



# Quality Assurance Process

## Creating an Effective Self-Study

In Cyclical Program Reviews, the Self-Study is the mechanism by which programs communicate and document their quality assurance practices and is a key element of the Review Team's evaluation when making their recommendations. A Review Team will use the Self-Study to determine:

- Are the learning outcomes of the program(s) appropriate?
- Are the learning outcomes clearly mapped according to the program(s) and degree level expectations?
- Are the curriculum design and modes of delivery appropriate?
- Is the quality and distribution of the faculty's expertise adequate to support the learning outcomes of the program(s)?
- Does the program(s) foster an enriching student learning experience?
- Does the program(s) use existing resources (physical, financial, human) appropriately and effectively?

The following table includes required elements (marked with an asterisk '\*') and other suggested best practices to help you create an effective Self-Study that will answer these key questions, and more:

Feature	Best Practices	Practices to Avoid
<b>Goal/Purpose</b>	The Self-study is a vehicle for continuous improvement and reflects an honest self-analysis of the program's strengths and weaknesses, and considers where and how improvements can be made	Defending or justifying the status quo and/or meeting the minimum criteria
<b>Focus of the Self-study</b>	<p>The Self-study is broad-based, reflective, forward-looking and includes critical analysis of the program(s)*.</p> <p>When a single omnibus Self-study is used for the review of different program levels, or delivery modes, each discrete program should be readily identifiable, analyzed, and evaluated*.</p>	<p>Writing in a descriptive manner rather than being reflective and analytical.</p> <p>Focusing on past-practice without including how analysis of past-practice will inform continuous improvement going forward.</p> <p>Not clearly identifying discrete program elements when more than one program is being addressed in a single Self-study.</p> <p>Focusing on the academic faculty and/or school rather than the program(s).</p>
<b>Process</b>	<p>The methodology/guidance for preparing a Self-study suggests methods for data collection from a variety of resources and describes the importance of good record-keeping.</p> <p>The guidance contains a clear description of how the views of students (past and present), faculty, and staff are to be obtained*.</p> <p>The Self-study includes a description of how it was prepared, including details on how the views of faculty, staff, and students were obtained and considered*.</p>	<p>The methodology/guidance for the Self-study is shared after key elements of the Self-study have been completed or is not developed at all.</p> <p>The views of other faculty, staff and students are not obtained and/or considered.</p> <p>The process for drafting and finalizing the Self-study is ad-hoc.</p>

<b>Record Keeping</b>	The program(s) have a plan for record-keeping related to the development of the Self-study including, accurate records of feedback, responses to feedback, and signoffs, which is accessible for future reference.	Records relating to the Self-study are difficult to access and/or not readily available for future reference.
<b>Authorship</b>	The Self-study results from a participatory, self-critical process and documents involvement in its preparation of all faculty and staff in the program, as well as current and recently graduated students.	The Self-study is written by a single person, without evidence of consultation with (or the knowledge of) the program's faculty, staff and students.
<b>Student Involvement</b>	<p>The mechanisms for securing active student involvement in the preparation of the Self-study are established in the methodology/guidance.</p> <p>Students have an active role through the development process.</p> <p>Data from student surveys, focus groups, or other mechanisms is used in the self-analysis and includes data from a few graduated cohorts as well as current students.</p> <p>An orientation session and/or guidance is available for students participating in the development of the Self-study that describes the purpose of the Self-study, the role of the CPR in continuous improvement, and the IQAP in general.</p>	<p>There is no effective plan in place for student consultation and/or participation.</p> <p>Students may be consulted, but data collected from student consultations/surveys is not incorporated into the self-analysis.</p> <p>Students may be consulted, but they are not provided with a sufficient orientation to understand the process or their role.</p> <p>Student data relates to current students only; data from recent graduates has not been collected and/or analyzed.</p>
<b>Use of Previous Reviews</b>	Concerns and recommendations from previous reviews (Final Assessment Report and Implementation Plan, and Follow-up Reports) are treated as a tool for continuous improvement with descriptions of how these have been addressed to indicate that concerns and recommendations have been synthesized and considered in the larger context of how the program(s) approaches continuous improvement and program review*.	<p>The program's responses to concerns and recommendations from previous reviews may be included but there is no indication that they have been addressed or substantively informed the program's approach to continuous improvement.</p> <p>No reference to concerns and recommendations from previous reviews is made.</p>

<b>Treatment of Items Flagged for Follow-up in Monitoring Reports or Quality Council (1<sup>st</sup> review of a new program)</b>	Issues flagged for follow-up by the Quality Council at the time of a program's approval and/or through the new program's monitoring process are treated as a tool for continuous improvement and addressed in the Self-study. Descriptions of how these have been addressed indicate that these issues have been synthesized and considered in the larger context of how the program approaches continuous improvement and program review*.	The program's responses to issues raised in follow-up reports may be included but there is no indication that they have been addressed or substantively informed the program's approach to continuous improvement.  No reference to issues raised in a first CPR is made.
<b>Treatment of Data</b>	Program-related data and measures of performance, including applicable national and professional standards are analyzed and used as the basis for performance evaluation. Data analysis contributes to the assessment of strengths and weaknesses of the program*.	Raw data are attached as appendices or used only in a descriptive manner.
<b>Evaluation of Criteria</b>	The Self-study addresses each of the evaluation criteria and quality indicators specified in the IQAP and QAF for each discrete program being reviewed.	The Self-study does not address each of the evaluation criteria and quality indicators specified in the IQAP and QAF for each discrete program being reviewed.
<b>Areas of Strength/ Unique Curriculum/ Program Innovations/ Creative Components/ High Impact Practices</b>	The Self-study addresses the program's areas of strength, unique curricular elements, program innovations, creative components, and other high impact practices and indicates how best practices will be shared within the program and across the institution*.  The Self-study indicates that best practices in one area will be used as a driver for continuous improvement in other areas.	The Self-study does not include references to the program's unique curricular elements, program innovations, creative components, and other high impact practices. Or, if these are included, they are listed and not integrated into the program's approach to continuous improvement.
<b>Areas for Improvement/ Enhancement/ Curricular Change</b>	The Self-study notes any areas for improvement, areas holding promise for enhancement and/or opportunities for curricular change identified by staff, faculty and students. The Self-study includes analysis of these areas and/or plans for incorporating these suggestions into concrete actions*.	The Self-study responds to the identification of areas for improvement, areas for holding promise for enhancement and/or opportunities for curricular change in a defensive manner.

	The Self-study takes a forward-looking approach to any identified areas for improvement, enhancement and/or curricular change.	
<b>Assessment of Relevant Academic Services</b>	<p>The Self-study includes a clear assessment of the adequacy of all relevant academic services that directly contribute to the academic quality of each program under review*.</p> <p>Each relevant academic service has had input into the assessment of the adequacy of the respective services.</p>	<p>The Self-study does not include a clear assessment of the adequacy of all relevant academic services that directly contribute to the academic quality of each program under review.</p> <p>Relevant academic services have not been consulted regarding their contributions to the program under review.</p>

Table 1 Adapted from the [OUC Quality Assurance Guide](#)

The requirements for a Cyclical Program Review Self-study can be found in Section 5.1.3. of the Quality Assurance Framework (QAF)

Click [here](#) for information about the review process for Joint Programs offered by two or more Ontario institutions.

For additional information on this requirement or the QUQAP process, please contact [gugap@queensu.ca](mailto:gugap@queensu.ca).