OCQAS has an on-going application process for qualified applicants who are interested in conducting audits. The OCQAS uses a roster, i.e. a pool of candidates who have already been vetted as viable candidates through the application process and who are ready for immediate selection. If the applicant has been informed of his/her inclusion in the roster, they can potentially be selected for an upcoming audit without having to undergo the entire application process.

Once the candidate is included in the roster, he/she will be regularly contacted by e-mail to either confirm his continued interest in upcoming job openings, or you may choose to temporarily put on hold or permanently withdraw his/her roster candidature. Candidates are encouraged to regularly provide OCQAS with updated contact information to ensure information regarding audit opportunities is communicated. Upon being notified of his/her selection for an upcoming audit, the candidate will be asked to provide OCQAS with an updated resume.

The OCQAS will provide to the group of potential audit panel members the college's agreed upon site visit dates. Once the potential audit panel members have responded with their availability according to the submitted site visit dates, OCQAS will submit to each of the colleges a slate of approximately twelve (12) potential audit panel members from which the college may select a minimum of six (6) names.



Once the groups of potential audit panel members for each college have been confirmed, the training will take place. The training of the potential audit panel members consists of two (2) compulsory training sessions:

1. Auditor Training

The group of potential audit panel members are trained on the following:

- Intent of the Standards and the Requirements.
- Expected code of conduct (confidentiality, impartiality, respect).
- Roles and responsibilities.
- Accessing and using the required resource and documentation.

2. Assessment of a Self-Study

Following the auditor training, potential audit panel members will be required to complete an assessment of a college self-study package.

Prior to participating in this session, the potential audit panel members will be asked to sign a mandatory confidentiality agreement in order to prevent the unauthorized disclosure of proprietary and confidential information, as will be defined by the agreement.

The process is as follows:

- The groups of potential audit panel members will review a self-study package from the college to be audited;
- Once the initial review is completed, the group of potential audit panel members will be asked to submit their initial review results to OCQAS;
- The results of the initial review will be evaluated by OCQAS in order to assess inter-reliability using the following statistical measure:
 - Fleiss' kappa: a statistical measure for assessing the reliability of agreement between a fixed numbers of raters when assigning categorical ratings to a number of items or classifying items. The measure calculates the degree of agreement in classification over that which would be expected by chance.
- The groups of potential audit panel members will receive specific training from OCQAS in order to address the inconsistencies highlighted by the inter-reliability measure;
- The groups of potential audit panel members will be asked to submit a second review of the same self-study for re-evaluation by OCQAS using the same statistical measure.

Based on the results of the re-evaluation, a final selection of three (3) audit panel members will be made by OCQAS and submitted to each of the colleges as their final audit panel.



This approach to training: ensures consistency in the assessment of the standards and its accompanying requirements; and provides increased levels of preparation and team building for the audit panel members prior to the site visit.

The Audit Panel

The OCQAS recruits experts with diverse backgrounds within the post-secondary education network and elsewhere. These experts can include: academic deans, assistant academic deans, directors of continuing education, human resources directors, faculty members, college professionals and external members of college boards of governors. Experts may also be recruited from different socioeconomic groups or universities in fields related to education.

The panel members are selected both for their knowledge of the post-secondary education network and their experience in evaluation and quality assurance.

Audit panel members must have the following qualifications:

- Demonstrated recent experience in the post-secondary education sector as a senior administrator or a position that collaborated with units and areas across the institution;
- Knowledge and understanding of policies, procedures and practices in the post-secondary education sector;
- Ability to collect and verify audit evidence;
- Ability to compose findings and conclusions (information analysis and synthesis);
- Strong report writing skills;
- Ability to form and develop interpersonal, professional relationships;
- Ability to work independently and in groups (collaborative work);
- Strong problem-solving and critical-thinking skills;
- Strong organizational and project management skills;
- Ability to be objective and impartial.

