

2017/18 QUALITY ASSURANCE PROCESS AUDIT BRITISH COLUMBIA INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

The Summary was prepared by the Degree Quality Assessment Board Secretariat using the Institutional Report, the Expert Panel Report, and the Response to the Expert Panel Report. The British Columbia Institute of Technology was one of five public post-secondary institution volunteers to test the new Quality Assurance Process Audit during the pilot (2016-2018).

Introduction

The Terms of Reference for the Degree Quality Assessment Board establish that audits will be based on information provided by public post-secondary institutions to ensure that rigorous, ongoing program and institutional quality assessment processes have been implemented.

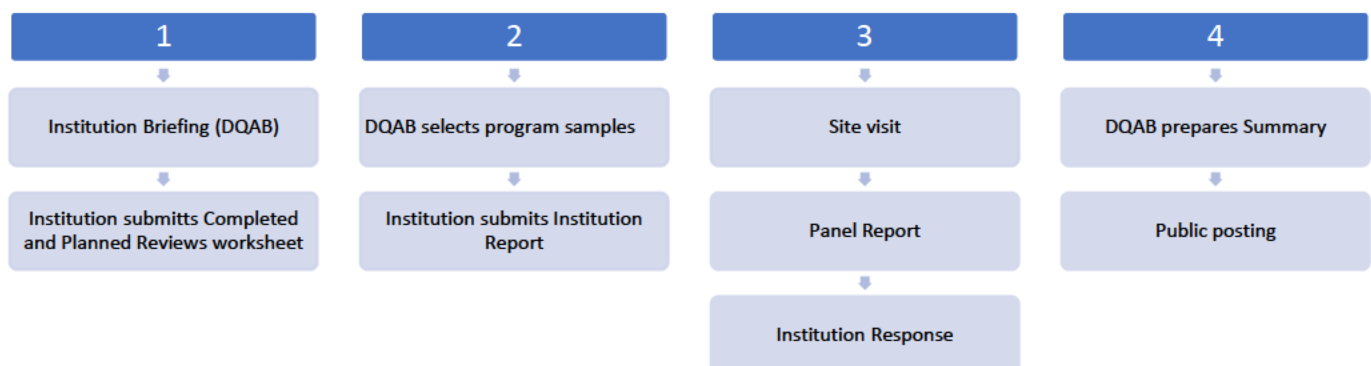
The main objectives of the quality assurance process audit (QAPA) are to ascertain that the institution:

- a) Continues to meet the program review policy requirements outlined in the DQAB's *Exempt Status Criteria and Guidelines* and the *Degree Program Review Criteria and Guidelines*, as applicable to the institution;
- b) Has and continues to meet appropriate program review processes and policies for all credential programs; and
- c) Applies its quality assurance process in relation to those requirements and responds to review findings appropriately.

The QAPA assessment is focused on answering questions in two categories:

1. Overall process
 - a. Does the process reflect the institution's mandate, mission, and values?
 - b. Is the scope of the process appropriate?
 - c. Are the guidelines differentiated and adaptable to respond to the needs and contexts of different units, e.g. faculties or departments or credential level?
 - d. Does the process promote quality improvement?
2. Review findings
 - a. Were the responses to the sample program review findings adequate?
 - b. Does the process inform future decision making?
 - c. Are the review findings appropriately disseminated?

Figure 1: QAPA Process



British Columbia Institute of Technology – Institutional Context

BCIT has a provincial mandate under the British Columbia *College and Institute Act* to serve as a polytechnic institution for British Columbia by offering technological and vocational instruction. It has five campuses in the Greater Vancouver area.

Table 1: Student enrollment (2016-2017)

	Undergraduate	Graduate	Degree Programs	Non-Degree Programs
Full-time equivalent (FTE)	21,576	75	2,067	19,584

BCIT offers a range of credentials including certificates, diplomas, bachelor and master's degrees. BCIT has developed, approved, and launched 25 bachelor degrees since 1995. BCIT began offering master's degrees in 2007 and now delivers four master's programs, two in partnership with other BC post-secondary institutions. BCIT is also one of 15 public post-secondary institutions delivering trades training, receiving 25% of the total BC Industry Training Authority public post-secondary funding.

