



Credit Program Review - Degrees Procedure	
Parent Policy: Program Quality Assurance Policy	
Category: Academic	Approval Date: February 18, 2022
Procedure Owner: Academic Policy Committee	Effective Date: July 1, 2022
Procedure Administrator: Quality Improvement of Programs Committee	Review Period: 5 Years
Associated Procedures and Documents Accredited / Externally Approved Credit Program Review Procedure Curriculum Development, Redevelopment, and Documentation Procedure External Reviewer Procedure (QIPR) QIPR Self-Study Outline for Credit Programs Program Development Procedure Quality Improvement of Programs Committee Terms of Reference QIPR 2-Year Process Flowchart Standard Data Package Contents Credit Program Review (QIPR) CAQC Quality Assessment and Quality Assurance Handbook	

PREFACE

Degree program review is a cyclical process for evaluating and continuously enhancing the quality and currency of programs. The evaluation is conducted through a process of self-evaluation, followed by peer evaluation via reviewers external to the program or department, usually also external to the organization. It is a comprehensive analysis of program quality, utilizing a wide variety of data about the program.

To be effective, the system of degree program review must be straightforward, objective, and transparent. It must be carried out in a timely manner and implemented deliberately. The result of the degree program review process is a clear picture of the program's strengths, challenges, and opportunities. These outcomes are used to inform strategic planning and resource allocation at program, department, and polytechnic levels.

PURPOSE

The purposes of a degree program review are to:

- Ensure that programs are maintained at the highest possible level of quality based on the guidelines set forth by the Campus Alberta Quality Council (CAQC).
- Provide a basis for continuous quality of programs.
- Help ensure the viability of the programs.
- Guide strategic planning and decision-making regarding programs.
- Ensure that programs serve the mission and vision of Red Deer Polytechnic.

PROCEDURE

1. Program Reviews for new degrees are carried out on year 4 and year 6 from the date they were initially offered by RDP. It will then be normally organized on a five-year cycle.
2. The Quality Improvement of Programs Committee (QIPC) Co-Chairs set and maintain the Schedule for Program Reviews in consultation with the Associate Deans. Deans and the Vice President Academic (VPAP) are apprised of the Schedule. To provide the flexibility needed for continuous program improvement, the Associate Dean may request alterations to the process from the Co-Chairs of QIPC.

Preparation

1. In the year prior to the Program Review, the Associate Dean establishes and leads a steering committee, which includes program faculty member(s), a faculty member who does not teach in the program under review, and a Learning Designer. Institutional Research (IR) is a resource for the steering committee.
2. The Steering Committee gathers information and data to prepare for the Program Review.
3. IR provides a standard data package and guidance related to the structure, design, data analysis and processes of the review.
4. The Steering Committee creates a list of potential External Reviewers (see External Reviewers on Appendix 1 Section 2; Appendix 3).

Assessment

1. The steering committee, in consultation with program faculty, completes a self-study of the program through a process of critical inquiry, self-reflection, and consultation with stakeholders.
2. The steering committee, in consultation with the Associate Dean, determine the level of focus and detail following the CAQC Handbook. The typical areas of focus for the review may include, but are not limited to:
 - a. currency, relevance, and structure of program learning outcomes
 - b. curriculum content and delivery modes
 - c. alignment of curriculum with essential employability skills and core literacies
 - d. information literacy and library resources

- e. teaching and learning strategies and effectiveness
 - f. faculty currency and development
 - g. student experience and outcomes
 - h. student success and retention
 - i. graduate and employment outcomes
 - j. role of research and scholarship in the educational experience of learners
 - i. scholarly activity and professional development of academic staff within the program
 - ii. internal and external grants
 - iii. engagement of students in scholarly activities
 - k. feedback from Program Advisory Committees
 - l. adequacy of physical facilities, equipment, technology
 - m. alignment with external requirements, RDP's strategic plan and commitments to sustainability, equity, diversity and inclusion and innovative and virtual approaches to program and service delivery
 - n. ongoing recommended action plan for the program.
3. Degree Programs complete a curriculum review as part of their review with the guidance and support of the Learning Designers on the Steering Committee. For significant curriculum changes, please refer to the Curriculum Development, Redevelopment, and Documentation Procedures.
 4. Upon completion of the Self-Study, the Steering Committee presents the Self-Study and Draft Action Plan to the School Council in consultation with the Dean and VPAP, and prior to it being sent to the External Review Team and the Internal Participant Observer.
 5. For all Degree Programs a qualified External Review Team participates in the review by reviewing the self-study, visiting the campus; and preparing a report for the steering committee. Upon selecting the External Review Team, the Associate Dean works with the Dean of Teaching, Learning and Research, to coordinate the contracting and site visit.
 6. Upon the approval of the Self-Study by the Dean and the receipt of a signed contract from the External Review Team, the self-study and curriculum documentation are provided to the External Review Team and Internal Participant Observer prior to the scheduled site visit.
 7. The Steering Committee may seek additional clarification on the External Review Team's report through QIPC, through the Co-Chairs, and/or may choose to provide a response to the Report.
 8. Using the self-study and the External Review Team's report, the Associate Dean, in consultation with the School Council and Dean, develops an action plan. The Associate Dean forwards the self-study, the External Review Team's report, the steering committee's response to the External Review Team's report (if applicable) and action plan to the co-chairs of QIPC, prior to presenting the action plan to QIPC.

