

2022/23 QUALITY ASSURANCE PROCESS AUDIT COLLEGE OF THE ROCKIES

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 College of the Rockies was one of four post-secondary institutions to undertake the Quality Assurance Process Audit in 2022/23.

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.

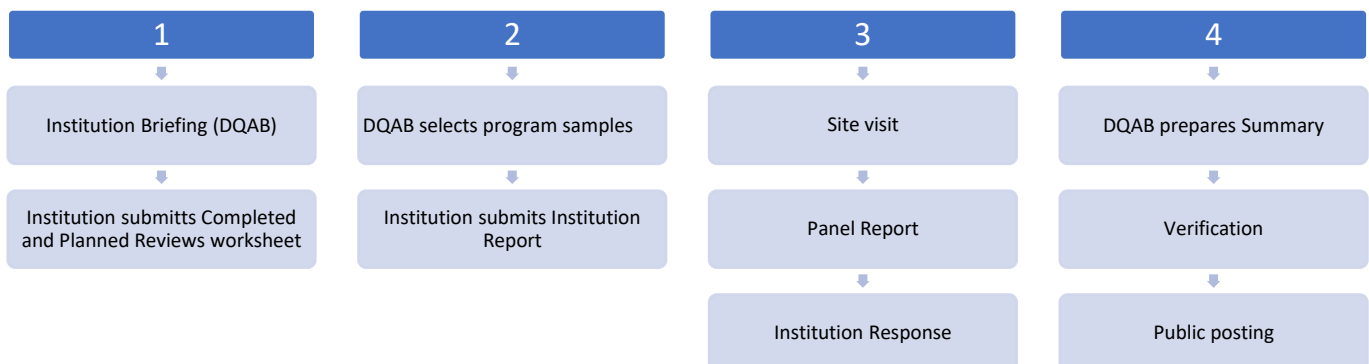
The main objectives of the quality assurance process audit (QAPA) are to ascertain that the institution:

- 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



College of the Rockies – Institutional Context

College of the Rockies serves the communities of the East Kootenays. The College’s campuses in Cranbrook, Creston, Fernie, Golden, Invermere, and Kimberley are located in the traditional territory of the Ktunaxa people which is also home to the Kinbasket people. Five First Nations bands are located in the regional boundary of the College: four of which are Ktunaxa, and one is Shuswap. Additionally, the College partners with the Kootenay Regional Office of the Métis Nation, BC. The College is thankful for all their Indigenous partners and is constantly seeking new ways to support the development of its community.

The College values its commitment to Truth and Reconciliation, especially the TRC Calls to Action on Education. The College signed a Memorandum of Understanding between College of the Rockies and Ktunaxa Nation Council in 2019. This MOU acknowledges the importance of a collaborative relationship with the Ktunaxa Nation. Prior to the MOU, the College and the Ktunaxa Nation worked together to build yaqakiᐅ ᐅitqawxaxamki “The Place Where People Gather” as a dedicated space for Indigenous elders, knowledge keepers, and students. The College commits itself in a variety of ways to address the Nation’s concerns and values, working towards reconciliation, and creating opportunities for more equitable education.

As a post-secondary institution, College of the Rockies is governed by the *College and Institute Act*. The College’s governance structure consists of a Board of Governors and an Education Council (EdCo). The Board has overall fiduciary and financial responsibility for the College and is responsible for determining programs that are offered at College of the Rockies. This work is in partnership with EdCo. EdCo has an advisory role to the Board on various educational policies, power to set policy on such things as evaluation and academic standards, and joint approval with the Board for matters of curriculum evaluation, as detailed in the *College and Institute Act*.

COTR is guided by the province’s mandate letter and subsequent addendum to the Mandate Letter, the Minister’s Letter of Direction, and the College’s Two-Year Action Plan. The Action Plan was initiated as a response to the crisis posed by the pandemic. It serves as a bridge from the College’s former strategic plan to its forthcoming strategic plan that will develop as the Province of B.C. and post-secondary education sector emerges from the crisis.