Table 2: Program offerings (2016-2017)

Credential Type	# of Programs
Apprenticeship	25
Industry Partnership Certificate	4
Certificates and Diplomas	222
Baccalaureate Degree	25
Graduate Certificate	4
Master's Degree	4
Total	284

Institution Self-Study

The British Columbia Institute of Technology (BCIT) QAPA review was initiated with an Institution Briefing on April 7, 2017 at the Burnaby campus. The Institution Briefing provides an overview of the QAPA process and the documentation institutions are requested to submit. At its meeting on May 24, 2017, the Quality Assurance Audit Committee reviewed the Completed and Planned Review worksheet submitted by BCIT and selected three program reviews for sampling. The programs reviews selected were: Diploma in Electrical and Computer Engineering Technology, the Bachelor of Technology in Technology Management and the Bachelor of Business Administration. On September 28, 2017, BCIT submitted its Institution Report.

Self-Evaluation Approach

The Dean, Academic Planning and Quality Assurance held several information sessions with the Deans' Council, Associate Deans' Forum, School Quality Committee Chairs, and Education Council to provide an overview of the QAPA review and to ensure broad awareness

and support for the process. The APQA group held several planning meetings to outline key participants, milestones, and tasks, and also determined the membership of the Steering Committee to oversee preparation of the institution report.

A Steering Committee was formed to guide the institutional self-study process and prepare for the site visit. Steering Committee members included:

- President
- Vice President, Academic
- Associate Vice President, Education Support and Innovation
- Dean, Academic Planning and Quality Assurance
- Managers, Academic Planning and Quality Assurance
- Coordinator, Education Council
- School Deans, Associate Deans, and Program Heads (based on the programs selected for QAPA review)
- Dean, International
- Dean, Applied Research
- Chair, Education Council
- Registrar
- Director, Institutional Research
- Director, Educational Support Services
- Director, Enrolment Planning
- Director, Learning and Teaching Centre

The Steering Committee role included providing institution report content, reviewing and commenting on the report, assisting in the planning for the site visit, and participating during the site visit.

The institution report was drafted by APQA, with members of the Steering Committee providing data for components of the Institution Report.

Quality Assurance Policy and Practices

All academic policies are reviewed and approved by BCIT's Education Council and Board of Governors. Program quality and the associated policies, procedures, templates, and resources, are the responsibility of the Academic Planning and Quality Assurance Office (APQA), which resides within the Vice President Academic (VPA) Office. In addition to APQA, program areas are supported by a Learning and Teaching Centre and Institutional Research Office.

BCIT's broad mandate and broad range of program offerings requires quality assurance mechanisms that are universally rigorous but adaptable to the range of credential types. The APQA coordinates the submission of new programming, program reviews, and changes to existing programs for each of the six schools via a three year rolling Operating Plan. From the Operating Plan, resources are allocated to ensure that identified initiatives are achieved according to Institute expectations and timeframes. APQA works with school working groups to ensure that all items within the Operating Plan proceed efficiently from conception to implementation. APQA also works closely with Education Council to provide administrative

support to educational programming initiatives and policy/procedure development, approval, implementation, and to raise institutional awareness of quality assurance measures.

BCIT is currently implementing a “Program Mix Analysis” process (PMA) to support its quality framework and align with its Strategic Plan and operational planning and resource allocation processes. PMA will be an integral part of the annual Operating Plans, and will provide a dashboard view of program performance measures at the School level, with department and program level detail to support. The purpose of PMA is to embed an annual review of performance measures to identify strengths and areas for improvement, with the intent of informing School plans for the coming academic year. Schools will review their summary dashboard, identify specific performance measures at the department and program level to review in greater depth, and determine an action plan to address any areas requiring attention. PMA performance measures include application statistics, FTE’s, credentials awarded, program relevance measures, quality measures, and access measures. The PMA process will be piloted in the upcoming operational planning cycle.