Implementation and Monitoring

1. The Associate Dean presents the final action plan to QIPC.
2. After the presentation, QIPC sends a confirmation memo to the VPAP indicating whether the QIPR is complete and any recommendations from QIPC.
3. QIPC posts the Program’s Action Plan to the Loop. The Program’s Self-Study, the Reviewer’s Report, and Program Response are held by the School.
4. Following presentation of the Action Plan, the Dean and Associate Dean operationalize Action Plan Items on a prioritized basis pending the next cyclical review.

TIMELINES AND SCHEDULE OF REVIEWS

COMPONENT	MAJOR RESPONSIBILITY	TIMELINE
Data Collection	Program Faculty, Learning Designers, Steering Committee	The steering committee will work with the Learning Designers and Program Chair (Faculty) to establish a schedule of expectations and timelines concerning data collection and reporting.
Self-study	Steering Committee with the support of Learning Designers	4 to 8 months depending on the complexity of the review
External Review Team Visit and Report	Associate Dean Steering Committee (Select During Preparation)	1.5 days to 3 days for site visit; Report expected within 45 days of site visit.
External Review Team Response Report	Associate Dean (and Steering Committee)	Response is sent to External Review Team within 30 Days of receipt of the Report.
Action Plan	Associate Dean, in consultation with the School Council and Dean	Action Plan is edited as part of the response to the External Review Team
Implementation of Action Plan	Dean and Associate Dean	Ongoing before next Cyclical Review

Appendix 1: Degree Program Review Specifics

Red Deer Polytechnic's (RDP) Degree Program Review process is a quality assurance exercise that facilitates continuous improvement. It is designed to ensure that RDP continues to provide relevant programs that meet provincial and national expectations for efficacy and consistency. The process is faculty-driven via the Quality Improvement Program Council (QIPC), is student-focused and academically relevant.

Components of the Degree Program Review

- Self-study
- External evaluation team's report following a site visit
- Response report

Section 1 The Self-Study

In the first stage of the review, the steering committee lead by the Associate Dean, conducts a self-study. The self-study provides an opportunity for RDP to review its processes, identify successes, seek resolutions to challenges and consider new opportunities. It should present program activities as they align with the Faculty Strategic Plan. The resulting document is a critical reflection of the issues and challenges facing the program and identifies its strengths and unique attributes. The self-study should consider the student profile and enrollment data, existing program design, curricular infrastructure and learning environment, and it should consider future directions. It may cite opportunities for potential growth.

Programs should report on their reflections in a manner and sequence most appropriate for the discipline. Appendix 2 highlights core requirements that CAQC proposes as essential contents of the self-study. Where possible, the self-study should include feedback from students, alumni, transfer institutions, employers and graduates.

The self-study, once approved by the Dean, QIPC, and Academic Council (if required), will be submitted to the VPAP in advance of distribution to the External Review Team. As materials are expected to be provided to the External Review Team (including the participant observer) one month prior to the site visit, the VPAP will normally receive the report within six weeks of the site visit.

Section 2 The External Reviewers

The second stage of the process is the site visit, where external peer reviewers are invited to confirm the information contained in the self-study. They subsequently meet in person (or by teleconference) with the VPAP, Dean(s), Associate Vice President, Teaching, Learning and Research (AVP-TLR), Program Faculties and the steering committee.

The External Review Team is normally composed of three external members and one internal participant observer. The reviewers' commitment is essential to the quality of commentary provided in the External Review Team's report. Every effort should be made to identify reviewers who have excellent academic qualifications and credentials in relation to the program area and online learning. External Review Teams for professional programs should include at least one expert from outside of academia. The CAQC expresses comments concerning academic experts in Appendix 3.

With the Dean's approval, the QIPC Chair submits a ranked list of four to six potential reviewers to the AVP-TLR (identified by the steering committee during the preparation stage). Reviewers will normally be from Canadian universities. For each recommendation, a brief rationale should be provided and any indications of conflict of interest should be disclosed. Any other known relationships or affiliations with RDP should also be disclosed.

