Welcome to the OCQAS Newsletter- your triannual peek behind the quality scenes at the OCQAS with quality news, updates, resources and more!

**INSIDE THIS ISSUE**

**OCQAS Hit the Road on a Cross-Ontario College Tour**

The OCQAS got a first-hand look at Ontario’s colleges this fall during a tour that gave them the opportunity to learn about the colleges and for colleges to discuss the functions and services of the OCQAS with its new staff.

**OCQAS Attend the 2015 INQAAHE Biennial Conference**

The OCQAS attended INQAAHE’s Biennial Conference *Changing Landscape of Higher Education: New Demands on Quality Assurance* that was held in Chicago, Illinois, USA from March 30th to April 3rd 2015.

**Colleges Move to New Accreditation Process (Delayed to January 2016)**

Ontario’s colleges will be moving to an institutional-level accreditation process for each institution (College Quality Assurance Accreditation Process- CQAAP), which will become effective in January 2016.

**Colleges Complete a Second Round of Audits**

Ontario’s colleges have completed another successful round of audits. It has provided an opportunity for OCQAS to pilot the new Quality Standards and procedural requirements of the audit process.

**Supporting Colleges in Providing Program-Level Quality Assurance**

Ontario’s colleges are responsible for ensuring that their vocational program learning outcomes (VLO’s) are consistent with the credential framework, communicated and purposeful. To help colleges fulfill this responsibility, the Credentials Validation Service (CVS) follows an outcomes-based credentialing model to review all VLO’s.

Transparency • Collaboration • Growth • Potential

Ensuring quality and consistency across the post-secondary education system

Visit our website! WWW.OCQAS.ORG
OCQAS Hit the Road on a Cross-Ontario College Tour

OCQAS got a first-hand look at Ontario’s colleges this fall during a tour that gave them the opportunity to learn about the colleges and for colleges to discuss the functions and services of the OCQAS with its new staff.

“It was a very successful tour and terrifically worthwhile. We got a great welcome from the colleges, a real openness, and a real sense of ambition”, said Karen Belfer, the Executive Director of the OCQAS. “The trip has allowed us to see first-hand how the college’s closeness to the industry and major focus on innovation, job creation and contribution to the economy inform their program development and quality assurance activities.”

Both Karen Belfer, Executive Director, and Geneviève Paquette, Quality Assurance Associate, spent three months visiting 24 colleges throughout the province. The tour concluded in January 2015.

The tour has come at an important time since Ontario’s colleges will be moving to an institutional-level accreditation process for each institution, which will become effective in January 2016.

OCQAS Attends the 2015 INQAAHE Biennial Conference

OCQAS attended INQAAHE’s Biennial Conference Changing Landscape of Higher Education: New Demands on Quality Assurance that was held in Chicago, Illinois, USA from March 30th to April 3rd 2015.

The International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) is a worldwide association of over 200 organizations active in the theory and practice of quality assurance in higher education.

INQAAHE has developed a set of internationally accepted standards for quality assurance agencies. Due to OCQAS’s requirement that the quality assurance service for Ontario’s colleges be consistent with international best practice, its model has been aligned with INQAAHE’s Guidelines of Good Practice in quality assurance. In 2011, the OCQAS received recognition from the INQAAHE as being an agency that meets the guidelines.
Colleges Move New Accreditation Process (Delayed to January 2016)

Ontario’s colleges will be moving to an institutional-level accreditation process for each institution (College Quality Assurance Accreditation Process- CQAAP), which will become effective in January 2016.

The Ontario public colleges, through the work of the OCQAS have developed a strong, well-received, and effective quality assurance system since 2005. However, with a desire for more international outreach and a need for greater credibility of Ontario public colleges, the colleges are adopting an accreditation system. Following the external review and evaluation of the current quality audit model (PQAPA) by Dr. John Randall et al using international validated criteria it was obvious that the OCQAS already has the structure and processes that are required to be a viable accrediting agency allowing the system to move from an audit process to a more widely recognized model of accreditation.

