



Cyclical Program Review

A guidebook to accompany the Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP).

Updated February 2025

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1. Introduction

Cyclical Program Reviews (CPR) are critical to the ongoing improvement of the quality of our programs at Ontario Tech University. All programs are required to undergo a review at least once every eight years, with the assistance of the Centre for Institutional Quality Enhancement (CIQE).

The key components of the process include a self-study, external assessment and response, and the development of a plan for improvement. Where the program is also undergoing another external review at the same time (as in the case of accreditation) it is important to ensure that the objectives of all review processes are met through the course of the review.

2. Background

The Ontario Universities' Council on Quality Assurance (Quality Council), created by the Council of Ontario Universities (COU), is an independent, arm's length body that has been vested with the authority to ensure institutional compliance with program audit guidelines.

In 2010, a Quality Assurance Framework was established by the Quality Council to align quality assurance among all universities in Ontario, align Ontario universities with international quality standards, and to promote continual program improvements.

Every University in the province of Ontario is subject to an audit by the Quality Council to ensure compliance.

Links:

[Ontario Tech University Centre for Institutional Quality Enhancement](#)
[Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance \(Quality Council\)](#)
[Quality Assurance Framework](#)

3. Timeline

For a summary of the steps in the Cyclical Program Review process, please download the [Cyclical Program Review Process At-A-Glance](#).

To view the steps in the required governance process for the Cyclical Program Review process, please see the [Cyclical Program Review Governance Flowchart](#).

The cyclical program review allows for an in-depth, critical look at the program and follows the 2-year timeframe below.

Timeframe	Description
Yr. 1, April	• Proposed Internal Assessment Team form submitted to CIQE
Yr. 1, May	• Overview Meeting hosted by CIQE
Yr. 1, June	• CIQE to send blank Self-Study template to Assessment Team

Yr. 1, June-August	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and enhancement of Program Learning Outcomes
Yr. 1, August	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CIQE to send data to Assessment Team
Yr. 1, November	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • List of potential External Reviewers submitted to the CIQE for review by Provost
Yr. 1, December	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft of Self-Study completed and presented to CIQE and subsequently presented to Faculty Council for review • External Reviewers contacted by CIQE
Yr. 2, January	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revisions to Self-Study completed • Final Self-Study and cover letters provided by Dean to CIQE
Yr. 2, February	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-Study and supporting documents sent to External Reviewers by CIQE
Yr. 2, March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site visit by External Reviewers
Yr. 2, April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • External Reviewers Report submitted
Yr. 2, May-June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedback on ERR solicited from program faculty and IAT • Preparation of Program and Decanal responses to ERR and Implementation Plan (IP) • Feedback on IP solicited through Faculty Council
Yr. 2, July-August	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IP reviewed by Resource Committee • Preparation of Final Assessment Report (FAR) and Executive Summary (ES) by CIQE • FAR package submitted for governance
18-Month Follow-up on recommendations (from date of Response to External Reviewers Report submission)	

4. Internal Assessment Team

The Internal Assessment Team (IAT) is assigned by the Dean and approved by the Provost. The IAT is comprised of faculty, staff and students (current or recent graduate of the program). The Dean must also designate a faculty member as the Chair of the IAT.

The memorandum for the selection of the IAT is sent to the Deans by the Provost during the spring of year one of the program review and is to be submitted by the Dean to CIQE within a month of the notice.

5. Overview Presentation with Faculty

Following the selection of the IAT, CIQE will provide a presentation and/or schedule an overview meeting with the members selected for the IAT. These introductory sessions are designed to provide context and a breakdown of the key components of the program review process.

6. Learning Outcomes Development

The IAT will engage in a program learning outcome enhancement process utilizing resources provided by CIQE and the Teaching and Learning Centre (TLC). It is strongly recommended that the IAT and other program faculty participate in the program

learning outcome sessions or make alternate arrangements for the revisions to be reviewed and approved by CIQE and TLC prior to scheduling the External Review. The IAT is also responsible for mapping the program learning outcomes to the appropriate degree level expectations and then to their current course offerings.

Additional assistance with mapping program learning outcomes to degree level expectations will also be made available if needed.

Link:

[OCAV's Undergraduate and Graduate Degree Level Expectations](#)

7. Self-Study

The self-study is the report prepared by the IAT in consultation with the Dean, faculty members, support staff, administration, current students, and graduates. The self-study report is designed to take a reflective, analytical and critical look at the program to recognize strengths and challenges and identify areas of improvement to enhance the quality of the program.

A critical component of the self-study includes candid feedback from the student population. As such, a resource has been created for the IAT to consider various options of [involving students in the program review process](#). This resource also provides suggestions on keeping student representatives on the IAT engaged in the program review process.