The External Review Team then composes a report which evaluates the program with respect to the CAQC's Quality Assessment Standards; Additional Quality Assessment Standards for Programs Delivered in Blended, Distributed or Distance Modes (if applicable); and the Council of Ministers of Education Canada Degree Level Expectations. The report will also provide recommendations pertaining to issues raised in the self-study, to identify areas of strength to be preserved and areas where improvements may be cultivated.

To maintain the integrity of the process, on no account should Council members approach potential reviewers. The external reviewers should not be asked to provide presentations or give seminars or performances at RDP as part of their participation in the review.

Section 3 The External Reviewers' Site Visit or Teleconference

An agenda for the External Review Team's site visit or teleconference is developed collaboratively between the AVP-TLR, the Dean and the QIPC Chair. The site visit will normally open with a meeting of the External Review Team (including the participant observer), the VPAP and the Dean. The purpose of this meeting is to answer any general questions about RDP and to reiterate the purpose and structure of the program review process and the role of the participants. Reviewers subsequently meet with the QIPC Chair and the Dean together, with the Program Director individually, and with QIPC members.

Over the course of the one-and-a-half to three-day period, there should be an opportunity for the External Review Team to review core course materials either online or through a presentation by RDP's faculty or staff. Meetings with the broader program community, including faculty, tutors, academic experts, students and alumni, professionals, and administrative support staff, as appropriate, must also occur. The QIPC Chair is responsible for ensuring the availability of course materials, assessed capstone or other significant assignments (with students' permission) and for recruiting meeting participants. Student participants should be selected by peers, in consultation with the required regulatory body, as appropriate.

The reviewers are expected to manage their own time when they are not in scheduled meetings. At the end of the visit the reviewers should have an opportunity to meet with the VPAP and Dean to discuss the process and present an initial verbal report.

Section 4 The Reviewers' Report

The reviewers are asked to address the program's compliance with the CAQC's Quality Assessment Standards; Additional Quality Assessment Standards for Programs Delivered in Blended, Distributed or Distance Modes; and the Council of Ministers of Education Canada Degree Level Expectations. The report should also address questions raised by QIPC in the self-study and offer commendations and recommendations as the External Review Team deems appropriate.

The report is not expected to be more than 10 pages. It is normally due to the VPAP, within 45

days of the site visit at which time it will be provided to the Dean for distribution to the QIPC Chair, QIPC members and faculty as determined by the Dean.

Section 6 The Response Report

The following stage of the process is a Review Response Report, authored by the steering committee, approved by the Dean, and presented to the School Council for discussion. This report is the culmination of observations and ideas from both the self-study and the External Review Team's report. It is an overview of activities planned for the remainder of that review cycle along with timelines for implementation and strategies for measuring the effectiveness of those activities over time. The report will be presented to the co-chairs of QIPC, prior to presenting it to QIPC.

Once QIPC has discussed the external report and revisited the self-study, it will develop a response to the reports. This response report will summarize major themes from both the self-study and the External Review Team's report. It will indicate the activities envisaged for the remainder of that review cycle, along with timelines for implementation and strategies for measuring the effectiveness of those activities over time. Using the self-study and the Reviewer's report, the Associate Dean, in consultation with the School Council and Dean, develops an action plan. The Associate Dean forwards the self-study, the Reviewer's report, the steering committee's response to the Reviewer's report (if applicable) and action plan to the co-chairs of QIPC, prior to presenting the action plan to QIPC.

It is the responsibility of the Dean to determine whether a summary of the response report will be shared with the External Review Team, and when.

Each year, the QIPC Chair will be asked to indicate to the School Council, by way of an annual update, any progress on the implementation of action items raised in the response report, the measures on the effectiveness of those activities and how those results were used to improve recruitment and retention, curriculum, the learning environment, or other program dimensions. Such updates must be approved by the Dean prior to submission to the School Council.

Appendix 2: Essential Contents of the Self-Study

A. Executive Summary

- Describes the purpose and intended audience of the self-study exercise.
- Present major findings and recommendations, including areas of strengths and weaknesses, of the self-study.

B. Table of Contents

- Include a list of tables, figures and appendices.

C. Introduction

- Provide a brief overview of the institution and its programs.
 - i. Brief history
 - ii. Size (number of students and academic staff)
 - iii. Proportion of students and academic staff that are involved in degree programming.
 - iv. Type and number of credit programs
 - v. Proportion of degrees
 - vi. Description of academic governance
 - vii. Other characteristics
- Provide a description of the self-review process undertaken.
- Summary of the institution's understanding of, and commitment to major issues previously identified by CAQC (if any, from the last evaluation) and outline any resulting actions.
- Summary of the significant changes that have occurred since the organizational evaluation and each program review by CAQC including the RDP's evolution to a degree granting culture.
- Provide an overview of the monitoring and implementation processes to be adopted for recommendations arising from the current comprehensive evaluation.

