Queen's University Quality Assurance Processes Cyclical Program Review Guidance for Review Teams

Introduction

The purpose of this document is to outline the role of review teams in Cyclical Program Review, and to provide guidance to reviewers. For any questions, contact ququap@queensu.ca.

Role of Review Teams in Cyclical Program Review

Independent expert review is foundational to the Quality Assurance process for Ontario's universities. The Cyclical Program Review of existing programs is the key quality assurance process aimed at assessing the quality of existing academic programs, identifying ongoing improvements to programs, and ensuring continuing relevance of the program to students and other stakeholders. The Cyclical Program Review consists of the following elements:

- The self-study provides an internal perspective on institutional priorities and their alignment with program objectives and program-level learning outcomes, program strengths and opportunities, and program goals for continuous improvement.
- The external review provides an external perspective on the programs and makes recommendations for continuous improvement.
- The internal responses to the external review address the recommendations and generate a plan for their implementation.
- The required program changes identified in the Implementation Plan become the basis of a continuous improvement process.

The Cyclical Program Review process takes the following shape:

Cyclical Program Review

Monitoring and Continuous Improvement
The unit, with the Faculty Dean, implements recommendations for continuous improvement and creates interim progress reports, looking ahead to the next full review.

Initiation of Review
The unit and Dean(s) are notified of the review and are oriented to the Cyclical Program Review Process.

Institutional Approval and Reporting
The Provost approves the FAR/IP and it is submitted to the Senate and the Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance.

Development of Self-Study
The unit creates their Self-Study in consultation with support services: the CTL, SGSPA, the Library, the OIRP, and the HREO.

Internal Responses
The unit, the Faculty Dean(s), and the Dean, SGSPA respond to the Review Team Report. The SCPRC creates a Final Assessment Report and Implementation Plan.

External Review
Reviewers participate in a site visit then create a Review Team Report including recommendations for continuous improvement.

Roles of External and Internal Reviewers

External reviewers are chosen because of their knowledge and standing in their field, and expertise in academic administration and curriculum development. Internal reviewers are chosen because of their knowledge about Queen's and its administrative and academic structures, for their perspective on curriculum development, and for their experience with program reviews. During the site visit and reporting writing stage, the internal reviewer will provide important insights about Queen's so that any conclusions drawn, and/or recommendations made by the review team, are done with an understanding of how changes are implemented in a decentralized university like Queen's.

All members of the review team must be at arm's length from the program(s) under review. The report is written by the external reviewers and should be submitted within four weeks of the site visit to quqap@queensu.ca. Review Team Reports will be checked for completeness upon receipt. If the report is not completed, or requires clarification, the Provost's office may reach out for amendments.

Review Team Report

The Review Team Report is created using a template which follows the requirements set out by the Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance. As reviewers compose the Review Team Report, they should consider both the quality and the sustainability of the programs under review, remembering that Cyclical Program Reviews are evaluations of programs, not units.

Program **quality** is evaluated in the following ways:

- Creative practices and innovation.
- Program alignment with university priorities, such as the [Principal's Strategic Framework](#), academic integrity, and I-EDIAA.
- Academic alignment of program-level learning outcomes with degree-level expectations, modes of delivery, assessments, teaching activities, and program structure.
- Quality indicators such as program enrolments, retention rates, and graduation rates.

Program **sustainability** is evaluated in the following ways:

- Availability of qualified faculty to support the program, as well as support staff, financial resources, and physical resources (bearing in mind that decisions about faculty complement are made at the Faculty Dean level).
- Use of supporting services such as the library, Student Academic Success Services, Information Technology Services, and the Centre for Teaching and Learning.
- Effectiveness of plans to monitor program quality.

Reviewers should carefully consider programs' strengths and weaknesses as well as where and how improvements can be made. The Cyclical Program Review process is broad-based, reflective, and forward-looking: it focuses on where a program is now and where it will be in the next 7 years. As with all Quality Assurance processes at Queen's, its foundational operating principle is that quality requires continuous improvement.

Guidance for Creating Recommendations
- Recommendations should focus on specific steps to be taken that will lead to the continuous improvement of the programs, such as curriculum development and constructive alignment.
- There should be a maximum of 10-12 recommendations. Recommendations should be clear, concise, actionable, and non-repetitive.
- Queen's University has modified the [Degree Level Expectations](#) to include considerations of I-EDIAA (Indigenization – Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, Anti-Racism, and Accessibility). Reviewers are encouraged to pay special attention to these sections of the Self-Study.
- Reviewers should consider timelines for recommendations, including short-term goals (18 months) as well as longer-term goals (several years).
- Reviewers should distinguish between those recommendations the program can itself take and those that require external action and should aim to provide more of the former.
- Reviewers should look to the Self-Study for goals the unit has set for the programs being reviewed and consider including those in their recommendations.