



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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STEPS TO COMPLETING A SELF-STUDY REPORT

Step 1: Program Selection Requirements

Use the established program selection requirements to collect supporting evidence and complete the self-study report.

Step 2: Examples of Quality Assurance Mechanisms

Use the guiding questions to accurately evaluate the standards and its accompanying requirements and the provided examples of quality assurance mechanisms to collect supporting evidence, such as policies, practices, reports and plans that document the mechanisms undertaken by the college.

Step 3: Assessing the Reliability of Audit Evidence

Assess the reliability of the evidence and select the most relevant.

Step 4: Narrative Writing

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.

Four (4) to eight (8) programs will be randomly selected for review in the self-study report. The selected programs must be used as supporting evidence throughout the self-study, in particular in Standards 1-4. The minimum expectation is that three (3) programs are featured throughout the self-study, as evidence of the connectedness of processes across the entire lifecycle of a program. The remaining programs should be used as additional evidence to demonstrate the consistent use of the quality assurance mechanism across the institution.

STEP 2- EXAMPLES OF QUALITY ASSURANCE MECHANISMS

Standard 1: Program Quality Management System

Effective quality assurance mechanisms ensure the quality of a program management system:

Mechanisms for regulating QA at the Board level; Strategic documents that define and guide the operationalization of QA in the institution; Mechanisms for regulating program quality; Mechanisms that ensure the program quality assurance processes are working effectively and applied consistently; Mechanisms, systems, infrastructure and tools for collecting, collating and analyzing data and information such as, but not limited to:

- Stakeholder data: professional bodies, program advisory committees (PACs), employers, community liaisons, graduates, faculty, students (i.e., domestic, Indigenous, international);
- Program indicators: graduation rates, Key Performance Indicators (KPI), placement rates, retention rates, progression rates and completion rates;
- Program records: previous program review outcomes (i.e. recommendations, action plans);
- Other data: Labour market analysis/costs;

Tools for presenting the analyzed data: scorecards, dashboards, reports; Mechanisms and documents that show how the program data or information (in R1.3) is being used to inform decisions during program development, review, renewal, maintenance, suspension and cancellation; Mechanisms to ensure that program level recommendations are monitored and addressed (tracking); Tools to evaluate the effectiveness of program changes; Mechanisms for regulating changes to programs and/or courses; Mechanisms for communicating changes to programs and courses to all stakeholders; Mechanisms for managing access (i.e. conserving and protecting their integrity and safeguarding access) to

important records of a program lifecycle.

Standard 2: Vocational Learning Outcomes as the Centre of Program Development Throughout the Program Lifecycle

Effective quality assurance mechanisms ensure vocational learning outcomes are at the centre of the program's lifecycle activities:

Mechanisms that purposefully put PVLOs at the centre of program lifecycle activities; Mechanisms that review PVLOs and ensure they remain measurable and relevant; Mechanisms for communicating PVLOs to all relevant stakeholders; Tools: program development, review, renewal or maintenance, suspension and cancellation templates; Organizational Structure: individuals or groups (committees) responsible for reviewing PVLOs; Mechanisms to develop the framework of a program of study/program of instruction; Mechanisms that review program course sequence and ensure the leveling and progression are adequate and properly scaffolded to meet the PVLO and EESs; Mechanisms for the dissemination of the frameworks of programs of study; Tools: program maps, curriculum maps, program guides; Organizational Structure: people or groups responsible for reviewing program/course progression; Mechanisms that review program/course activity and ensure that the learning activities and assessments are aligned with course learning outcomes, PVLOs and EESs; Mechanisms to design course frameworks; Mechanisms that review course activity and ensure that learning activities and assessments are learning-centered; Tools: course outlines, syllabi, training plans; Organizational Structure: individuals or groups responsible for reviewing program and course instructional design.