Recommendation / Finding	Response	Actions Proposed	Responsibility	Timeframe	Expected Outcome

D. Main body

- The main body of the self-study should address each of the 10 categories below:
 - Description of the standard(s) under review
 - Related issues previously identified by Council and progress made towards these issues so far
 - Analysis of relevant strengths and challenges
 - Overview of the evidence considered, including any triangulation of information where applicable:
 - Relevant institutional objectives / plans / policies
 - Implementation processes and evidence of effectiveness
 - Outcomes and results
 - Improvements
 - A chart, table, or figure to illustrate the findings
 - Cross-references to other relevant materials in the report or in an appendix
 - Actions and monitoring processes to be adopted

E. Conclusions

- Provide a summary of the major conclusions that were reached and achievable recommendations (areas in which actions are required) that are offered in the report.

Appendix 3: CAQC's Recommendations Concerning Academic Experts

(Excerpts)

“Independent academic experts also play a pivotal role in the cyclical review of an institution's programs, the general purpose of which is to monitor the quality of approved degree programs on a continuing basis. As noted in chapter 5.2.3, after a first successful comprehensive evaluation, Council expects the institution to accept responsibility for a self-evaluation of its organization and programs. All institutions are expected to develop a systematic program evaluation plan which should be based on certain guidelines, one of which is that qualified independent academic experts should participate in the evaluation by reviewing the self-study, visiting the campus, and conducting on-site interviews, and preparing a report.”

- Academic experts must have doctoral degrees (or terminal degrees in the discipline) and hold (or have held) academic appointments at the senior level.
- Academic experts should have experience in the design, delivery or administration of a similar program offered at a degree-granting institution.
- In order to avoid conflict of interest and to ensure objective assessments, any connection between an academic expert and the institution must be disclosed. It would be wise to avoid potential and perceived conflicts by selecting experts who have no connection with the institution.
- CAQC acknowledges in certain cases the value to institutions of selecting as a reviewer an expert who was involved in the original review of the program (either one selected by the institution during the development of the proposal or one appointed as of CAQC's reviewer). However, CAQC advises institutions not to use the same reviewer more than twice.
- Given Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act considerations, RDP should seek permission from the expert for submission to CAQC of the expert's resume.
- Academic experts should be provided with terms of reference, including specific issues/areas to be addressed in the review.
- If an expert's cyclical review report fails to address critical elements of the program, the institution should consider engaging another expert to assist it in arriving at a rigorous program review.

[CAQC Handbook: Quality Assessment and Assurance](#)

First Edition, with revisions to March 2021

Appendix 4: Sample Terms of Reference

The following exemplifies terms of reference that an institution might give to independent academic experts who are engaged as part of a cyclical review of approved degree programs. They may be adapted to suit the institution and program being evaluated.

1. Does the program continue to meet national and international quality standards for degree programs, including Council's program assessment standards?
2. Does the program demonstrate an understanding of the needs of learners in the program (including the quality of the student experience and learning environment (including the face-to-face experience and virtual environment) and support system), and provide the appropriate academic breadth and depth of knowledge as outlined in the expectations for degree level standards in the Canadian Degree Qualifications Framework?
3. Does the program continue to offer similar learning outcomes and opportunities for vocational and educational advancement as those offered to graduates of similar programs at Canadian post-secondary institutions?
4. Does the institution have a sufficient number of appropriately qualified faculty who demonstrate evidence of scholarly activity as outlined in Council's Standards on academic staff for baccalaureate programs, its academic freedom and scholarship policy, and its protocol on Research and scholarship in Campus Alberta? Has the institution maintained a culture of scholarship commensurate with its status as a Canadian degree granting institution?
5. Does the institution have both the academic resources (e.g., supporting disciplines) and the infrastructure (e.g., classrooms, information resources, labs, offices, equipment, etc.) to sustain the program?
6. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the program? What recommendations, if any, should be made to improve the program?
7. What is the nature of the administrative support for the program (e.g., academic counseling, academic leadership)?

In order to assist academic experts with their assessments, it is recommended that they be provided with information about the monitoring of approved degree programs (in particular, sections 5.2.3 and 5.2.4 in Handbook), the Canadian Degree Qualifications Framework (Appendix B), and Council's program assessment standards (Section 4.3.1 and 4.4.1). In the case of undergraduate degrees, the applicable guidelines with respect to staffing, degree structure and curriculum content, etc. should also be provided.

[CAQC Handbook: Quality Assessment and Assurance](#)

First Edition, with revisions to March 2021