



Ontario College Quality Assurance Service

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

## **COLLEGE QUALITY ASSURANCE AUDIT PROCESS (CQAAP)**

### **AUDIT REPORT**

#### **ALGONQUIN COLLEGE**

**DATE OF SITE VISIT:** June 6 & 7, 2016

**PREPARATION DATE:** July 11, 2016

**SUBMISSION DATE:** August 12, 2016

**PREPARED BY:** Charles Pankratz



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**APPROVAL OF THE AUDIT REPORT**

This report represents the findings of the College Quality Assurance Audit Process for **Algonquin College**.

This report has been prepared, reviewed, and accepted by all parties to the Audit, including the college President, members of the audit panel, and the Chair of the OCQAS Management Board. The signatures of the representative parties demonstrate their acceptance of the content of this report.

**COLLEGE PRESIDENT**

Cheryl Jensen  <i>Cheryl Jensen</i> Signature:	Date: November 11 <sup>th</sup> , 2016
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**CHAIR- OCQAS MANAGEMENT BOARD**

Joy Warkentin  <i>Joy Warkentin</i> Signature:	Date: October 14 <sup>th</sup> , 2016
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**AUDIT PANEL MEMBERS**

Chair: Charles Pankratz  <i>Charles Pankratz</i> Signature:	Date: November 11 <sup>th</sup> , 2016
Panelist: Dennis Dowker  <i>Dennis A. Dowker</i> Signature:	Date: November 11 <sup>th</sup> , 2016
Panelist: Sandi Bailey  <i>Sandi Bailey</i> Signature:	Date: November 11 <sup>th</sup> , 2016



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### 1. Conclusions

*General comments and summary of the findings of the audit panel.*

Algonquin College has very strong and well-developed quality assurance policies, processes, and practices. The college has committed very significant effort and resources over many years to achieve its current level of quality assurance. The college's achievement is particularly noteworthy in light of the number and variety of programs that the college offers and the fact that it also delivers programs at other campuses in Ontario as well as internationally. Reasons for the college's success include:

- long-term, high-level leadership commitment to quality;
- high quality leadership in the academic development and program quality assurance roles and strong support of the Quality Assurance Office by senior administration; and
- significant investment in technology to support program quality (e.g. COMMS – Course Outline Mapping and Management System, Cognos—program KPI and data management system).

Algonquin College submitted a comprehensive Self-Study Report that provided ample good quality supporting documentation to accompany the self-study document. The site visit was well-organized and provided the audit panel with quality opportunities to validate information provided in the self-study. The panel found that the site visit provided good, positive confirmation of the self-study information and usually supported that actual practice lived up to the information provided in the self-study and, in some cases, exceeded it.

The audit panel met with a broad cross-college representation of stakeholders: students, graduates, Board of Governors, faculty, executive, deans and directors, chairs and academic managers, front-line service staff, Program Advisory Committee members, etc. There was a high level of engagement with these different groups and the participants were forthcoming and helpful in providing information.

### 2. Results

#### a. Audit Results

Standard	Result		
1	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Met	<input type="checkbox"/> Partially Met	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Met
2	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Met	<input type="checkbox"/> Partially Met	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Met
3	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Met	<input type="checkbox"/> Partially Met	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Met
4	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Met	<input type="checkbox"/> Partially Met	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Met



5	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Met	<input type="checkbox"/> Partially Met	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Met
6	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Met	<input type="checkbox"/> Partially Met	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Met

**Audit Decision:** *(select one)*

- Mature Effort
- Organized Effort
- Formal Effort



## STIPULATIONS

### 1. Commendations

Provide clear statements that articulate areas where the college has shown exemplary or leadership in the field of quality assurance and improvement. These are mechanisms that are especially good and may be worthy of emulation by other colleges in the system.

1. Algonquin College has a very systematic and holistic approach to monitoring program quality.
  - a. There are very well-designed and implemented Annual Curriculum Review and Program Quality Review processes.
  - b. Quality review processes are evidence-based.
  - c. There are both informal and formal processes and activities that support program quality
2. The Strategic Investment Priorities Process provides a very good way for the college to govern its resource support to its activities. That process also provides for supporting quality and meeting student needs. The audit panel was also impressed by what it heard at the site visit about how that process is used to look forward and build for the future.
3. The use of Service Level Agreements between service areas and the academic departments seems like an excellent mechanism to maintain the quality of programs and services to and for students. Some of the strengths of these agreements are that creating and maintaining them is a consultative process and that there are structured points for renewing and renegotiating these contracts.
4. Algonquin College has made significant and collaborative efforts to ensure that the delivery of curriculum at all remote sites including international campuses is consistent and serves the needs of learners. There are formal and structured ways in which the quality of programs and services are supported across campuses. In the site visit, the audit panel also saw how staff from different campuses were committed to providing good service and working collaboratively to achieve that.
5. There is very effective use of technology to record, document, analyze and evaluate all aspects of College's activities. With so many technological supports already in place, it is to be noted that the college continues to investigate and implement other processes that will result in improved efficiencies. These are currently embedded in the 2016-2017 business plan of the college.
6. There is evidence of a robust cross-college culture focused on ongoing quality assurance processes and to identifying improvements in every aspect of the College's activities. A high level of collaboration exists across the college and with its



constituents and partners. A sense of cooperation and support for each other is evidenced by the use of service level agreements.

