



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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THE GOAL OF SELF-STUDY IS TO SHARE WITH THE READER...



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: Quality Assurance Mechanisms

Use the guiding information to accurately evaluate the standards and its accompanying requirements. Collect the college's quality assurance mechanisms (files such as policies, practices, reports and plans) and supporting evidence that demonstrates how they are used, communicated and reviewed.

Step 3: Assessing the Reliability of Audit Evidence

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

Step 4: Writing the Narrative

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 5: Assessment of the Standard

Articulate a critical assessment of each standard which identifies gaps and actions moving forward.

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- QUALITY ASSURANCE MECHANISMS

The template contains detailed and specific information pertinent for each requirement. It includes QA mechanisms that are important for the requirement. If there is confusion or belief that the same evidence should be used for multiple requirements, contact OCQAS to gain

clarity on the requirement as each has been established for its own purpose and to eliminate redundancies.

STEP 3- ASSESSING THE REALIBILITY OF 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 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.

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

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- WRITING THE NARRATIVE

In preparation

- **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 to demonstrate 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.

Your narrative can adopt any approach, providing that it is analytical, coherent, and credible. Every narrative should contain three parts and all evidence must be referenced. The narrative can also be written in point form provided it is clear and concise.

1. Part 1

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. Part 2

The middle contains the contribution of the quality assurance mechanism to quality assurance; the key individuals responsible for its implementation; and a critical

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>

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. Part 3

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

STEP 5 – ASSESSMENT OF THE STANDARD

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

1. Identification of strengths and areas requiring improvement;
2. Identification of changes made in the spirit of continuous improvement.

This assessment is completed, within the narrative, at the end of each standard for the whole standard, however, affirmations must be identified using the associated requirement number.

OCQAS is always available to answer questions. The team is happy to help! (cvs@ocqas.org)