



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

QUALITY ASSURANCE AUDIT PROCEDURE	
Procedure No.	OCQAS 18-1
Approving Jurisdiction:	<i>OCQAS Management Board</i>
Effective:	9-2025
Reviewed:	

This procedure sets the processes related to undertaking OCQAS quality assurance audits.

## CONTEXT AND PURPOSE

To provide consistent, fair, and efficient audits of the Ontario Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology's (CAATs) compliance with the quality assurance standards and requirements through the clear expression of responsibilities for OCQAS, the colleges, and individuals involved.

## SCOPE

This policy applies to OCQAS, its employees and contractors, as well as to the Ontario Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology in their activities related to the OCQAS quality assurance standards and requirements.

## STEPS IN THE AUDIT PROCESS

1. Scheduling the Audit
  - a. A college's audit takes place in the academic year specified in the OCQAS audit cycle.
  - b. OCQAS coordinates with the college to set the dates and deadlines associated with the audit.
2. Forming the Audit Panel
  - a. OCQAS selects and trains audit panel members. The audit panel members must be external to the audited college and have no perceived conflict of interest.
  - b. The college has the right to reject an audit panel member but must provide a rationale for doing so.
3. Audit Package Submission and Review
  - a. The college is responsible for submitting an audit package that describes the quality assurance mechanisms and the evidence of their implementation.
  - b. The college completes its audit package according to the guidelines set by OCQAS.
  - c. The audit package should contain a letter from the president with an explanation for any recommendations from the previous audit that have not been significantly implemented.

- d. The OCQAS executive director has the authority to require a college to revise an audit package that materially does not meet the OCQAS guidelines.
- e. The audit panel reviews the audit package and makes an initial assessment of the college's compliance with quality assurance standards and requirements.
- f. The audit panel may request additional information from the college.

4. Audit Visit

- a. The audit sessions are held according to the audit schedule that has been established with OCQAS.
- b. The college is responsible to adequately prepare session participants for their effective involvement in the audit visit sessions.
- c. The college is responsible to facilitate access to representatives from all the groups specified in the OCQAS guidelines to allow the audit panel to corroborate the information from the audit package.
- d. College personnel may only attend one audit visit session apart from the welcome and final meetings.
- e. The audit visit must have a meeting with senior college management as its final session.
- f. A member of the audit panel chairs each session.
- g. The sessions comprise questions from the audit panel to meeting attendees that are meant to corroborate and expand on information provided in the audit package.
- h. An OCQAS staff member attends each session to ensure the integrity and consistency of the audit process.

5. Completion and Approval of Audit Report

- a. The audit panel produces the audit report.
- b. The audit report must include at least one recommendation for each requirement that was not met. It may also include recommendations for requirements that were met, especially if the audit panel identifies a significant aspect that could benefit from improvement.
- c. The audit panel finalizes its assessments of the college's compliance with OCQAS quality assurance standards and requirements and determines the audit decision by consensus. The criteria for decisions on the assessments of each standard and requirement are set out in the Audit Evaluation Framework policy.
- d. The audit report provides adequate rationale for any requirements that the panel feels are not fully met, as well as for the panel's audit decision on the college's overall quality assurance state.
- e. OCQAS reviews the audit report to ensure that it is of acceptable quality and appropriately represents OCQAS expectations for final reports. If the report does not meet expectations, OCQAS works with the audit panel to address shortcomings.
- f. OCQAS sends the draft audit report to the college for review.
- g. The college can provide feedback and request revisions to the audit report.
- h. The audit panel considers the college's feedback and finalizes the audit report.
- i. The Board reviews the audit report submitted by the audit panel and is responsible for its final approval based on the following:
  - There is a high level of consistency in the expectations and assessments of the college's meeting the standards and requirements with the audits of other colleges within the system.