Table 1: Student enrollment

	Undergraduate	Graduate	Degree Programs	Non-Degree Programs
Full-time equivalent (FTE)	1,391	N/A	21	1,370

Note: Undergraduate FTEs does not include enrollments in Adult Basic Education, Continuing Education, and Trades.

The Action Plan is in its second year and has established a clear structure to ladder the College’s institutional mandate with its quality assurance processes. The Action Plan has informed the establishment of several key resources for quality assurance mechanisms. This includes founding the Centre for Innovation in Teaching and Learning, establishing the position of Executive Director for Indigenous Education, forming institutional-wide Health and Wellbeing

plans for staff and students, and developing several new policies for program review and new program development.

Table 2: Program offerings

Credential Type	# of Programs
Diploma	17
Certificate	38
Developmental/ABE Activity	4
Apprenticeship	9
Post-Degree Diploma	1
Post-degree Certificate	1
Short Certificate	1
Bachelor Degree	1
Associate Degree	6

Institution Self-Study

The QAPA review was initiated with an institution briefing on May 3, 2022. The briefing was conducted virtually by video conference. The briefing provides an overview of the QAPA process and the documentation institutions are requested to submit. At its meeting on July 22, 2022, the Quality Assurance Audit Committee reviewed the Completed and Planned Review worksheet submitted by the College and selected the following for sampling: Bachelor of Business Administration; Health Care Assistant Certificate; Education Assistant Certificate.

Self-Evaluation Approach

The College's approach was comprehensive, collaborative, and conducted with a genuine commitment to continuous improvement. Following a period in which formal program reviews were not occurring routinely, the College was able to reflect on past practices and redevelop the quality assurance policies and processes. Much of this redevelopment work occurred over the past three years, with new policies approved, new processes developed, and pilots implemented. There were two main questions the College sought to address in the self-evaluation: first, are the current policies and processes adequate; and second, how does the College know it has quality programs? These questions naturally lead to a review of current policies, procedures, and evidence to support various elements of quality. Several College committees, departments, and individuals have important roles to play in academic quality assurance generally, and the self-evaluation process, specifically.

The College has a Program Quality Assurance Committee (PQAC). The mandate of PQAC is to provide oversight and recommendations for managing the program quality assurance and the cyclical review of existing programs. The Committee establishes, reviews, and makes necessary improvements to the program approval and implementation process and the quality assurance processes. The committee meets at least three to four times per year. The PQAC Membership and their responsibilities are:

- Dean, Innovation in Teaching and Learning (Chair of committee)
- Vice President Academic and Applied Research (accountable for quality assurance)

- Program Deans (responsible for curriculum development and program review)
- Registrar and Director of Institutional Research (data and credential standards to support renewal and development)
- Two Teaching and Learning Specialists (curriculum development and instructional support)
- Manager, Learning Commons (learning resources to support quality)
- Indigenous Education Coordinator and The Executive Director, Indigenous Strategy and Reconciliation (consultation on indigenization and decolonization of curriculum)
- 2 Institutional Researchers (data collection and reporting)
- Chair of Education Council (EdCo) (advice on education policy and liaison with EdCo)

This committee has been actively preparing for the self-evaluation and audit process over the past three years. Since 2019, the committee has initiated new policies and procedures for program development and program review which were approved through EdCo and the College's Board of Governors. The new formal program review process was piloted in 2019-2020 and PQAC has reviewed the results of the program reviews and has debriefed the participants in the pilot to further refine the review process. Results of the formal program reviews are shared with EdCo annually.

The Vice President, Academic and Applied Research (VPAAR) and the Dean, Innovation in Teaching and Learning lead the self-study process and over the past year, have met every two weeks to collect information, plan consultations, analyze results, make recommendations, and co-write the report. To ensure the College community understood the purpose and process of the audit and had an opportunity to contribute to it, the VPAAR made presentations to various groups including EdCo, PQAC, Vice President's Academic Council (VPAC), President's Council, and all Program Coordinators. A briefing note and map of the process were shared with all groups.