7. The college has an especially attentive and comprehensive understanding of outcome-based education and the resulting implications for the curriculum and its delivery. This is at the heart of the college's program quality processes.

## 2. Affirmations

Provide clear statements that articulate areas where the college itself has found a weakness, identified the weakness, and intends to correct it (a plan of action has already been articulated). In effect, this is affirming the college's judgment and findings of its own self-study.

The areas of improvement that were identified by Algonquin College in its self-study (summarized in the college's "*Strengths/Areas for Ongoing Improvement*" document) are itemized below along with the audit panel's affirmations for each of them. The relatively large number of self-identified areas of improvement should not be considered to be indicative of numerous weaknesses in quality assurance at the college but rather be seen as evidence of the college's commitment to constant improvement.

1. Enhancements to the Cognos reporting portal: Algonquin College has a very good data reporting portal (Cognos) that allows users to access and analyze program data and monitor program quality. The college is going to enhance the data and metrics available through the system which will further strengthen its quality assurance processes. (Requirement 1.1, Algonquin College reference A1.1)
2. Creation of an automated centralized program lifecycle tracking system: The college is currently embarking on this project and it will assist with the challenging work of tracking the development and review processes for the many programs the college offers. It will also increase the college's management of program standard releases, titling changes, and communication of program curriculum information and updates. (Requirements 1.2, 3.1, Algonquin College reference A1.2, 3.1)
3. Exploration of a new Student Information System (SIS): Algonquin College has identified that its current SIS (GeneSIS) has limitations and is embarking on an exploratory project to acquire a new SIS. Though the panel did not note any areas in which the current SIS was impacting program quality, it is important that the college ensure that the quality of such a fundamental system is being given attention. (Requirement 1.3, Algonquin College reference A1.3)
4. Addition of Program Quality Assurance Associate position: There is a considerable workload associated with maintaining quality assurance and program review processes and it is commendable that the college is adding staff to support these processes. (Requirement 1.4, Algonquin College reference A1.4)
5. Enhancement and professional development for COMMS: Algonquin College is already recognized for the strengths of its COMMS system which manages its course outlines and maps learning outcomes. These further refinements coupled with the ongoing professional development plans for faculty will ensure Algonquin College's



- continued strengths in outcome-based education and the comprehensive process of mapping course and program learning outcomes and other components of outcome-based education. (Requirement 2.1, Algonquin College reference A2.1)
6. Review of college certificate program VLOs: As part of maintaining program quality, it is good that the college is reviewing the VLOS for the certificate programs. (Requirement 2.2, Algonquin College reference A2.2)
  7. Ensuring that the college's distinctive Sustainability and Internationalization VLO is fully embedded in Ontario College credential programs: This reflects a definite commitment to ongoing attempts to ensure compliance with the Credentials Framework through provision of instructional resources and related professional development for faculty. (Requirement 3.2, Algonquin College reference A3.2)
  8. Enhancing compliance with the ministry's Guidelines for General Education Courses through further review of GenEd courses, and stronger embedding of those courses into PQRs: The alignment across the college of General Education courses with the ministry guidelines is an important initiative to ensure compliance with ministry directives, college policy, and the Credentials Framework. (Requirement 3.3, Algonquin College reference A3.3)
  9. Enhancing collaboration for program delivery across multiple sites and/or delivery modes: This is a good initiative to support the college maintaining its strength and commitment to assuring consistency of program delivery quality across different sites and modalities. (Requirements 3.4, 4.1, Algonquin College reference A3.4, 4.1)
  10. Implementation of a common HOQAS compliant Blackboard course shell: This is a good step in the direction of consistent delivery of courses that utilize online course instances. (Requirement 4.2, Algonquin College reference A4.2)
  11. Increasing research on the implementation of new learning technology initiatives and strengthen dissemination of the results of that research and best practices: The college has a commendable record of initiatives to improve program delivery and quality through technology. That has given rise to the challenge of having faculty adopt and support these technology initiatives in line with best practices. It has also presented the challenge of addressing situations where the implementation outcomes have fallen short of expectations. It is critical that the college continue to pay attention to supporting effective implementation of technology initiatives and continue researching and reviewing the implementation to assure that expected outcomes are achieved and best practices are followed. (Requirement 4.3, Algonquin College reference A4.3)
  12. Increasing information available to students regarding internal pathways for further study within the college: It is good to see that the college is taking seriously the quality assurance requirement to establish and communicate alternative entry and exit points for programs. (Requirement 5.1, Algonquin College reference A5.1)
  13. Developing a Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) policy and an initiative to have all eligible programs include a work-integrated learning opportunity: Work-integrated learning is clearly an area of critical focus in today's post-secondary education and is very important in effective and comprehensive student learning. In the site visit, the audit panel heard from PAC members about the importance of work experience as part of the students' learning experience and its role in hiring students as future