Further, panel members must not have an employment, advising, or contract relationship with the college under review, or any other connection that could create a conflict of interest perceived or real.

The panel composition generally follows the structure outlined below; however, extenuating circumstances and the need for external confidence may demand alterations approved by the OCQAS Management Board after consultation with the college being audited.



- One (1) qualified and trained audit panel chair who is external² to the CAAT system and has demonstrated audit experience, preferably direct experience with at least one (1) audit in an Ontario College, either as a panelist or an observer to the process; and
- Two (2) qualified and trained panelists from within, or external to, the CAAT system, and external to the college being reviewed.

The members of the audit panel are accompanied by one (1) OCQAS staff who participates as an observer which means they do not interfere in any aspect of the audit (may not inject, provide opinions, argue a finding, speak for or against a finding). The OCQAS staff may also offer redirection at times to ensure standards and their accompanying requirements are being accurately interpreted.

For each audit, panel members are selected to analyze the self-study package submitted by the college, visit the college, and make evaluation decisions and recommendations for improvements. The panel members are tasked with:

- Analyzing, prior to the visit, the self-study report and all accompanying documents submitted by the college;
- Identifying items requiring further verification and clarification prior to the site visit;
- Participating in the site visit;
- Verifying the effectiveness of the college's quality assurance mechanisms based on the information acquired prior to, and during the site visit;
- Preparing the audit report which specifies, where applicable, recommendations for continuous improvement to the college based on the audit findings.

Panel members are expected to conduct themselves in a professional manner throughout the audit process. The following are practice guidelines that panel members are expected to follow:

- Perform work with integrity (honesty, diligence, responsibility);
- Perform work in an impartial manner;
- Ensure fair presentation (report truthfully and accurately using evidence-based audit findings);
- Exercise due professional care;
- Exercise discretion, confidentiality and proper handling of information acquired during the course of the audit process;
- Act in a manner that is free from bias and conflict of interest;
- Communicate in a diplomatic and objective manner;

² *External* is defined as follows: resides outside of the province and has been working outside of the CAAT system for five (5) years.



- Maintain open communication channels.

All panel members are made aware of the expected professional conduct practices through their training with OCQAS.

*Supporting resource document: **Auditor Job Description.***

3. STAGES OF THE AUDIT PROCESS

All documents can be found on the OCQAS website- www.ocqas.org.

i. Notification of the Audit

The OCQAS communicates with the vice-presidents of academics (VPAs) and designated college representative(s) from the colleges to be audited at the beginning of the previous academic year to their audit year; outlining, in general terms, the information and documentation they are required to submit in advance of the audit, and the available audit dates based on an established audit calendar. The OCQAS negotiates a date for the site visit with the college based on the available dates in the audit calendar and officially communicates to the VPA and designated college representative(s) the time frame for their audit process.

Timeframe: Beginning of the previous academic year to the college's audit year.

ii. Submission of the College Program List (Program Selection Requirements)

The program selection requirements are meant to ensure a diverse program representation including supporting evidence that is presented in the college's self-study report demonstrating the implementation of the college's existing quality assurance mechanisms, as prescribed by the standards and its accompanying requirements.

Prior to submitting its self-study package, each college must submit to OCQAS, the intended programs for the audit process (4 programs representing the specified credentials and the level, provincial program descriptions and standards, field of study, and delivery mode for each). Each college will also submit a complete list of its active programs. This will be used by OCQAS to conduct a random sampling approach to select the additional two (2) of the college's six (6) total programs that will be submitted for review in its self-study report.

If the college deems that any of the programs randomly selected by OCQAS are unrepresentative, the college may provide a substantive reason to have the selected programs reconsidered.



Once the selection is complete, OCQAS will advise the designated college representative.

Each audit year, this program list will be updated by the college and resubmitted to OCQAS.

*Document to be completed by the college and submitted to OCQAS: **College Program List Form**.*

Timeframe: No later than the beginning of the college's audit year.