The following initiatives also support quality assurance and practice:

- faculty scholarship and applied research initiatives;
- the Learning and Teaching Framework; and
- the Education Plan.

Program Development

The policy for program development remained relatively unchanged for the period 2011-2017, with refinements approved in the spring of 2017 (resulting from a LEAN review). The policy allows for minor variations depending on credential type.

Learning outcomes are a foundational component of all BCIT programs. The approval processes for new programs and major program changes require all proposals to include a full description of the curriculum. Through the various review stages, the curricular structure and the individual course outlines are subject to a rigorous review, with a focus on learning outcomes and assessment methods. Important elements of this review are ensuring alignment of learning outcomes with the credential type and credential standards, alignment of assessment methods with educational policy on student evaluation and good assessment practices, and designing programs to provide an effective, meaningful learning experience to help students achieve the stated learning outcomes.

The process for program development at BCIT has four stages, beginning with a Notice of Intent to raise awareness of and solicit initial feedback related to the new initiative, and in the case of degrees, to seek approval from the Board of Governors to proceed with the development of the new degree program. The second stage involves widespread consultation and review by internal and external stakeholders, including the respective School’s Quality Committee, an Internal Panel of faculty experienced with degree development and an External Panel including industry representatives and academic experts from peer institutions. The second stage culminates with a fully developed proposal for the new program. The third stage involves a rigorous review of the proposal by the VPA and APQA Offices, the Education Council Programming Committee, the full Education Council, and the Board of Governors. In the case of degrees, after BCIT’s Board of Governor’s approves the proposal, it is submitted to the Ministry of Advanced Education, Skills and Training for final approval. BCIT has Exempt

Status for baccalaureate degrees. The final stage of BCIT's process is implementation of the new program, ensuring that all aspects of program implementation are coordinated and appropriately resourced.

Program development processes are the responsibility of the APQA which works closely with program areas, School Quality Committees, Education Council, and the Learning and Teaching Centre to ensure all are aware of policies and procedures, roles and responsibilities, and resources available to support the process. APQA staff take specific responsibility in launching individual program development/change initiatives, clarifying internal/external approvals that will be required, monitoring progress of each initiative, ensuring all required reviews have been incorporated, coordinating all Internal and External panel reviews, and liaising with Education Council, the Board of Governors, and the Ministry. Each program initiative is supported by an instructional development consultant from the Learning and Teaching Centre who works with the program team on educational design issues, consultations and proposal documentation.

Program Review

The program review policy has remained relatively unchanged since it was substantially revised in 2012. The program review policy is currently undergoing some revisions as the result of its specific LEAN review, with implementation in December 2017. BCIT has developed a detailed Program Review Manual and a series of templates to guide and support program areas through the process. Normally, all degree programs will be reviewed every five years, with the remaining programs reviewed at least every seven years. If resources are an issue, priority will be given to reviewing degree and diploma programs.

Learning outcomes are also a foundational component of the program review process. The program review process includes an analysis of student/graduate success through the courses and the program as a whole, and involves a review of the course outlines, again with a focus on learning outcomes and assessment methods.

Program review at BCIT involves the development of an internal self-study report with evidence-based recommendations for program changes, validation from an external review panel including a site visit, a final report integrating input from the external review and the finalizing of recommendations, and an institutional response by way of presentation at Education Council by the Vice President, Academic. One year following the presentation of the program review findings and recommendations, the school dean will present to Education Council on the status of the action plan implementation. All related documents are retained by Education Council, and are available to all BCIT employees.

