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

COLLEGE QUALITY ASSURANCE AUDIT
PROCESS (CQAAP)

GUIDE TO COMPLETING A SELF-STUDY REPORT

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Write a clear and concise narrative that demonstrates how the supporting evidence presented and referenced ensures the meeting of the standard and its accompanying requirements.

STEP 1- 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.

A sample of six (6) programs is 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. Degree credentials and accredited programs cannot be submitted to review in the self-study.

STEP 2- EXAMPLES OF QUALITY ASSURANCE MECHANISMS

Standard 1: Program Quality Management System

Mechanisms for the management of programs of study to ensure quality, relevance, currency, and effectiveness:

Structures for implementation of programs; policies/ procedures for developing, approving, reviewing, revising, suspending and cancelling programs; procedures for establishing, approving and revising; Operating regulations for program committees; Information system on program; Process to ensure the mechanisms are working effectively and applied consistently; Policies/ procedures and tools for collecting, collating and analyzing data; Procedures and documents that report and demonstrate how the program data/information collected is being used to inform program review; Assessments of graduate performance based on program vocational learning outcomes; Follow-up indicators monitoring success rates; Procedures for monitoring causes of dropping out; Mechanisms to ensure that program level recommendations are monitored and addressed (tracking); Processes to modify program standards; Tools to monitor consequential changes to programs, course, and assessments; Structures for adaptation and revision of competency flowcharts and course matrices; Information systems on programs of study; Program monitoring tools; Policies/ procedures for controlling and governing most important records of a program life-cycle.

Standard 2: Program Development

Mechanisms for the development of programs of study to ensure quality, alignment, and coherence:

Processes that put VLOS at the center of program development; Structures that review VLOS and ensure they are measurable, relevant and align with standards and professional bodies; Processes for program frameworks; Structures that review program sequence and ensure the leveling and progression are adequate and properly scaffold to meet the vocational learning outcomes; Processes for course frameworks; Structures that review program/course activity

and ensure the learning activities aligned with the vocational learning outcomes.

Standard 3: Conformity with Government Requirements

Mechanisms for the implementation of programs of study to ensure alignment, conformity and coherence:

Processes for program review; Structures that review program titles and ensure they are conforming to title requirements; Structures that review programs and their alignment with the credential validation framework; Processes for the creation and establishment of terms of reference for program advisory committees; Structures that review programs and ensure that students have reasonable opportunities to achieve both vocational learning outcomes and essential employability skills; Processes to implement revisions to provincial program standards. Processes and structures to communicate all relevant stakeholders the changes and implications, and respond to the ministry.

Standard 4: Program Delivery and Student Assessment

Mechanisms for the delivery of programs of study to ensure quality, consistency and value of the teaching assessment methods used:

Mechanisms that ensure consistent delivery of programs; Inventory of teaching methods; Collaborative tools for faculty. Mechanism for sharing results; Mechanisms to ensure course examination is multi-method, it involves timely formative feedback, and is comprehensive; Mechanisms to assess graduates achievement of the program vocational learning outcomes.

Standard 5: Existence, Monitoring and Communication of Academic Policies and Practices

Mechanisms for monitoring and communication of existing academic policies and practices to ensure quality:

Mechanisms for developing and approving program policies and/or guidelines; Procedures for establishing and approving departmental rules and policies; Policies on program progression; Mechanisms for the dissemination of program guidelines (e.g. pre and co-requisites, practical/work components, alternative entry and exit points, credential completion timelines, transfer credit, exemptions, grading, transfer agreements, course outlines, etc.); Policies on awarding credits; Policies on recognition of prior learning; Tools for on the recognition of prior learning, course equivalency or substitutions; Procedures for reviewing student files (e.g. substitution, equivalencies); Policies on grading, academic appeals, re-assessment, accommodations and special awards; Policies on institutional agreements; Mechanisms for developing and implementing agreements; Procedures for communication protocols both between faculty members and between faculty and management; Mechanisms that ensure program descriptions are duly distributed and explained to both faculty and students;

Mechanisms that ensure students are duly informed of policies and practices regarding their program of instruction; Procedures for communication changes to programs or courses; Mechanisms for monitoring and reviewing academic policies and/or guidelines; Procedures for monitoring and reviewing departmental rules and policies.

Standard 6: Availability and Allocation of College-Wide Resources

Mechanisms for the planning of programs of study to ensure implementation, follow-up, and support:

Procedures for hiring teaching staff; Procedures for the evaluation of teaching; Faculty performance evaluation; Measures for evaluating and upgrading skills for faculty; Professional development plans for faculty and other categories of staff; Mechanisms that communicate expectations to faculty. Mechanisms to assess that faculty are meeting responsibilities; Mechanisms to collate classroom and non-classroom faculty and staff requirements for student support; mechanisms for identifying gaps, and addressing gaps; Mechanisms to collate academic support and advising service requirements; mechanisms for identifying gaps, and addressing gaps; Screening, support and follow-up measures for at-risk students; Procedures for hiring staff; procedures for the evaluation of staff; Staff performance evaluation; Measures for evaluating and upgrading skills for staff; Professional development plans for staff; Mechanisms to collate learning facilities for different modes of delivery requirements; mechanisms for identifying gaps, and addressing gaps; Mechanisms to collate college requirements; Mechanisms for identifying gaps, and addressing gaps; Procedures for developing, implementing and reviewing: annual institutional priorities; plans for implementing the plan; institutional, management, departmental and program work plans (e.g. work plan templates); management dashboards; Follow-up mechanisms that track indicators and progress measured against expected results. Procurement plans for new or upgraded specialized equipment; Plans for development (e.g. IT, physical infrastructure).