Standard 3: Conformity with Government Requirements

Effective quality assurance mechanisms ensure the conformity of programs of study with relevant government requirements:

Mechanism to review program titles and ensure they are conforming to title requirements throughout the lifecycle; Tools: guides, templates, CVS applications, new program development and program review forms; Organizational Structure: individuals or groups responsible for reviewing program titles and conformity to governmental requirements; Mechanisms to review programs and their alignment with the CVF; Tools: guides, templates, CVS applications; new program development application and program review forms; Organizational Structure: individuals or groups responsible for reviewing programs conforming to the CVF; Mechanisms for PAD creation and terms of reference; Tools: guides, templates; Organizational Structure: individuals or groups responsible for ensuring that program development, review, renewal, and maintenance includes PAC input; Mechanisms to implement revisions made to provincial program standards in a timely manner; Processes

and structures to communicate changes and implications to all relevant stakeholders;
Processes and resources in place to respond to the Ministry.

Standard 4: Program Delivery and Student Assessment

Effective quality assurance mechanisms ensure the quality of program delivery and student assessment:

Mechanisms that ensure that students can reliably and consistently demonstrate capacity to meet learning outcomes regardless of program delivery modes or strategies; Mechanism for engaging faculty in the exploration of new methods for teaching, learning and assessment; Mechanism for sharing results; Mechanism for evaluating the teaching experience; Inventory of teaching, learning and assessment methods; Collaborative tools for faculty to use; Mechanisms to ensure course assessments are authentic, provide timely formative feedback, and are comprehensive; Processes to review the experiential learning opportunities offered by programs; Mechanisms to determine imminent graduates' achievement of the program vocational learning outcomes.

Standard 5: Existence, Monitoring and Communication of Academic Policies and Practices That Influence and Impact Academic Quality

Effective quality assurance mechanisms ensure the communication and monitoring of established academic policies and practices related to academic issues:

Mechanisms communicating and ensuring compliance of program policies and/or guidelines; Procedures/protocols for communicating policies to management, faculty, support learning services staff, and students; Mechanisms that ensure students are duly informed of policies and practices regarding their program of instruction; Mechanisms for monitoring and reviewing academic policies and/or procedures; Procedures for monitoring and reviewing departmental rules, guidelines and policies (if they exist); Mechanisms for managing the admission processes and criteria; Mechanisms for monitoring and managing student progress; Mechanisms for recognizing formal and informal learning; Mechanisms for transfer credit; Mechanisms for recognition of prior learning; Mechanisms for assigning grades; Mechanisms to manage academic appeals, re-assessment, accommodations and special assessments; Mechanisms for conferring credentials and awards; Mechanisms for developing and implementing agreements; Mechanisms for regulating program quality for activities that are subcontracted to or carried out by other parties.

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 PVLOs:

Mechanisms for hiring (faculty and support staff); Mechanism for providing orientation (faculty and support staff); Mechanism for onboarding (faculty and support staff); Mechanism for faculty development; Mechanism for evaluation (performance review/appraisal, for faculty and support staff); Mechanisms that communicate expectations to faculty; Mechanisms to determine that faculty are meeting responsibilities; Mechanisms to determine that faculty continue to develop their skills and knowledge in their field of practice and as teachers; Mechanisms for reviewing and regulating academic support and advising services; Mechanisms that ensure the academic support and support services are working effectively and are applied consistently; Mechanisms for professional development for support staff; Mechanisms that communicate expectations to support staff; Mechanisms to assess that support staff are meeting responsibilities; Mechanism to assess that support staff continue to develop their skills and knowledge in their field of practice; Mechanisms to aggregate college 'budget' requirements; Mechanisms for identifying and addressing gaps; Mechanisms for making decisions and allocating resources; Procedures for developing, implementing and reviewing:

- Annual institutional priorities;
- Risks;
- Institutional, management, departmental and program work plans;
- Management dashboards;

Follow-up mechanisms that track indicators and progress measured against expected results; Procurement and maintenance plans for new or upgraded specialized equipment; Plans for future 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 Suedbeck¹:

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

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

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.
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 than 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 Narrative²

Researchers have found that narrative is more persuasive than 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 multiple 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.

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.

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>

- 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.

In summary:

- What do you do?
- Demonstrate that you are doing?
- Is there room for improvement?