- employees. The initiative to improve and extend WIL is important to enhancing the overall quality of programs. (Requirement 5.1, Algonquin College reference A5.2)
14. Increasing response rates to the Student Course Feedback surveys: Since surveys are an integral part of monitoring course and delivery quality, this is a positive initiative. (Requirement 6.1, Algonquin College reference A6.1)
  15. Continuing to support facility and technological improvements through business plan processes; in particular, plan for bringing on a new student information system: The inclusion of forward-looking technology and facility upgrades into core business planning processes is fundamental to maintaining the quality of student learning and experience. (Requirement 6.2, Algonquin College reference A6.2)
  16. Continuing and evolving the focus on faculty and staff professional development, particularly as it relates to technology integration: This is critical to maintaining the quality of instruction and program delivery because in order to achieve the benefits of new technology initiatives it is imperative to provide ample professional development to support implementation of technology and adoption of best practices. (Requirement 6.3, Algonquin College reference A6.3)
  17. Supporting faculty and staff recruitment and succession planning through an implementation of findings of the recent Human Resources audit: The college's intent in this regard was supported in hearing at the site visit that the college was undertaking an employee engagement survey to create a 5 year people plan. Maintaining appropriate staffing with the right skill sets is important to maintaining quality at the college. (Requirement 6.4, Algonquin College reference A6.4)

### 3. Recommendations

Provide clear statements that articulate areas as needing improvement.

Recommendations may also be made in relation to areas of concern identified by the college in its self-study, and for which no plan of action has been articulated by the college.

#### RECOMMENDATION #1 (Requirement 2.2)

Ensure that the review of course outlines and learning objectives mapping is tight enough to identify and address overlaps, gaps, and extraneous content in courses. Also, ensure that student feedback on course content is taken into consideration in ACRs and PQRs. As mentioned above under Standard 2, the panel heard comments from students and grads that there was overlapping, missing, and irrelevant content in some of their courses.

#### RECOMMENDATION #2 (Requirement 3.3)

Ensure the PACs (Program Advisory Committees) are positioned to fulfil their role in curriculum and program quality reviews. This could be facilitated through a review of the College's Advisory Committee policy to clarify membership requirements and roles. As mentioned above under Standard 3, the panel found that in some programs, part-time instructors were acting as PAC members, which may compromise the effectiveness of the PAC to exercise its external advisory function on program content and quality.



#### RECOMMENDATION #3 (Requirement 4.3)

Take further steps to make sure that faculty are complying with the college's Evaluation of Student Learning policy stipulation that professors are to provide the feedback on evaluation within 10 working days. As mentioned above under Standard 4, the audit panel heard comments from students that they were not receiving prompt evaluation feedback. The 10-day stipulation should also be better communicated to students who will also then have this as a tool to address promptness concerns with their professors. Finally, the college should ensure that issues like this that are identified in a PQR are followed up on.

#### RECOMMENDATION #4 (Requirement 5.7)

Establish mechanisms for college oversight of department- and program-specific academic policies regarding matters such as grades required for progression, GPA requirements for graduation and continuance, etc. As mentioned above under Standard 5, such mechanisms are not currently in place. Although there is often good reason for program-specific variance in these matters, the college still needs to govern this variance by stipulating parameters for these types of department- and program- specific policies and the conditions which must be met for variance to be allowed. This should be accompanied by appropriate college-wide approval processes for such policies. Though the college may not technically label such matters as policies, they de facto act as academic policies for specific programs.

#### RECOMMENDATION #5 (Requirement 6.1)

Establish policy and consistent practice for evaluation and performance management of part-time, partial load, and sessional faculty. As mentioned above under Standard 6, the college does not currently have this in place. It is a very important matter since this group of faculty is responsible for a very significant portion of the college's course delivery.

#### RECOMMENDATION #6 (Requirement 6.6)

Review the efficacy of processes for monitoring the adequacy of instructional resources. As mentioned above under Standard 6, the audit panel heard comments from students in 3 programs regarding outdated texts and software.