The self-study method was based primarily on document review and consultation to confirm current practices. A comprehensive review was undertaken of College policies, documented procedures, informal practices, supporting documents, samples of programs and courses, and the terms of reference, agendas, and minutes of related committees. Individuals and departments provided information and insights on current practices at the College and their experience. The goals of the self-study were to assess the adequacy and currency of the College's quality assurance infrastructure, identify any gaps, and develop action plans where there were opportunities for improvement. In the process, student success was focused on as a primary driver. While there was a particular focus on new program development and program review and renewal processes, the College also explored other important aspects of quality, including faculty qualifications, quality of instruction, faculty supports, and services for student success.

The development of the institutional report is in alignment with College policies and procedures as defined by the Program Quality Assurance Committee. The report was drafted through the Offices of the VPAAR and the Centre for Innovation in Teaching and Learning, in consultation with PQAC members and other stakeholders. Committee members contributed invaluable evidence and feedback throughout the process. Further evidence for the self-study came from published institutional documents, accreditation reports, Institutional Research figures, and provincial data. The institutional report was shared in iterative drafts as required to individuals

as it pertained to their work with a draft reviewed at PQAC and EdCo before the summer break, and final review in September before submitting the report to the Degree Quality Assessment Board.

Quality Assurance Policy and Practices

The Vice President's Academic Council (VPAC) provides leadership to the College community for teaching, learning, research, and service to learners. VPAC brings together the College's academic leaders and other department representatives for monthly meetings that focus on institutional progress toward the academic goals of the College. VPAC contributes to a comprehensive approach to academic planning, coordination, policy implementation, communication, program review, and program decisions. Membership includes the Vice President, Academic and Applied Research (VPAAR) as the committee Chair, four Deans, the Director of Student Affairs, the Executive Director of Indigenous Strategy and Reconciliation, the Manager of Applied Research and Innovation, the Registrar and Director Institutional Research, the Director of Continuing Education, Contract Training and Campus Operations, the Manager International Education, three Department Heads, and the President (ex-officio). VPAC members have been actively engaged in conducting formal program reviews, developing mechanisms to support quality assurance, and informing the QAPA self-study. The Vice President, Academic and Applied Research is the senior leader accountable for quality assurance.

The College's policies are developed and approved through a variety of mechanisms that ensure robust consultation with relevant stakeholders. Policy 1.1.4 on policy development was recently refreshed and approved by the College Policy Committee (CPC) and this policy guides the development and approval of all College policies, including Board, education, and administrative policies. All College policies can be found on its website.

All education policies are reviewed at the Academic and Student Affairs Policy (ASAP) sub-committee of EdCo and are reviewed by CPC and where appropriate, are approved by the Board of Governors or Education Council, in accordance with the powers of both as spelled out in the *College and Institute Act*. In addition, the Curriculum Standing Committee (CSC) is a sub-committee of Education Council which reviews program and course outlines to ensure compliance with education policy and to advise EdCo and faculty on curriculum quality. Policies that are specific to program development and program quality assurance are developed and reviewed by the Program Quality Assurance Committee with approval by the Board of Governors upon advice of EdCo.

In 2021, the College launched a new Centre for Innovation in Teaching and Learning (CITL) under the leadership of a Dean. The Centre was created to bring renewed focus to strategic growth and quality assurance in educational programming and to provide support for faculty in the development and delivery of curriculum. The Dean of the CITL is Chair of PQAC, the Curriculum Standing Committee (CSC) of Education Council (EdCo), and the Academic Technologies Committee (ATC), all of which play a significant role in quality assurance.

The College has many policy mechanisms that foster its culture of continuous improvement and quality assurance including policies on a Credential Framework, credit transfer, faculty qualifications and faculty professional development.

The College has multiple pathways for faculty-driven cultivation of teaching and learning excellence such as receiving student feedback at the end of the semester, piloting a process for performance review of faculty, faculty First Year Experience, and investments in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning.

Program Development

New courses and programs at the College are designed to align with its strategic plan, follow provincial requirements and legislation, meet the educational needs of students, and satisfy labour market demand and societal needs. *Policy 6.1.2 Program and Course Development and Approval* outlines the scope and the procedures for developing new programs. Program and course development is a consultative process that brings together stakeholders including faculty, staff, external partners, and institutional research to support the gathering and interpreting of relevant data to inform the proposal, approval, planning, and implementation processes.