The program selection requirements are as follows:

- One (1) program from each credential level as indicated in the Minister's Binding Policy Directive- Framework for Programs of Instruction:
 - Certificate, Certificate of Apprenticeship, Ontario College Certificate (OCC), Ontario College Diploma (OCD), Ontario College Advanced Diploma (OCAD), Ontario College Graduate Certificate (OCGC).
 - Certificates of Apprenticeship must be included only if they lead to an Ontario College Credential.
 - College Degree program and accredited programs cannot be used in the college's self-study report.
- One (1) program that uses a provincial program standard that has been published by the MTCU in the last five (5) years.
- One (1) program that is aligned to a provincial program description that has been validated by the Credential Validation Service (CVS) in the last five (5) years.
- Each program must be from a different field of study:
 - Applied Arts, Business, Health Sciences, Human Services, Hospitality and Tourism, Technology, Other.
 - Colleges may have a different organizational structure regarding programs that doesn't reflect the fields of study as stated above (e.g. Business and Hospitality and Tourism might be clustered into one School). The aim is to ensure that the College includes a diverse representation of programs, notwithstanding its internal program structure.
- One (1) program that showcases a different delivery mode:
 - In-class delivery (e.g. face to face).
 - Off-site delivery (e.g. third party delivery, a campus/site other than the main one),
 - Not fully classroom based delivery (e.g. online, blended, self-study).



iii. **Completing the Self-Study Package/ Informal Review**

The college, as part of its internal evaluation process, is required to carry out a critical assessment of the effectiveness of its quality assurance system, and demonstrate this in a self-study report. This report must be concise, be supported by relevant evidence, and be accompanied by a continuous improvement action plan.

The college must provide the list of the six (6) programs that have been selected and are being submitted to review in the self-study report. A minimum of two (2) programs from the selected program list must be submitted to review throughout the entire self-study report as evidence for all standards and its accompanying requirements.

The OCQAS staff will assist the college by reviewing self-study packages and providing the required support and feedback. This stage is not mandatory, but highly recommended. The self-study package consists of the following documents: the *Self-Study Report*, the *Evidence Mapping Template* and the *Current State of Quality Assurance Activities Report*.

*Supporting resource document: **Guide to Completing a Self-Study Report.***

*Timeframe: At least **4 weeks** prior to submitting the Self-Study package.*

iv. **Submission of the Self-Study Package**

In addition to the completed self-study report, the college must submit the following accompanying documents to OCQAS:

- *Evidence Mapping Template;*
- *Current State of Quality Assurance Activities Report;* and,
- A current organizational chart for the college, including names and responsibilities of the senior college employees.

The documents must be submitted electronically using a system/ tool of their choosing, (i.e. database system, file storage and synchronization system, etc.). Regardless of the system, colleges must ensure that; the system is simple for users and secure, proper technical support is provided, and documents are easily accessible, searchable and clearly identified.

*Documents to be completed by the college and submitted to OCQAS: **Self-Study Report Template, Evidence Mapping Template, Current State of Quality Assurance Activities Report, and, a current college organizational chart.***

*Timeframe: **10 weeks** prior to the college`s scheduled site visit date.*



v. Confirmation of the Site Visit Dates and Audit Panel Members

Following the auditor training, an official electronic confirmation of the previously agreed upon site visit date and final audit panel members is sent by OCQAS to the designated college representative responsible for liaison with the audit panel chair.

Timeframe: 8 weeks prior to the college`s scheduled site visit date.

vi. Review of the Self-Study Package and Follow-up Questions

The college`s self-study report along with all other documentation received is further analyzed and reviewed for completeness by the audit panel. Following the audit panel`s reception and final review of the self-study report, the audit panel chair promptly forwards any request for additional documentation/evidence and questions related to the college`s self-study package that requires further clarification and investigation to the designated college representative. The college must respond providing the audit panel chair with the requested information and documentation.