APQA staff take specific responsibility for launching individual program reviews, guiding programs in identifying key areas to explore through their review, clarifying expectations regarding stakeholder consultation and evidence-based recommendations, coordinating the external review component, and being available for consultation on specific issues as they arise. Standard data packages are provided to programs by the Institutional Research Office, and programs are supported by instructional development consultants from the Learning and Teaching Centre as direct team members for individual program reviews.

Where programs are accredited by external bodies, programs are encouraged to coordinate the accreditation process with the internal program review requirements to minimize any duplication of effort while satisfying the requirements of both processes. APQA assists program areas with this by providing a gap analysis of the accreditation review in comparison with the expectations for program review, and in most cases only requires the areas not covered (gaps) to be completed as an augmentation to the accreditation review. If the accreditation review incorporates a site visit, that will usually be considered adequate for the BCIT program review, and no further site visit will be required.

In addition to scheduled program reviews, BCIT programs engage in frequent and ongoing reviews of a less formal/comprehensive nature to ensure timely responses to stakeholder needs, in particular students. These include regular reviews of program key performance indicators (KPI), student engagement surveys, an annual elected-student representative feedback mechanism, program advisory committee meetings with student input, end-of-course surveys, other annual formal/informal processes led by program areas (such as curriculum workshops), and also LTC supported initiatives such as mid-term student feedback sessions.

QAPA Review

The QAPA panel conducting the assessment were Dr. John Waterhouse, panel chair, and panel members Dr. Salvador Ferreras and Dr. Gordon Nixon. The site visit occurred on November 14 and 15, 2017. A member of the DQAB Secretariat, Ms. Dao Luu, also attended the site visit.

The QAPA panel submitted its initial report on November 26, 2017. Following BCIT's review for factual errors, the panel finalized its report on February 20, 2018. BCIT provided a response on May 10, 2018.

The panel noted "the guidelines directing the quality assurance process are entirely consistent with the institution's mandate, vision and strategic goals. The rigour of these processes positions BCIT as a leader in the quality assurance area within the post-secondary sector and speaks strongly to its provincial mandate."

The panel report provided commendations, affirmations and recommendations.

Commendations are areas where the institution has shown exemplary practice. Areas of exemplary practice:

- Establishment of School level quality committees.
- Requirement that the School Dean report to the Education Council on the implementation status of review recommendations one year after the review report is approved.
- Involvement of instructional development consultants in program design and quality assurance.

Affirmations are areas where the institution has identified weaknesses and intends to correct it. Areas the institution identified for improvement:

- BCIT has conducted a LEAN review of its processes and procedures that underlie program approval and assessment. (The LEAN review) Overall there is recognition of a need for process efficiencies. An education plan is being developed. The plan should provide more

opportunity to be strategic in academic planning and provide more alignment with strategic objectives. Some uncertainty exists with respect to how detailed curriculum reviews should be. Guidelines are being developed to guide this process.

Recommendations are areas needing improvement. Areas for the panel identified for improvement:

- BCIT would benefit from adopting a formal scholarly activities policy applicable to faculty who teach in degree programs. We believe that such a policy should recognize the applied nature of BCIT programs and therefore should include among its standards industry relevance and engagement. The development and application of new pedagogy also should be included as one of the activities within the scholarly activities policy.
- Programs should clearly state learning objectives and quality assurance processes should measure student accomplishment relative to the stated objectives.
- The person or office responsible for implementing recommendations arising from external reviews should be clearly identified in the status report.
- Teaching excellence at the program level should be defined and benchmarked to BCIT standards for program excellence and BCIT should develop their own standards for KPIs to enhance quality.
- We note that quality assurance and accreditation reviews often serve different objectives. While some of the work necessary to prepare for accreditation reviews might be relevant to a quality assurance review, we caution against concluding that positive accreditation is a signal of quality that BCIT should rely on for evaluating program quality.
- BCIT should include biographical information of external reviewers in review documentation to demonstrate their expertise to conduct the reviews.

BCIT acknowledged the recommendations in its response to the panel's report and provided an action plan addressing each of the recommendations.