CIQE will provide the self-study template with data to the IAT Chair following completion of the Program Learning Outcomes enhancement process. CIQE also obtains the Library reports which is required in the self-study appendices. Upon completion of the report, the Faculty, and the Dean, will review the self-study brief to ensure that it presents the full range of evidence to support an assessment of program quality; this includes the Dean's sign-off that acknowledges that the [evaluation criteria](#) has been addressed. The self-study will then be sent to CIQE for review and then must be presented at Faculty Council for consultation. The agenda and minutes from the Faculty Council meeting when the self-study is accepted are to be forwarded to CIQE.

Link:

[Quality Council Framework – Evaluation Criteria](#)
[Best Practices for Student Engagement Throughout the CPR Process](#)

For reference purposes only:

[Self-Study Report template \(undergraduate\)](#)
[Self-Study Report template \(graduate\)](#)

8. External Reviewers

The Dean, in consultation with the IAT, will recommend to the Provost, at least 5 individuals to serve as external reviewers of the Program. The reviewers must be

external to the University, will normally be tenured or equivalent, be active and respected in their field, have program management experience, and be at arm's length from the program under review. The proposed list, along with a rationale and biographical statement for each reviewer, is signed by the Dean and approved by the Provost. CIQE will contact the reviewers as ranked on the form until two reviewers have been achieved.

Note: At least one reviewer must be from a Canadian post-secondary institution and it is preferred they are from an Ontario institution to provide provincial context.

For reference purposes only:

[Proposed External Reviewers \(undergraduate/graduate\) template](#)

9. Site Visit

Under normal circumstances, the site visit occurs over a two-day period and is hosted on campus. For programs with significant online course delivery, or under special circumstances, arrangements can be made with the external reviewers to host the visit online.

The site visit is an opportunity for the external reviewers to meet with the various stakeholders of the program and the University regarding the self-study. The IAT is responsible for ensuring faculty, staff, students, graduates and the Dean are available for the site visit and to also schedule the Provost to attend. The IAT is also responsible for booking rooms, tours, catering service, etc. CIQE will be responsible for coordinating the site visit with the external reviewers and also providing the IAT with a schedule template.

Ontario Tech has a strong preference towards in person participation for external site visits.

10. External Reviewers Report

Within one month of the site visit, the external reviewers will submit a report with recommendations for quality enhancement to the program. The reviewers report addresses the contents of both the self-study report and the program quality review evaluation criteria set out in Quality Council Framework.

Links:

[Quality Council Framework – Evaluation Criteria](#)

For reference purpose only:

[External Reviewers' Report \(undergraduate/graduate\) template](#)

11. Response to External Reviewers

Within two months following receipt of the External Reviewers Report, the Program and Dean each get 30 days to prepare separate responses to the recommendations of the external reviewers. Included in this timeframe, the IAT Chair must solicit feedback on the response from program faculty and, in consultation with the IAT, will prepare

and send to the Dean the Program's response to the reviewers' report. The Dean will prepare a separate decanal response and an implementation plan. The implementation plan will include resource requirements, a timeline for acting on and monitoring the implementation of the recommendations, and person/area responsible for acting on the recommendations. The Dean solicits Faculty feedback on the Implementation Plan through Faculty Council and then it is reviewed by the Provost through the Academic Resource Committee (ARC).

CIQE prepares a Final Assessment Report (FAR) and Executive Summary to accompany the Implementation Plan. This package is presented to the appropriate standing committee of Academic Council (USC or GSC) for approval. The appropriate documents are then delivered through University governance for information, posted on the Ontario Tech website, and provided to the Quality Council.

It is expected that the reports and recommendations will be afforded an appropriate level of confidentiality.

Links:

[Final Assessment Reports](#)

For reference purposes only:

[Program's Response to External Reviewers' Report template](#)

[Decanal Response to External Reviewers' Report template](#)

12. 18-Month Follow-up Report

The Dean of the Faculty is required to complete a brief follow-up report 18 months following the response to external reviewers' report. This follow-up is an accountability piece to ensure the action items based on the recommendations are being achieved and any items deemed as 'outstanding' may warrant further follow-up between the Dean and Provost, via ARC. A summary of the 18-month follow-up report is prepared by CIQE, approved by USC or GSC, delivered through University governance for information, and posted on the Ontario Tech website.

Link:

[18 Month Follow-up Reports](#)

The [Centre for Institutional Quality Enhancement \(CIQE\)](#) is committed to building a university culture of quality enhancement and continuous program improvement. Please direct any inquiries to cique@ontariotechu.ca.