*Document to be completed by the audit panel and submitted to the college: **Audit Panel Self-Study Review Questions Form.***

Timeframe:

- *Submission of request to the college representative: at least 4 weeks prior to the college`s scheduled site visit date.*
- *Submission of college response to the audit panel chair: at least 2 weeks prior to the college`s scheduled site visit date.*

vii. Preparation for the Site Visit

The designated college representative develops a draft schedule for the site visit of the audit panel to the college and submits a copy to the audit panel chair for review and consideration. The audit panel chair forwards any comments or proposed modifications to the designated college representative regarding the schedule in order to be finalized.

The draft schedule will be drafted according to the following site visit requirements:

Representative Group	Representation Requirements	Duration
Senior Leadership	Locally determined.	Beginning of day 1 (15 min.) for opening remarks. End of day 2 (1 hr.) for closing remarks.
Board of Governors	Locally determined.	30 min.



<p>Faculty/ Program Coordinators</p>	<p>General requirements: In order to provide the audit panel with a complete overview of the college's quality activities, we ask that the college include faculty that are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program Coordinators; • Full-time and part-time; • Teaching in programs with the following delivery modes: in-class delivery, offsite delivery, not fully classroom based delivery; • Teaching in programs from the following credential level: Certificate, Apprenticeship Certificate, OCC, OCD, OCAD, OCGC, degree (where applicable). <p>Note: Program clusters/ fields of study are Applied Arts, Business, Health Sciences, Human Services, Hospitality and Tourism, Technology, Other.</p> <p>Group Meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The audit panel will meet with two (2) groups of faculty separately; • Each group must have two (2) to three (3) faculty from three (3) of the identified program clusters/ fields of study (all program clusters must be represented); • Each group will have between six (6) to nine (9) faculties. 	<p>30 min./ group</p>
<p>Program/Curriculum Development/Review Staff & Quality Leads Teams</p>	<p>Locally determined.</p>	<p>1 hr.</p>
<p>Students</p>	<p>General requirements: In order to provide the audit panel with a complete overview of the college's quality activities, we ask that the college include students that are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full-time and part-time; • Enrolled in programs with the following delivery modes: in-class delivery, offsite delivery, not fully classroom based delivery; • Enrolled in programs from the following credential level: Certificate, Apprenticeship Certificate, OCC, OCD, OCAD, OCGC, degree (where applicable). <p>Note: Program clusters/ fields of study are Applied Arts, Business, Health Sciences, Human Services, Hospitality and Tourism, Technology, Other.</p> <p>Group Meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The audit panel will meet with two (2) groups of 	<p>30 min./ group</p>



	<p>students separately;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each group must have two (2) to three (3) students from three (3) of the identified program clusters/ fields of study (all program clusters must be represented); • Each group will have between six (6) to nine (9) students. 	
Student Support Service Providers	<p>In order to provide the audit panel with a complete overview of the college's quality activities, we ask that the college include representatives from the all student support services (not limited to):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Registrar; • Admissions; • Student Services (e.g. mental health and wellness, tutoring, academic advising, student association, aboriginal, international, first generation, disabilities, etc.); • Library. 	1 hr., OR 2 groups (30 min./ each)
Program Advisory Committees (PAC)	<p>General requirements: In order to provide the audit panel with a complete overview of the college's quality activities, we ask that the college include PAC members of programs that are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full-time and part-time; • Offered in the following delivery modes: in-class delivery, offsite delivery, not fully classroom based delivery; • From the following credential level: Certificate, Apprenticeship Certificate, OCC, OCD, OCAD, OCGC, degree (where applicable). <p>Note: Program clusters/ fields of study are Applied Arts, Business, Health Sciences, Human Services, Hospitality and Tourism, Technology, Other.</p> <p>Group Meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The audit panel will meet with two (2) groups of PAC members separately; • Each group must have two (2) to three (3) PAC members from three (3) of the identified program clusters/ fields of study (all program clusters must be represented); • Each group will have between six (6) to nine (9) PAC members. 	30 min./ group
Recent Graduate/ Imminent Graduate	<p>This representative group includes the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Recent Graduate: An individual who has met all the requirements and will or has been granted a college credential within the last 18 months; 2. Imminent Graduate: A student who has completed a minimum of 80% (time and/or requirements) of the 	30 min.



