

## 2018/19 QUALITY ASSURANCE PROCESS AUDIT VANCOUVER COMMUNITY COLLEGE

*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. Vancouver Community College was one of three public post-secondary institutions to undertake the Quality Assurance Process Audit in 2018/19.*

### 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.

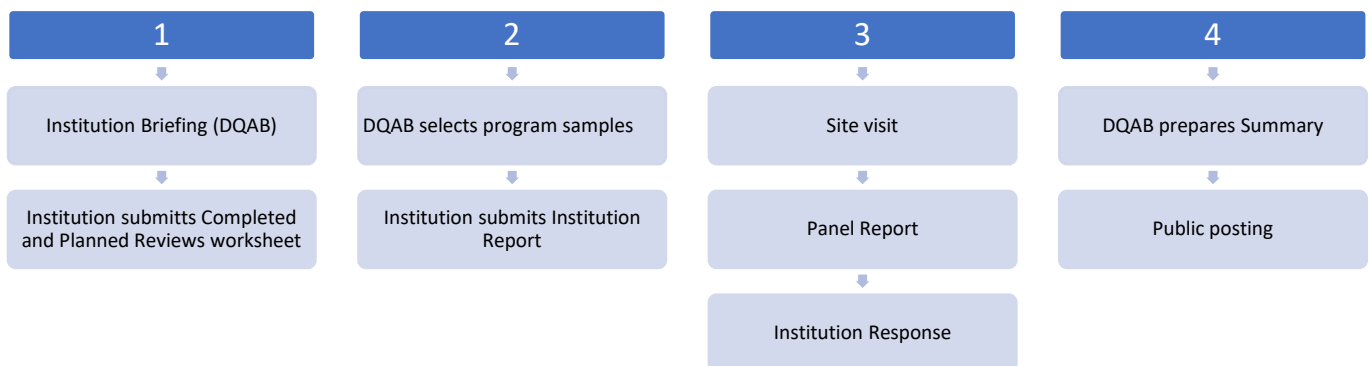
The main objectives of the quality assurance process audit (QAPA) are to ascertain that the institution:

- 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**



## Vancouver Community College – Institutional Context

Vancouver Community College (VCC, the College) is the oldest government public postsecondary college in BC. The College delivers more than 120 programs to a diverse and multicultural student population. VCC's vision statement "The first choice for innovative, experiential learning for life" is aspirational and captures the essence of the College community. It is a declaration that focuses on our future direction and aligns with the College's core values: Student Success; Excellence; Diversity; and Stewardship.

VCC programs are structured to meet the social and economic needs of a dynamic, urban community with hands-on, industry-relevant education and training through small classes and intensive practical learning. It works in cooperation with other educational institutions, licensing and accrediting bodies, employers, community groups and governments to offer flexible, responsive, and innovative instruction.

**Table 1: Student enrollment (2017-2018)**

	<b>Undergraduate</b>	<b>Graduate</b>	<b>Degree Programs</b>	<b>Non-Degree Programs</b>
<b>Full-time equivalent (FTE)</b>	6,105	44	240	5,909

VCC delivers programming across three campuses: Broadway, Downtown, and Annacis Island. The majority of VCC program offerings are directly related to skills that are needed for in demand occupations in health, trades, hospitality, technology, sales and service, business and management. It also offers programs in arts and sciences; food studies; continuing studies; and instructor education.

**Table 2: Program offerings (2017-2018)**

Credential Type	# of Programs
Citation	3
Certificate	86
Apprenticeship	13
Diploma	31
Post Degree Diploma	1
Undergraduate Degree	3

## Institution Self-Study

The VCC QAPA review was initiated with an Institution Briefing on April 12, 2018 at the Broadway campus. The Institution Briefing provides an overview of the QAPA process and the documentation institutions are requested to submit.

At its meeting on June 4, 2018, the Quality Assurance Audit Committee reviewed the Completed and Planned Review worksheet submitted by VCC and selected three program

reviews for sampling. The selected samples are those that the DQAB considers to be representative of various areas of the institution's educational activities. The program reviews selected were: Provincial Instructors Diploma & Online eLearning Certificate; Bachelor of Science in Nursing; and Jewellery Art & Design Diploma. On September 17, 2018, VCC submitted its Institution Report.

### Self-Evaluation Approach

Dr. Kathryn McNaughton, Vice President Academic, Students, and Research has served as a member of the Quality Assurance Audit Committee (QAAC) since inception. The preparation of the institution report was a collaborative effort led by the Office of the Vice President Academic, Students, and Research.

Participation in QAPA was listed as a priority in the 2018/19 Integrated College Plan. In preparation for the audit, the C.3.2 Program Review and Renewal Policy was fully reviewed and significant revisions to the institution's review processes were made. Those changes were approved by Education Council and the Board of Governors in April 2018.