All proposed new programs outline program viability and sustainability, future educational or career opportunities for students, and benefits to the College's partners and the community. To ensure that new programming has a solid foundation for success, the College revised the Program Idea Proposal in 2021. The Program Idea Proposal ensures that a careful, data-informed and multi-stakeholder engagement process leads to successful launches of a new program with well-resourced foundations enabling student success.

Program Review

In 2018, the College embarked on a renewed effort to establish meaningful, impactful, and future-oriented quality program review. Prior to that year, there had been a 5-year hiatus of program reviews until a new suite of policies and processes could be developed internally that rebooted the College's quality assurance operations promoting a growth mindset via a strengths-based design. The College has a regularly revisited schedule of program reviews so that every program undergoes a program review every 5 to 7 years. There is an active engagement from multiple committees, including the Curriculum Standing Committee, Program Quality Assurance Committee, Academic and Student Affairs Committee, College Policy Committee and Education Council.

Faculty have enthusiastically engaged the processes of program review. The Centre for Innovation in Teaching and Learning (CITL) has dedicated staff who facilitate the faculty-driven process. Program reviews at College of the Rockies are intentional, robust, and critically reflective. The process is faculty-driven; every program review has a faculty lead. The faculty lead then has support from their Dean and CITL Teaching and Learning Specialists. The Teaching and Learning Specialist coordinates the collection of information, facilitates meetings, and connects the faculty with available institutional resources.

At College of the Rockies, quality assurance is a collaborative, evidence, and strengths-based self-examination of the overall quality of the program. *Policy 6.1.6 Program Quality Assurance* and the affiliate procedure document outline the periodic review of programs as administered by the Program Quality Assurance Committee. Program review at the College is both formative and summative. It is an ongoing collection of feedback and data, with the end goal to create program unity and submit a formal report/action plan for future guidance and benchmarking. The College has a template for program reviews, although there is flexibility in how faculty may

approach their self-study. Faculty work with the Program Review Self-Study template, but they are able to adjust the parameters of the template that best suits the review of the program.

In 2021, external reviews became an integral part of every self-study process. The College allows for appropriate variability of external reviews based on specific program circumstances and variations of discipline. At the same time, programs that have external accreditation still perform an internal self-study to contextualize the program within the mission and community of the College as a whole rather than establishing benchmarks with accreditors' standards.

Typically, an external review panel consists of 2-3 persons from peer Deans, Department Heads, senior industry advisors and others who would be familiar with the discipline/knowledge area, and someone from within the College, but from a different program, who is familiar with the College processes and procedures (e.g. Program Coordinator, Department Head, Education Council member, Campus Manager). This is to promote the culture of program review across campus and increase transparency.

The self-study process includes an internal self-study undertaken by program faculty, internal partners, and administration that is designed to create program insight, unity, and vision, and capture the strengths and challenges of the program. A report that includes a summary of the self-study process, its recommendations, resource requests, and the findings and recommendations from the external reviewers are submitted to the program Dean. The program Dean writes an executive summary, including a response to the self-study, addressing recommendations, resource requests, and the external review. This is submitted to the Dean for Innovation in Teaching and Learning, while only the executive summary is submitted to the Vice President Academic and Applied Research (VPAAR). The Program Dean's executive summary is submitted to EdCo by the VPAAR. A post-self-study follow-up on recommendations summarized by the program Dean is developed within one year and reported to EdCo.

The initial pilot of program reviews has provided opportunities to work on continual process improvement, the smooth incorporation of external reviews, and introduction of long-term planning for program review recommendations. The College has streamlined the program review template, added flexibility for programs with only one or two faculty, and accredited professional programs have the option to engage in an expedited (but no less rigorous) program review that leans into the critical reflection and research from their accreditation processes.

QAPA Review

The QAPA panel conducting the assessment were Kathy Siedlaczek, panel chair, and panel members Rhys Andrews and David Veres. The site visit held at the Cranbrook campus on November 23-24, 2022. Dao Luu, a member of the DQAB Secretariat also attended. The QAPA panel submitted its report on November 29, 2022. The panel report provided commendations, affirmations and recommendations.

