



POLICY AND PROCEDURE MANUAL

Policy Title:	ACADEMIC PROGRAM QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEWS	Area of Responsibility: VICE PRESIDENT, ACADEMIC
Policy Section:	ACADEMIC	
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1.6.2 Academic Program Quality Assurance Reviews

1. Preamble

The Minister’s Binding Policy Directive issued under the Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities clearly establishes that quality assurance is a responsibility of every college. Under that Directive, “Colleges are to establish mechanisms for the review of their programs of instruction to ensure ongoing quality, relevancy and currency.” (Section F. 1 of the Framework for Programs of Instruction).

The essential function of the program review process is to provide a method for ongoing quality improvement in the design, development and delivery of curriculum to our learners. By ensuring quality assurance reviews, the College participates in evidence-based decision-making and promotes accountability for the quality of academic programming.

The quality assurance review process is designed to articulate with and support the Program Quality Assurance Process Audit initiative (PQAPA) or the accreditation process of the Ontario College Quality Assurance Service (OCQAS) and the Postsecondary Education Quality Assessment Board (PEQAB).

Quality assurance reviews ensure the health and vibrancy of academic programs by:

- assessing curriculum in a program of study for compliance with ministry requirements and and outcome-based education standards
- comparing curriculum in a program of study with professional, business, industrial, or community standards and needs
- examining the financial viability and efficiency of the programs
- evaluating feedback from the various stakeholders of the programs especially of students, graduates and employers
- assessing a variety of performance indicators and other data relating to the program and its historical operation

2. Extent of Application

This policy and its accompanying procedures and templates apply to all members of the College community who are responsible for or involved in the delivery of academic programs that must conform to the Framework for Programs of Instruction contained in the Minister's Binding Policy Directive issued by the Minister of Training, Colleges, and Universities. This policy, therefore, includes the traditional academic programs offered through the College's post-secondary academic schools as well as those programs offered through any St. Clair College department that are credentialed and approved through the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities and approved through the College's Board of Governors such as the Continuing Education department.

3. Variations from this Policy

This policy is intended to establish the broad basis for Quality Assurance reviews of academic programs. Specific components of the policy implementation and application may vary or develop additional components or requirements as the processes mature over time. These components include the protocols or processes to be followed as well as templates and directives of the Academic Sector. Additions, modifications or deletions to the actual processes or practices must be approved by the Vice President, Academic. If in the opinion of the Vice President, Academic a substantial variation or departure from the intent or purpose of this policy is being contemplated, the Vice President, Academic may address the variation at the Senior Operations Group for consideration and approval as a modification to this policy. Otherwise, the actual processes and components of the review will be determined by the Academic Sector with the approval of the Vice President, Academic.

4. Academic Quality Assurance Program Review Process

4.1. The academic quality assurance program review processes shall consist of:

- Firstly, a regular annual review of program-related data by the coordinator and faculty (the program team), and
- Secondly, a comprehensive cyclical and/or ongoing review that focuses on the currency and relevance of the program curriculum and its compliance with outcome-based education and ministry requirements.

4.2. All academic programs at the college will complete the review of program-related data on an annual basis.

4.3. All academic programs at the college will complete the comprehensive, cyclical Quality Assurance Review within a time period no greater than five years.

5. Regular Annual Internal review of program-related data

- 5.1. The annual review of program-related data shall consist of such items as historical numbers of applications and registrations in the program, attrition/retention rates for the program, grade ranges by course, Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for the program, course feedback by students (IFSs), program costing and such other data as determined by the Vice President, Academic.
- 5.2. Wherever possible the data and information for the annual review of program-related data should be provided by the College in an electronic format.
- 5.3. After reviewing and analyzing the program-related data, the coordinator and faculty (the program team) will develop any appropriate action plans including proposed modifications to the curriculum or its delivery.
- 5.4. The resulting review and action plan must be reviewed and endorsed by the School Chair who will provide feedback to the coordinator and faculty (the program team) on the feasibility of any proposed action plan.
- 5.5. After the endorsement of the action plan, the School Chair is responsible to ensure that the action plan is implemented before the next annual internal review of program-related data.
- 5.6. The responsibility for ensuring the completion of the annual internal review of program-related data resides with the School Chair who shall ensure that the review is completed according to communicated deadlines and that the action plan is realistic and feasible.
- 5.7. The annual review of program data is part of the professional responsibility of the faculty members teaching in the program and is required to be completed each year according to the directives of the Academic Sector.

6. Cyclical Quality Assurance Review of Program Curriculum

- 6.1. The cyclical Quality Assurance Review of program curriculum and its compliance with outcome-based education requirements and ministry compliance shall take place for each program at least once every five years according to a rotation developed by the Executive Director, Quality Assurance and the Vice President, Academic with input by the School Chairs.
- 6.2. School Chairs, in consultation with the Vice President, Academic, may determine that a particular academic program should undergo a cyclical review of curriculum based on special circumstances, in which case, the five year cycle of reviews shall be adjusted to reflect this out-of-sequence review.
- 6.3. The cyclical Quality Assurance Review of program curriculum shall consist of the following components:

- i. A review of the occupational relevancy of the program curriculum conducted by industry or community experts to determine whether graduates from the program have the appropriate knowledge and skills for employment in the program's profession or trade.
 - ii. Input by means of surveys and/or focus groups from current students, graduates, employers, and other stakeholders as determined by the Coordinator, Chair or the Chair's supervisor.
 - iii. A review by the coordinator and faculty (the program team) of the currency and relevance of the vocational learning outcomes for the program and the consequent updating and revision of those vocational learning outcomes. This review must be facilitated by the Quality Assurance Office.
 - iv. A review by the coordinator and faculty (the program team) of the currency of the course outlines for the courses that are delivered in the program and the compliance of the program course outlines with outcome-based education and college policy and practices.
 - v. The mapping of the course learning outcomes to the program vocational learning outcomes as well as the compliance of the program to requirements relating to general education and essential employability skills outcomes. This review must be facilitated by the Quality Assurance Office.
- 6.4. The responsibility for conducting the cyclical Quality Assurance Reviews resides with the School Chair with assistance and advice provided by the Quality Assurance Office.
- 6.5. The Review Coordinator for the cyclical Quality Assurance Review will typically be the current Program Coordinator but the School Chair may designate a different faculty member as the Review Coordinator for the purpose of conducting the Quality Assurance review processes.

7. Exceptions to Requirement for a Cyclical Quality Assurance Review

- 7.1. Where an existing, mandated process for external certification already exists, the program Coordinator may request and School Chair may recommend to the Executive Director, Quality Assurance that the results of the certification process would meet some or all of the requirements for a cyclical Quality Assurance review of the program curriculum.
- 7.2. On the recommendation of the Executive Director, Quality Assurance and with the approval of the Vice President, Academic, an academic program with a mandated accreditation process will not need to engage in a full cyclical review of program curriculum. However, the accredited program must still complete a mapping of the course learning outcomes to the program outcomes/competencies. The mapping of the Essential Employability Skills outcomes is required as well as the identification of the number and type of assessments. Other components of the cyclical Quality Assurance review process may also be required as deemed appropriate by the Vice President, Academic on the recommendation of the Executive Director, Quality Assurance.

8. Protocols, Guidelines and Templates

- 8.1. For further information relating to the details of the annual review of program-related data and the various components of the cyclical Quality Assurance Review of curriculum, please see the appropriate protocols, guidelines and templates approved for current use by the Vice President, Academic. The current, approved protocols, guidelines and templates are available from the Quality Assurance Office.

Appendix A

QA Program Review Processes and Relationships