The self-study included consultation from the following:

- President
- Vice President, Academic, Students, and Research
- Vice President, Administration and CFO
- Chair, Program Review and Renewal Committee
- Chair, Education Council
- Academic Coordinator, VP Academic Office
- Academic Deans
- Registrar
- Dean, Student Development
- Dean, Library, Teaching and Learning Services
- Director, Institutional Research
- Instructional Associates, Centre for Teaching, Learning, and Research
- Department Leaders

Additional input on quality assurance at VCC was sought from academic and student service leaders across the institution at a June 2018 meeting of the Leaders' Forum.

A webpage has been created to provide information to the internal and external community on the College's steps towards quality assurance <http://www.vcc.ca/about/governance--policies/qualityassurance/>.

### Quality Assurance Policy and Practices

The quality assurance mechanisms support a wide variety of programs that range across the institution and credentials awarded. The *Colleges and Institutes Act* identifies Education Council as the body with ultimate authority over the quality of programming. In discharging this responsibility, Education Council created the Program Review and Renewal Committee (PRRC), a standing committee that has established a set of policies and procedures

supporting the continuous improvement of programming. Institutional Research plays an important role in providing accurate and relevant data for deans and department leaders as they prepare yearly reports. Each Dean and Department Leader also develops action plans which guide the ongoing implementation and improvement of each program. Through departmental action plans, key goals and activities are identified.

Academic planning at VCC is an iterative process, beginning at the department level, when Department Leaders and Faculty members identify their goals and priorities in their Department Plans. The Academic Plan reflects all aspects of teaching and learning at VCC and feeds into the Integrated College Plan which sets the overall direction of the College.

Policy A.3.2 Policy Development and Maintenance sets out the guidelines for creating policies that comply with legal and regulatory requirements, achieve the College's vision and values, enhance operational effectiveness, manage risk, and set standards for the conduct of the College's affairs. The procedures outline a comprehensive review, consultation and governance approval process for all new and revised policy documents. All VCC policies are scheduled for review every five years. Academic policies are vetted through the Education Policy Committee and then Education Council. Administrative policies are vetted through the Administration Policy Committee and the Operations Council. All draft policies are open for College community feedback for 15 days, and are reviewed by internal governance processes a second time. Policies requiring Board of Governors approval are then sent to the appropriate Board standing committee and then to the Board.

VCC is in the process of designing a teaching and learning framework to support individual learner success. This Framework will include: a philosophy on principles of adult learning; achievable challenges in both didactic and experiential learning settings; provision of choice within parameters; classroom environments which are open to questioning and critique; and a recognition of the value of ongoing self-reflection. The Framework recognizes the key role played by Faculty participation in professional development, applied research and scholarship in informing learner focused classroom practice.

The Centre for Teaching, Learning, and Research (CTLR) provides support to departments and Faculty in the design, development, and/or revision of programs and courses. The CTLR office consists of four Instructional Associates who provide pedagogical and administrative leadership and support to VCC Faculty and two eLearning Support and Media Development members who provide support and training on educational technologies, including VCC's Moodle learning management system and design/production of digital media for online learning.

Learning outcomes are a foundational component of all VCC curricular programs. All course outlines and Program Content Guides include a full description of learning outcomes. A college-wide consultation process was initiated in May 2017 to determine the Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILOs) which best represented VCC's diverse learners and graduates. The consultation process consisted of facilitated sessions where individuals identified, discussed, selected and then rated a number of ILOs. These sessions were conducted at both academic and non-academic department meetings, governance committee meetings, union executive meetings, and Program Advisory Committees.

The following initiatives also support quality assurance and practice:

- faculty professional development;
- scholarship and research initiatives;
- performance management systems for faculty; and
- strategic enrolment management to support student success and retention, including a commitment to the highest quality educational experience for Indigenous students.

### *Program Development*

The process for new program development starts with the submission of a Concept Paper that assesses the necessity/viability of offering a new program. It outlines the research, educational value, marketability, and other related issues related to the request for a new credential. The Concept Paper must be approved by both the Vice President Academic, Students, and Research, and the Vice President Finance and CFO prior to developing the program curriculum materials.

Program design identifies the student profile, program goals, program learning outcomes, delivery modes/learning environment, key concepts and skills, program map which clusters concepts and skills into courses, identification of high level assessments, mapping to external bodies such as articulation, accrediting/regulatory body and industry requirements, and alignment with entry to practice competencies as required.

Once courses for the program have been identified, course blueprints are developed that identify course goals, course learning outcomes, learning environment, student assessments/course evaluation plan, and teaching and learning activities to support student achievement of the evaluation plan. Faculty development needs are identified during the program and course development process. CTLR supports Faculty in developing teaching and evaluation strategies that align with program and course learning outcomes.