In preparation for the transition, the OCQAS has developed accreditation policies in the following areas: application and timelines, eligibility, and evaluation framework. The processes related to the accreditation application and timelines are organized under the following headings:
Stage 1-Informal Review
Stage 2-Formal Institutional Commitment to Apply
Stage 3-Formal Institutional Commitment Review
Stage 4-Formal Application for Accreditation
Stage 5-Audit
Stage 6-Formal Accreditation Decision
Stage 7-Formal Announcement
Stage 8-Re-Application for Accreditation.

Colleges will formally submit their Institutional Commitment package to the OCQAS Management Board starting September each year. For the first round of applications the Institutional Commitment packages will be accepted from January 1st, 2016 to November 1st, 2016. In addition, the Institutional Commitment package must contain a Confidentiality Agreement signed by the President of the college. Once the college has received a “Candidate for Accreditation” status from the OCQAS Management Board, it can formally apply for accreditation.

Regarding the Accreditation Decisions, for the first round of applications the draft report to the college will include both the Accreditation and Audit standing results, and the rendering of the accreditation results will be done at a system level on September, 2017.

The Evaluation Framework consists of evaluations at the requirement level (Met, Partially Met, Not Met), at the standards level (Standings: A, B, C, D) which translates to an accreditation decision (to be determined).

Also, as part of the continuous improvement of its own activities and in response to the transition, the OCQAS has updated existing procedures, tools and resources such as site visit and program selection requirements, and developed a self-study guidebook and an auditor training model.

We encourage the colleges to keep visiting the OCQAS website for access to regularly updated news items, resources, and tools.
Colleges Complete a Second Round of Audits

Ontario’s colleges have completed another successful round of audits. It has provided an opportunity for OCQAS to pilot the new Quality Standards and other audit process requirements.

Besides the new Quality Standards that were developed from the former Quality Criteria in preparation for the transition to accreditation, the other new requirements that have been piloted are the following:

- **Auditor Training**: The OCQAS has developed and implemented a revised, more rigorous training program for auditors which aim to increase inter-rater reliability and consistency in process.
- **Site Visit and Program Selection**: The OCQAS has established and implemented Site Visit and Program Selection requirements designed to provide a higher level of consistency across the audit process.
- **Guide to Conducting a Self-Study**: The OCQAS has developed guiding questions to help auditors and colleges in the interpretation and evaluation of the Quality Standards and Requirements.
- **Self-Study Review Questions**: The OCQAs has developed a form that is designed to assist the auditors in the submission and recording of questions and requests for supplemental documentation/evidence related to areas of the college’s self-study that require further clarification and investigation following the panel’s review prior to the site visit.

Throughout the pilot the colleges have consistently provided invaluable feedback to the OCQAS and have remained very engaged as we transition to accreditation and aim to increase consistency, transparency and accountability.

Supporting Colleges in Providing Program-Level Quality Assurance

Ontario’s colleges are responsible for ensuring that their vocational program learning outcomes (VLO’s) are purposeful, communicated and consistent with the credential framework. To help colleges fulfill this responsibility, the Credentials Validation Service (CVS) follows an outcomes-based credentialing model to review all VLO’s and collaborates closely with the Exchange network (ABC and CDAG).

VLO’s influence curriculum development and program review since they need to be congruent with the credential framework, the existing program standards and the needs of the workplace.

As colleges continue to develop and review curriculum and VLO’s, here are some important things to keep in mind:

- VLO’s are statements that describe what learners will know and be able to do when they graduate from a program.
- VLO’s describe performances that integrate knowledge, skills, and attitudes that are necessary and significant for college graduates to be effective in their vocational and personal pursuits.
- VLO’s describe learning that is significant and durable – What students need to be able to do “out there” that we are responsible for “in here”.
- VLO’s are specific, measurable, observable and action-oriented and align with curriculum learning activities, resources and assessments.

Starting August 2015, the OCQAS will offer monthly hands-on CVS workshops giving participants the opportunity to review the methodologies used by the CVS to validate college program proposals that ensure conformity to the credential framework. Particular emphasis will be placed on the development of vocational program learning outcomes. It is hoped that the workshops will provide further clarity and transparency of CVS processes and help colleges submit more robust applications. For more details, please visit our website!