- Recommendations are appropriately stated and consistent with the approach found in other audit reports.
  - There is alignment between the findings and assessments provided in the audit report and recommendations specified.
  - The audit process was conducted appropriately.
- j. The Board may request the audit panel to make revisions, undertake reconsiderations, or provide explanations.
  - k. The college may appeal against the audit report according to the process and deadlines set out in the Appeals Policy.
  - l. OCQAS posts the executive summaries of audits, and the current state of quality assurance activities reports on its website.
  - m. Colleges may share and publicize their audit results and audit reports at their discretion.
  - n. OCQAS collates and publishes Ontario Colleges quality assurance good practices identified in the audits.
6. Submission and Approval of Follow-Up Report
- a. The college must submit a follow-up report according to OCQAS timelines and guidelines.
  - b. The Board reviews the college's report based on the following criteria:
    - i. Completeness of report
    - ii. Appropriateness of the college's chosen activities for achieving the intent of the audit report recommendations.
    - iii. Sufficiently appropriate progress on addressing the audit report recommendations.
  - c. If the Board finds the report is sufficiently complete, it approves the report.
  - d. The Board may request further action from the college and a subsequent updated follow-up report.
  - e. Colleges can request a maturity status change in conjunction with its follow-up report. The process is set out in the Audit Evaluation Framework Policy.

#### **QUALITY ASSURANCE PROCESSES FOR THE AUDITING FUNCTION**

1. OCQAS maintains audit data which is presented along with a summary of the audit trends to the Board.
2. OCQAS undertakes an annual informal review of the audit process by providing opportunity for invested parties to provide feedback.
3. OCQAS recruits, orients, and trains observers. Individuals are responsible for getting support/approval from their college prior to requesting to be an observer.
4. If a college has concerns about the audit process, these should be brought to the attention of the Executive Director. If not satisfactorily addressed there, the concerns should be brought to the attention of the Board Chair.

#### **DEFINITIONS**

**Audit Cycle:** The schedule that identifies which year each college will have its audit within the timetable that includes audits for all colleges.

**Audit Package:** The combination of the college's quality assurance self-study or quality assurance book which describes the college's quality assurance system along with the documents and other evidence that demonstrate the college's effective implementation of the quality assurance system.

**Audit Panel:** The team of individuals external to the college selected by OCQAS to carry out a college's quality assurance audit.

**Audit Report:** A summary document created by the audit panel that outlines their findings based on the established standards and requirements. It includes assessments of the college's compliance with quality assurance standards and requirements, the audit decision, recommendations for compliance, and affirmations of the college's planned future quality assurance initiatives.

**Audit Decision:** The audit panel's assessment of the college's overall quality assurance status in relation to the standards and requirements.

**Audit Visit:** A series of interview sessions with representative groups of college members, conducted to verify the information in the audit package and evaluate the effectiveness and consistency of the college's quality assurance mechanisms.

**Audit Visit Schedule:** The timetable of group interview sessions that take place during the audit visit.

**Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology (CAATs):** Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology (CAATs): Colleges that were designated under the Ontario Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology Act, 2002.

**Follow-Up Report:** A document prepared by the college that follows up on the college's audit report and states the progress made on recommendations and affirmations.

**Observer:** A member of a College of Applied Arts and Technology (CAAT) who is significantly involved in ensuring the quality and relevance of educational programs at the institution such as a curriculum developer, curriculum reviewer, or quality manager.

**Quality Assurance Mechanisms:** In a college setting, quality assurance mechanisms can vary widely to meet different standards. For OCQAS, these mechanisms are both mandatory and guiding from an institutional perspective. They have been documented and implemented to ensure quality and continuous improvement. These mechanisms often include, but are not limited to, structures, policies, practices, processes, programs, guides, templates, plans, committees, forums, regulations, legislation, by-laws, and various tools.

## **GOVERNING POLICY**

Quality Assurance Audit Policy

## **RELATED POLICIES**

Audit Evaluation Framework Policy

Appeals Policy

Quality Assurance Standards Policy

**RELATED DOCUMENTS**

Guidelines and Framework

Evolution of OCQAS Standards and Requirements

Management Board Review of CQAAP Reports