VCC is committed to the use of systematic, transparent practices and procedures for the development of curriculum that engage relevant stakeholders and align with the College's governance process. The processes in place ensure that all curricula is consistent with the College's mission, goals, educational priorities and plans; meets the College's standards of excellence; is based on the needs of the community; and promotes responsible use of College resources. Curriculum development is also guided by provincial Ministry guidelines, professional and industry association requirements, accreditation bodies and credentialing policies at other postsecondary institutions with which the College may wish to articulate. The College uses an online curriculum development software to manage the development and approval through a web portal and email notifications of curricula. Program curriculum must be approved within the system at each stage by relevant reviewers.

A core principle of the approval process is meaningful consultation with internal and external stakeholders to ensure high quality curriculum and a smooth approval and implementation process. Depending on the nature and scope of the changes to curriculum, consultation might involve the department Faculty and the Registrar's office for a small change or all areas of the College for a new program. The Department Leader and Dean must approve all proposals

prior to undergoing governance review, and are responsible for ensuring appropriate consultation has taken place.

All new programs and courses must be approved by Education Council. The Board of Governors approves the implementation of any new programs with advice from Education Council. Approval of minor changes to curriculum has been delegated to Curriculum Committee by Education Council. All other changes to curriculum must be approved by Education Council.

The College's Curriculum Development Funds support projects that advance and expand the College's educational programming. These funds support the exploration of new ideas, fostering creativity and innovation in program offerings as well as efficiency and effectiveness in program delivery. In line with the College's planning process, proposals that are identified in the Integrated College Plan and Academic Plan will be given priority along with recommendations and action plans resulting from program reviews, program renewal activities and external accreditations. The CD Funds supports the development/revision of programs and courses up to the program and course mapping stage.

### *Program Review*

VCC's program review and renewal process is outlined in C.3.2 Program Review and Renewal Policy and Procedures. The intent is to ensure high quality programming and a process of ongoing and continuous improvement to programs. The main principles of the process are:

- A focus on currency, relevancy, and quality;
- Guided by the College's mandate, vision, and values, and integrated into the wider planning activities of the College;
- Done collaboratively and focused on improving the educational quality of the programs;
- Evidence-informed; and
- Reasonable in scope, and flexible enough to ensure the process is relevant and meaningful to all program circumstances.

**Annual Program Review** is completed by all programs with the focus on understanding the current state of the program and to plan for continuous improvement to support program quality and student success reflective of the College's values. Program Review is primarily based on data compiled for each program by the Institutional Research department on an annual basis. Student profile data, Student Outcomes Data from the B.C. Student Outcomes Survey and the VCC Student Survey, and Student Enrolment data are typically the sources of the information provided. The previous year's departmental action plan is also included.

Using the data from the past five years as a starting point, program departments are asked to reflect on program quality, teaching practices, business aspects, and to identify trends, successes, and barriers to success. They provide an update on the previous year's departmental action plan and an action plan for the coming year. The Dean of the program provides additional comments. The reports are provided to the Vice President Academic, Students and Research and to the PRRC who meet with each Dean to identify overall College trends.

**Program Renewal** is a more comprehensive, forward-looking and formative process that looks to revitalize a program through a collaborative and consultative process that includes extensive consultation with stakeholders and an external review. During the program renewal process, department leaders and Faculty are supported by Instructional Associates from the Centre for Teaching, Learning and Research and the members of the Program Renewal Steering Committee. This support ensures that the program renewal school-level process is thorough, systematic and results in actionable items.

Two to five renewals are scheduled in a typical year. Degree programs are required to undergo renewal every five to seven years. Other programs are scheduled for renewal as needed to address issues identified during the annual program review, a significant change in the field/industry, or at the request of the department. The process is evidence-informed and addresses all aspects of the learning environment.

A typical program renewal includes: 1) an internal self-study report; 2) an external review report; 3) a summary report that includes recommendations and institutional responses; and 4) an action plan for changes to the program. The internal self-study includes an environmental scan, a section on program curriculum and instruction, Faculty and staff, student outcomes, student support services, program planning and administration, and the physical environment. The Renewal Steering Committee is chaired by an Instructional Associate from CTLR and includes the program Dean and Department Leader, a member of Institutional Research, program Faculty, and a program staff member.

Numerous VCC programs (primarily in the Health Sciences) are required to conduct reviews by external accrediting bodies. The Program Review and Renewal Policy allows, where elements of the external review are consistent with College requirements, for the accreditation review to substitute for a program renewal. The program must report on the accreditation findings to the Vice President Academic, the PRRC, and Education Council.