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

1. Commitment to Quality Assurance

There is impressive progress on a number of quality-related initiatives at the College. These include new policies, procedures, and resources to guide program reviews, new committees to oversee aspects of quality assurance, new initiatives to provide mentoring for faculty (i.e. First Year Experience), and new approaches to gather student data (i.e. Student Experience Survey). This is evidence of the significant efforts being made to move the institution's culture forward towards greater focus on quality assurance and continuous improvement.

2. Establishing Centre for Innovation in Teaching & Learning (CITL)

The panel commends the College on establishing CITL as a central resource for the College, which demonstrates significant commitment and investment in quality by the College leadership. The importance of the role and expertise of the CITL staff was evident in discussions during the site visit, and demonstrated the value of this resource in supporting quality assurance processes such as program review. In addition, it was clear that the faculty development offerings provided by CITL were well received by faculty and contributed to the quality of teaching and learning at the College. Ensuring that the resources of the CITL match this growing need will further strengthen the faculty's commitment to continuous improvement.

3. Commitment to Indigenization and Truth and Reconciliation

It was evident that College of the Rockies has embedded Indigenization and a commitment to Truth and Reconciliation as a core value at the institution. This was evidenced by the renewed MOU with the Ktunaxa Nation Council, the hiring of an Executive Director of Indigenous Strategy & Reconciliation, broader engagement of the Indigenous Education Team on policy and program reviews, and embedding an Indigenous lens in curricular decisions. In addition, the recently established Equity, Diversity, Indigenization, Inclusion and Belonging (EDIIB) Task Force is further evidence of the College's commitment to fostering a culture of equity and belonging at College of the Rockies.

4. Focus on Faculty-driven Program Review

In redesigning its program review policy and processes, the College intentionally established a focus on these as faculty-driven initiatives. This is demonstrated in the initial faculty visioning process that establishes guiding questions for program reviews (referred to as Terms of Reference), clearly defined roles for faculty throughout the program review process, and resourcing program reviews appropriately in terms of faculty release time and CITL support. This faculty-led approach has built trust in the renewed program review process as a valuable and important way to conduct a comprehensive review of programs with a view to future-focused improvements. As the program review process matures, consideration for the role of related academic leadership (Deans, Department heads) should be discussed as a way of strengthening the program areas' ability to enact the formulated recommendations.

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

1. Strategic Enrollment Management (SEM) Plan

The College has initiated work on a SEM plan, in part as a way of informing future plans for programming at the College to ensure a program mix responsive to the needs of the

community. The SEM Plan was developed with extensive engagement contributing to the plan's adoption. The panel supports the inclusion of program quality metrics within the data that will form the SEM dashboard. Determining metrics for all of the SEM plan components, as well as determining the weighted importance of each, will ensure that program quality is not only present in the decision making, but afforded the appropriate value.

2. Availability and consistency of institutional data

A key support for program reviews is the timely availability and consistency of institutional data. The College has increased resources for the Institutional Research office to enhance the ability to provide a consistent data package for all program reviews, including student and graduate data. In addition, the College has initiated an annual Student Experience Survey to gather student data which will provide additional insights for program and institutional decision-making. Important to the meaningful use of data in program reviews is ensuring there is support for faculty in interpreting and analyzing it to inform future focused recommendations.

3. Annual review period process

The program review process has embedded a one-year status update report, which is important to ensure accountability for the resulting recommendations and action plan. The College recognizes that not all recommendations can be completed within one year, and in response, they are implementing an annual process to monitor progress on recommendations beyond the one-year timeframe. The panel supports this approach and offers the suggestion to consider the requirements of this process with an eye to value for the program while not making the process unnecessarily burdensome for program teams. Additionally, it will be important to ensure that the responsibility for implementation of recommendations is assigned at the appropriate level of the organization to allow for tracking and monitoring of progress.

4. Sharing outcomes of program reviews

The College has established a repository for program review documents, and has implemented methods of communicating the outcomes within the College (for example, within the Program Quality Review Committee and Education Council). There is recognition that there would be benefit to establishing additional ways of providing access to program review materials and outcomes internally and externally. This would broaden the learning opportunities internally and would provide opportunities to share and celebrate outcomes and program improvements with the external community. Sharing outcomes with external partners will also aid in establishing/reinforcing community relations, and commitment to the College.