STEP 3- ASSESSING THE RELIABILITY OF AUDIT EVIDENCE

In order to assess the reliability of evidence gathered through the audit process, consideration must be given to the relevancy, sufficiency, and competence of the evidence provided and collected. The following are some guidelines proposed by John Suedbeck[1]:

1. **Objectivity**. Is the evidence being presented *objective or subjective*? Objectivity of the evidence is achieved or attained when two or more independent auditors are likely to arrive at the same result.

2. **Documentation**. Documented evidence (things written and sourced rather than oral and anecdotal) provides proof of compliance to procedures and is more reliable than verbal evidence alone.

3. **Externality**. Third-party evidence may be more reliable than evidence gained from within the institution; hence the importance of seeking information/evidence from graduates, members of Boards of Directors, employers, members of Program Advisory Committees, etc.

4. **Sample size**. Larger samples are generally more reliable than smaller samples. Larger samples also allow for greater opportunity for consistency and reliability of the evidence being presented.

5. **Sampling method**. How was the evidence gathered? Was this an appropriate and reliable method in relation to the evidence presented?

6. **Corroboration**. Corroborated evidence is the same or similar evidence from two or more independent sources. It is generally more reliable than uncorroborated evidence and more attainable when the other guidelines here are adhered to.

7. **Timeliness**. Timely evidence (currency of information) is typically more reliable than historical evidence or evidence produced after a delay from time of request.

8. **Authoritativeness**. Evidence related to the impact of academic policies obtained from the faculty or from the student may be more reliable with regards to how well the policy works than evidence gathered from the administrators (Chairs, Deans, Registrar, etc.) who wrote or developed the policy. A machine operator is a greater authority as to the operation of a particular machine than is the engineer who designed the machine.

9. **Directness**. Interviewing and observing may provide more reliable and useful evidence than merely reading the policy manual. Similarly, an original document is likely more reliable than a copy.

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[1] Suedbeck, J.G., *Back to Basics*, Quality Progress, June 2012 pg. 72

10. **Adequacy of controls**. Evidence from a system or process adequately controlled is more reliable than evidence from a poorly controlled or questionable system or process. The results from a Program Review process in a college that ensures there is a schedule, the schedule is adhered to, results are shared , and programs are accountable will produce better and more reliable evidence that that which comes from a college where the schedule exists apart from any other controls for ensuring results are gathered and accountability is clear.

STEP 4- NARRATIVE WRITING

Getting Ready to Write

- **Read** each requirement within the context of its standard.
- **Consider** the various examples of components and quality assurance mechanisms for each of the standards/ requirements.
- **Plan** out a structure for the narrative that demonstrates clearly how the quality assurance mechanisms make possible the attainment of each specific standard/ requirement.
- **Select** key evidence related to the specific standard/ requirement.
- **Write** the narrative.

Writing Evidence-Based Narrative[2]
Researchers have found that narrative is more persuasive that evidence on its own.

ASSESSMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT

Your narrative can adopt any approach, providing that it is analytical, coherent, and credible. Every narrative should contain a: beginning, middle, and end.

All evidence must be referenced using the *Evidence Mapping Template*. If the evidence document contains multiples pages, the relevant pages must also be included in the reference.

The narrative can also be written in point form provided it is clear and concise.

1. **Beginning**
   The beginning orients the reader by introducing the key institutional quality assurance mechanisms used by the college as part of its quality assurance system related to the specific standard/requirement.

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[2] Spiegel, D. L. (1981). Six alternatives to the directed reading activity. *The Reading Teacher*, 34, 914-922. http://www.learnnc.org/lp/editions/few/683

2. **Middle**
   The middle contains the contribution of the quality assurance mechanism to quality assurance; the key individuals responsible for its implementation; and, a critical assessment on the ability of its mechanisms to ensure continuous improvement in quality (performance in practice).

   The narrative must be supported by specific evidence related to the quality assurance mechanisms. It requires well-researched, accurate, detailed, and current evidence to support the ideas presented.

   Ideas can be organized in the following basic ways:

   a. **Sequence**: uses time, numerical, or spatial order as the organizing structure.

   b. **Description**: is used to describe the characteristic features and events. Descriptive reports may be arranged according to categories of related attributes, moving from general categories of features to specific attributes.

   c. **Cause and Effect**: structure is used to show causal relationships between events.

   d. **Compare and Contrast**: structure is used to explain how two or more objects, events, or positions in an argument are similar or different.

   e. **Problem and Solution**: requires stating a problem and coming up with a solution.

3. **End**
   Strong endings summarize the highlights, restate the main points, or end with a final conclusive statement to drive home the main point.

ASSESSMENT OF THE STANDARD

For each of the standards, the College must provide a narrative that contains the following:

1. A critical assessment of areas of strengths and improvement of its quality assurance mechanisms;
2. The implementation of corrective measures to address areas for improvement;
3. An evaluation on their impact on continuous quality improvement.