	<p>program, and is expected to complete his program of instruction in the term in progress.</p> <p>In order to provide the audit panel with a complete overview of the college's quality activities, we ask that the college include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Graduates and/or Imminent Graduates from several program clusters/ fields of study;• Three (3) to nine (9) individuals. <p>Note: Program clusters/ fields of study are Applied Arts, Business, Health Sciences, Human Services, Hospitality and Tourism, Technology, Other.</p>	
Dean/or Head of Academic Department	<p>In order to provide the audit panel with a complete overview of the college's quality activities, we ask that the college include representatives from all program clusters/ fields of study.</p> <p>Note: Program clusters/ fields of study are Applied Arts, Business, Health Sciences, Human Services, Hospitality and Tourism, Technology, Other.</p>	1.5 hrs., OR 2 groups (45 min./ each)
Directors/ or Head of Service Departments	<p>In order to provide the audit panel with a complete overview of the college's quality activities, we ask that the college include representatives from all services (not limited to):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Registrar;• Admissions;• Student Services;• Library;• Finance;• Information Technology;• Human Resources;• Physical Resources (Facilities);• Institutional Research.	1.5 hrs., OR 2 groups (45 min./ each)
Audit Panel	Audit Panel members	End of day 2 before closing remarks (1 hr.) for deliberations.

It is expected that the college will provide a broad range of individuals, as identified by the representation requirements, who represent programs that are identified in the college's self-study report as well as some who represent different programs. The site visit schedule must include the name, role/position and sector for each of the members of the representative groups. Also, Colleges are expected to provide identification (i.e. name tags, tent cards, etc.) for all members of the representative groups during the meetings (interviews) indicating their name, role/position and sector.



Also, the college has the opportunity to suggest activities outside of the site visit requirements, such as campus tours or meet and greet receptions, but these activities cannot impede on the established site visit requirements and must be consistent with the purpose of the site visit. If for any reason the audit panel deems the proposed activities as not being consistent with the site visit purpose, they can request to have them removed from the proposed schedule. No meetings are to be held during the lunch period. OCQAS expects that Colleges will provide the audit panel with a lunch, including refreshments throughout the day. Colleges may submit receipts to OCQAS for reimbursement.

Prior to the audit panel arriving on-site, it is expected that interview questions be prepared for each of the respective representative groups. The questions should be clearly linked to key elements of the standards and the requirements and will serve to clarify areas of the college's self-study report that require further verification based on the audit panel's assessment of the college's self-study package and all other supplemental information and documentation received prior to the site visit.

Colleges are encouraged to take the opportunity to inform the members of representative groups of their role and responsibility in the college's audit process, including the purpose and scope of the CQAAP, prior to the audit panel arriving on-site to conduct the audit.

OCQAS requires that Colleges inform their security department of the presence of each of the audit panel members on-site for the purpose of the audit, including the duration of their visit. If necessary, Colleges are expected to provide the audit panel members with parking passes for the duration of the visit.

*Document to be submitted by the college to the audit panel chair: **Draft Site Visit Schedule.***

*Timeframe: at least **1 week** prior to the college's scheduled site visit date.*

viii. Site Visit

The main purpose of the site visit is to verify and supplement the information contained in the college's self-study report and provide a better understanding of the college's conclusions. In addition to supplementing the self-study package, the visit enables consideration (where applicable) of any subsequent corrective measures implemented by the college between the adoption of the self-study report and the time of the visit.