Accountability and follow through is a central part of the process. The Department Leader and the Dean will monitor and report out on the action plans from annual program reviews, program renewals, and program accreditation. The action plans are tracked by the Program Review and Renewal Committee. Major trends, goals, needs, and barriers are summarised and shared with Education Council.

### **QAPA Review**

The QAPA panel conducting the assessment were Dr. Robin Fisher, panel chair, and panel members Dr. John Boraas and Ms. Kathy Siedlaczek. The site visit was held on November 21 and 22, 2018. In addition to the panel, Ms. Dao Luu, a member of the DQAB Secretariat, also attended the site visit.

The QAPA panel submitted its report on December 5, 2018. VCC provided a response on March 14, 2019.

The panel concluded that the College is on a path of program review and renewal, and have developed significant policy structures, and are actively building toward this long-term goal. The review team noted that it was impressed throughout the visit by the very collegial culture at and the way that it was carrying the institution through the challenges of developing a strong

quality assurance environment. The panel saw this as fundamental to the good work being done on improving programs. Overall, the panel commended the College for its vision and the development of a collaborative and relational institution. The panel report provided commendations, affirmations and recommendations.

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

- The well thought out and developed policy structure around quality assurance and that, while many these policies are relatively recent, VCC has instituted a much more robust set of review processes that include program development and two kinds of reviews – annual reviews for all programs and periodic program renewal reviews when appropriate.
- There is a great deal of enthusiasm for this work at all levels of the institution and uniformly among faculty in the three programs that met with us. There is clear momentum on this work with widespread involvement at all levels.
- As well as having learning outcomes at the course and program level, VCC has recently taken the major step of establishing a set of Institutional Learning Outcomes.
- There is support for quality improvement through the Centre for Teaching, Learning and Research and the Faculty Associate model is helpful and provides “horsepower” necessary to move forward projects. Templates are being developed to assist the faculty in programs to carry out reviews and this work encourages faculty involvement.
- Lastly, and most importantly, there is evidence that all of this work is leading to improved program quality, a better educational experience and higher levels of student satisfaction and success.

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

- VCC was clear that the implementation of the new policies is a work in progress as, indeed, quality assurance work always is. They are committed to continuing this work and understand the benefits that it brings to their programs.
- Having established a set of Institutional Learning Outcomes they understand that they now have to be integrated with the course and program learning outcomes and then assessment methods need to be established. This too is a work in progress and the institution understands that. VCC is in the process of developing a program of internal communication and engagement on Institutional Learning Outcomes which is an important first step along the path of implementation.
- VCC is moving to encouraging the development of scholarship within a College environment. The Nursing program appears to be a leader in this development and it is being encouraged and resourced at initial levels by the College leadership.
- The College is also providing some resources of time and money to the program review process and the implementation of recommendations.
- The institution is undertaking a gap analysis between accreditation reviews and their own program review/renewal process. We commend this analysis because accreditation and program reviews are different processes with somewhat different outcomes. Accreditation is about defending and explaining against accreditation standards while program review can be about a more appreciative model to explore areas of weakness or concern. At the same time we understand the reluctance in programs like Nursing about doing two full



blown reviews and so suggest that if there is a need for an internal review that it be done through an existing process like the annual review. Internal program review can also be used to encourage curriculum program changes, gather evidence, and request funding which are purposes different from accreditation.

- VCC is developing strong policies and processes around new program development and this work is going on hand-in-hand with the work on quality improvement.
- VCC is working on a program of professional development for program leaders and the review team saw this as an important new initiative to train leaders, among other things, in program quality assurance.
- We recommend that the institution give some thought to program review in the trades programs. They are aware of this need and indicated that it was on the agenda for future work.

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

- We are concerned that there are not adequate resources of time and money to conduct annual reviews and also complete enough program renewals to cover all programs in a reasonable period of time. We therefore wonder if the annual reviews for each program could be reduced to once every two or three years or could the process be streamlined to make it less of a drain on resources. The frequency of annual reviews could otherwise be a drain on forward momentum.
- VCC should develop a clearer set of expectations for external program review panels.
- Some process for establishing whether the recommendations that come out of program reviews/renewals are achievable and that what is not possible is clearly acknowledged and those that are possible are then prioritized.
- As noted, VCC is developing a well-considered program development policy and process and we have a few suggestions about that development. We think that evaluation could be built into program development more strongly. We noted that a lot of work goes into the early stages before the first approval of the concept document and wonder if some form of “notional” approval could come earlier. We did hear from the institution that there is a good deal of informal discussion before the concept stage.
- More, and more public, communication of the processes and results of program reviews would be beneficial by, for example, enhancing the website devoted to this information, or establishing other mechanisms to build capacity and share learning across the College.

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