Recommendations are areas needing improvement. The panel identified the following areas:

1. Plans to assess progress on quality assurance initiatives

The College has initiated an impressive number of initiatives related to quality assurance and continuous improvement. Some of these have evolved organically initially, and there is value in reviewing them and potentially establishing greater structure and consistency to support and sustain them. It is important to establish evaluation plans and mechanisms to review these new quality assurance initiatives to determine whether they are meeting their identified needs and/or should be refined after an initial period. In particular, it will be important to consider the inter-connectedness among initiatives to find synergies and efficiencies in order to make them sustainable. Such a process will also ensure that

identified effective practices and approaches to these initiatives are captured and shared across the institution.

2. **Program Advisory Committees**

Program Advisory Committees (PACs) are an integral connection to the community, and the panel commends the College on recent PAC policy development. The panel recommends that the College ensure active engagement across all PACs, consistent involvement in processes such as program reviews and program development initiatives, and ongoing sharing of outcomes of these types of quality assurance processes. Incorporating quality assurance as a regular and standing item in PAC meetings will reinforce the College's commitment to quality, while highlighting the important role that PACs play in quality assurance. The College could consider seeking advisory committee perspective on their satisfaction levels with engagement.

3. **Program level outcomes**

The panel recognizes that the College has learning outcomes at the course level and with the support of CITL is focusing on ensuring effective assessment of learning outcomes. Programs are also mapping courses and learning outcomes. The panel encourages the College to consider the significant benefit in establishing program level outcomes for all programs – for students, for faculty, and for external partners. This provides a way of communicating graduate abilities on completion of a program, and these outcomes are important to revisit over time as the landscape changes in the relevant disciplines/industry. In this way, program level outcomes can act as an important foundation from which to start program reviews. The College has started discussions around establishing program level outcomes, and the panel recommends that this be prioritized with a clear process and road map for their development across all programs.

4. **Program review flexibility versus consistency**

The current program review process has been designed with flexibility in mind, which has been well received by faculty and will lead to important learning about what level of flexibility is needed for the range of programs offered at the College. As the College reviews the program review process, there would be benefit in determining what elements of program review should be considered essential for all programs (i.e. strategic directions of the College), and which elements can be addressed flexibly depending on program type. This would provide balance between flexibility for program teams while ensuring a level of consistency in quality assurance processes. The panel recommends that this be clearly noted in the template used to guide program review self-study reports, as well as in any resources used to guide faculty in the process. As part of this process, it will be important to clarify either the division of responsibility between the faculty team and CITL, or at least the process for determining the division of responsibilities.

5. **External review within program review**

An external review process has been established within the program review requirements, and has recently started being implemented. There is great value in integrating external review perspectives as part of a program review. The panel recommends that the outcomes of external reviews be integrated consistently into the process, showing how feedback from external reviews is addressed, and how this impacts final recommendations and action plans. There is a recognition that existing external accreditation activities can help inform or be informed by the program review process. Determining a clear process that balances the need to minimize duplication, while serving the intent of the existing review process (self-

study, external review) will ensure that the external review within the program review is authentic and valuable.

6. Program development and change policies/processes

To support greater clarity around the development of new programs and processes to change existing programs and courses, the panel recommends updating the policy and procedures supporting these processes. In addition, there may be opportunity to establish additional resources such as guidance from CITL staff or developing new resource guides to support faculty and staff in navigating development and change processes. This will be important to coordinate with the planned implementation of the new curriculum management software, and with involvement of Education Council governance representatives.

7. Establish mechanisms to support institutional decision-making

To support institutional decision-making, the panel recommends establishing structured mechanisms/processes to encourage institutional level learning from program reviews. This may involve, for example, identifying institutional-level recommendations from which numerous programs would benefit, or patterns and trends arising from multiple program reviews that would benefit from deeper analysis.

College of the Rockies provided a response on January 19, 2023 that included an action plan to address the recommendations.