The duration of a site visit is two (2) days which includes meetings (interviews) with different representative groups involved in the implementation and follow-up of quality



assurances mechanisms, the assessment of the effectiveness of those mechanisms and the self-evaluation process. It is expected that the visit will take place at the college's main campus location. If appropriate or necessary, the use of teleconference is encouraged to facilitate the participation of individuals from other campus' involved in the site visit discussions. In the event that teleconference is used, Colleges must provide proper technical support.

Audio recordings of the meetings (interviews) with the representatives groups are not permitted.

Throughout the site visit, the audit panel meets to summarize and record their observations. They also assess the results of the evaluation for each standard against its objectives, identify key areas of strength and deficiency in order to render key messages to present to the college.

The audit panel's observations are evidence –based and supported by the observations found in the college's self-study report, the views expressed by the college stakeholders during the visit, and any other documents examined while on site.

It is expected that a room will be assigned for the audit panel to allow for closed door deliberations and review of any confidential documentation throughout the site visit.

The site visit concludes with a meeting with the college governance (senior leadership), including other administrative staff the College believes should be present. The purpose of the meeting is for the audit panel chair to present the panel's conclusions; it is not an opportunity to discuss audit findings. This will serve as a way of preparing the college for the possible contents of, and recommendations to be made in, the preliminary audit report.

It is expected that all evidence will have been submitted prior to the completion of the site visit.

Duration: 2 days.

ix. Preparation and Submission of the Preliminary Audit Report

Following the audit, which includes a thorough review of all documentation received from the college and the completion of the site visit, the audit panel drafts a preliminary version of the audit report.

Evaluation Framework

An audit decision can only be arrived at after the fair, unbiased implementation of evaluation process and assessment of the college's self-study package and evidence presented by the college during the site visit against the standards and its accompanying requirements as defined by OCQAS.



The evaluation decisions are as follows:

Requirement Decisions

- MET: A Requirement is met if the college meets or exceeds the expectations embodied in the Requirement.
- PARTIALLY MET: A Requirement is partially met if the college meets in part the expectations embodied in the Requirement, or performance in relation to some aspects of the Requirement must be improved.
- NOT MET: A Requirement is not met if the college fails to meet the expectations embodied in the Requirement, or performance in relation to one or more aspects of the Requirement is deficient.

Standards Decisions

- MET: A Standard is met if the college meets or exceeds the expectations embodied in the Standard.
- PARTIALLY MET: A Standard is partially met if the college meets in part the expectations embodied in the Standard, or performance in relation to some aspects of the Requirements must be improved.
- NOT MET: A Standard is not met if the college fails to meet the expectations embodied in the Standard, or performance in relation to one or more aspects of the Requirements is deficient.

Audit Decisions

- MATURE EFFORT: A college's quality assurance system is deemed mature if it has met all decisions at the Standard level.
- ORGANIZED EFFORT: A college's quality assurance system is deemed organized if it has a combination of met and partially met decisions at the Standard level.
- FORMAL EFFORT: A college's quality assurance system is deemed formal if it has one or more not met decisions at the Standard level.

Report Findings

The audit report is designed to describe the college's quality assurance system and its effectiveness. The report outlines the findings of the audit panel, which are reached through its interpretation of the specific information it has reviewed. The report notes strengths as well as those areas that require improvement, and recommendations for improvement. It also attempts to address all relevant areas without excessive detail or presuming to be exhaustive. The report does not comment on individuals (positively or negatively) or on standards irrelevant to the quality assurance process.



The audit report does not contain statements that cannot be substantiated; evidence must be appended on which to base the statements. Conversely, firm views are stated firmly, avoiding excessive subtlety.

Where a college introduces a new quality assurance mechanism to supersede a former mechanism, and due to its newness there is insufficient evidence of the effectiveness of this new mechanism, the college should provide evidence that the former mechanism was implemented and effective. This principle should be interpreted in the spirit of 'not punishing colleges for implementing new and more effective quality assurance systems' that replace a prior quality assurance system that was demonstrably effective.

In respect of all conclusions reached and judgments made, the audit report must contain sufficient evaluative narrative to demonstrate the reasoning which led the audit panel to its conclusions. Particularly where remediation is required, the college must be able to understand, from the report, the nature of the deficiency to be addressed. Similarly, the college must be able to understand, from the report, reasons given for the meeting of the standards as this is helpful to future audits.

The preliminary report is then submitted to OCQAS for review to ensure clarity and consistency of the text, and analysis and approval before it is sent to the designated college representative for review.

*Document to be submitted by the audit panel chair to OCQAS: **Audit Report Template**.*

*Timeframe: within **5 weeks** following the site visit.*

x. Review of the Preliminary Audit Report

The OCQAS forwards the preliminary version of the audit report to the designated college representative for comments and feedback on whether the report accurately reflects the situation of the college. The college must submit its response, in writing, to OCQAS.

Once OCQAS has received the feedback from the college, it forwards the document to the audit panel chair that reviews the feedback with the panelists and makes whatever changes to the preliminary report they, at their discretion, agree to make. Any comments or corrections of facts received from the college will be included.

In cases where the audit panel does not agree to incorporate the college's comments to the audit report or the corrections recommended by the college that have been deemed important, the latter can request to have them submitted to the OCQAS Management Board for review upon submission of the final audit report.



Timeframe:

- **Submission of the college feedback to OCQAS:** *within 4 weeks of the receipt of the preliminary audit report.*
- **Submission of the final report:** *within 3 weeks of the OCQAS receiving the response from the college.*

xi. Submission of the Final Audit Report

Once the feedback from the college and the audit panel has been incorporated and the report is final, OCQAS will submit the final report to the OCQAS Management Board for review and approval.

It is the Board that affirms the conclusions, supports the recommendations in the report, and approves the final report. Upon revision, the audit panel may be asked by the Board to make certain amendments to the audit report in order to ensure consistency.

Timeframe: scheduled monthly OCQAS Management Board meetings.

xii. Formal Board Approval

Following the review, the OCQAS Management Board will determine the college's official audit decision and approve the final audit report.

Once the final report has been approved by the OCQAS Management Board, it is released by the Executive Director of OCQAS to the President of the relevant college and the audit panel for signatures. At this point, the college can release its official results to its stakeholders.

Timeframe: scheduled monthly OCQAS Management Board meetings.

xiii. Appeal Process

Colleges undertaking an appeal must do so, in writing to the OCQAS Management Board Chair.

*Supporting resource document: **Appeals Policy**.*

Timeframe: within 4 weeks of notice of the receipt of the final audit report.



xiv. Release of the Final Report and Publication of the Audit Decision and Stipulations

The OCQAS Management Board has the authority to release the audit decision and any stipulations (recommendations and affirmations) accompanying this decision once the following conditions have been met:

- the process used by the audit panel conforms to the approved audit guidelines;
- the college has been given the opportunity to comment on the preliminary audit report and has been treated fairly and consistently as compared to other reviews in other colleges;
- the college has provided a written response to their review of the preliminary audit report;
- the deadline for undertaking an appeal has passed and no appeal has been made; or, the appeals committee has heard an appeal, ruled on any changes to be made, and those changes (if any) have been made;
- the final audit report does not contain confidential or proprietary information.

Thereafter, OCQAS will publish on their website the college's audit decision and any stipulations (recommendations and affirmations) accompanying this decision.

The final audit report is a public document and belongs to the OCQAS Management Board as a whole; not to the audit panel or its individual members.

xv. Follow-up Reporting

College's must submit a follow-up report to OCQAS following the release of the final audit report, describing that quality assurance activities it has implemented to address the identified gaps since its last submitted report to OCQAS. The OCQAS Management Board reviews the follow-up report.

The follow-up report must not include submission of evidence.

*Document to be submitted by the college to OCQAS: **Current State of Quality Assurance Activities Report.***

Timeframe: 18-months following the release of the final audit report.