# / information brief

# **Quality Assurance**

### what is it?

Quality Assurance (QA) is the process by which existing and new post-secondary education programs in Ontario are evaluated against specific criteria. The Council of Ontario Universities has set out to meet new international standards that call for the articulation of Degree Level Expectations (DLEs) and program learning outcomes.

A <u>Quality Assurance Framework</u> was prepared by the Quality Assurance Transition Implementation Task Force and the Ontario Council of Academic Vice-Presidents' Executive Committee. It sets out the guidelines that every institution must follow to design and implement a quality assurance process that is consistent with its mission, its DLEs, and the protocols of the Framework. The Framework was formally approved in 2010 and the Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance was established.

The Quality Council is at arm's length from universities and government. Recommendations go from the individual university quality assurance committee (e.g. Office of the Provost) to the Quality Assurance Council to ensure that universities comply with quality assurance guidelines. The Quality Assurance Council communicates final decisions to the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities where necessary.



# how does it work?

Ontario colleges and universities are responsible for creating an Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP) to meet the standards outlined in the Quality Assurance Framework. IQAPs are ratified by Quality Council and include protocols for:

- New program approvals
- Expedited approvals e.g. new field in a graduate program
- Cyclical review of existing programs
- Audit process i.e. compliance with IQAP and program review

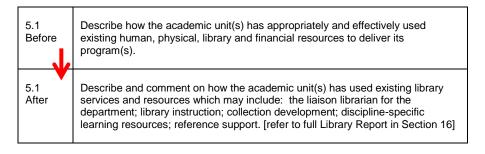
There must be alignment between course and program learning outcomes, standards for professional programs, and institutional Degree Level Expectations (DLEs) which are set out in six broad categories:

Undergraduate DLEs	Graduate DLEs
Depth & Breadth of Knowledge	Depth & Breadth of Knowledge
Knowledge of Methodologies	Research & Scholarship
Application of Knowledge	Level of Application of Knowledge
Communication Skills	Professional Capacity/Autonomy
Awareness of Limits of Knowledge	Level of Communication Skills
Autonomy and Professional Capacity	Awareness of Limits of Knowledge

# who's doing it?

Academic departments must adhere to QA guidelines and develop learning outcomes for the DLEs. Each IQAP identifies committee representatives who support a departmental program review or new program proposal. Library members, probably a mix of unit heads, liaison librarians, and collection coordinators, will be asked to contribute information on behalf of the library.

Look for the IQAP on your university administration pages. It's important to check the context in which the library is included in this document. At Queen's, we discovered that feedback on the library had originally been grouped with numerous resources minimizing the opportunity to describe library impact. Here's how we changed the wording on Queen's cyclical program review form. Every department is asked to comment on the role of the library.



# / information brief

#### OCU a .. ontario college and university library association

# **Quality Assurance**

#### further reading

Ascough, R.S. (2011). <u>Learning (about) outcomes:</u> <u>How the focus on assessment</u> <u>can help overall course design</u>. *Canadian Journal of Higher Education, 4*/1/2, 44-61.

ACRL. (2010). <u>The Value of</u> <u>Academic Libraries: A</u> <u>Comprehensive Research</u> <u>Review and Report</u>. Chicago: ACRL.

Council of Ontario Universities. Council on Quality Assurance. (2012). <u>Quality Assurance</u> <u>Framework</u>.

Gilchrist, D., & Oakleaf, M. (2012). <u>An Essential Partner:</u> <u>The Librarian's Role in Student</u> <u>Learning Assessment</u>. Urbana, IL: University for Illinois and Indiana University, National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment.

Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario. (2015). Learning outcomes assessment: A practitioner's handbook. Toronto: HEQCO.

OCUL Spotdocs Quality Assurance Repository and OCUL QA Community. Links to template for library self-study, examples of program reviews, QA resources.

Ontario Colleges Quality Assurance Service . (2011). Colleges' self-regulatory quality agency.

> Updated May 5, 2015 Cory Laverty Queen's University

## why is it significant?

Given the QAF, *Library Self Study* reports must now provide evidence to demonstrate how information literacy programs and library collections sustain and enhance the quality of student scholarship and learning. The <u>OCUL Quality</u> <u>Assurance Community</u> (2012) links to a QA repository with report templates, examples, and lists of data that can be included in self-study reports.

Recommended quality indicators relating to collections include:

- Ways collections address the current state of the discipline or area of study
- Identification of unique collection innovations or creative components
- Appropriateness of the proposed methods for the assessment of collections
- Completeness of plans for documenting and demonstrating the level of collection relevancy to students, consistent with the institution's DLEs
- Definition and use of indicators that provide evidence of quality of collections

Recommended quality indicators for information literacy programs include:

- Appropriateness of methods for the assessment of student achievement of the intended program learning outcomes and DLEs
- Completeness of plans for documenting and demonstrating the level of performance of students, consistent with the institution's statement of its DLEs

### what are the challenges?

Every academic department will be writing their program learning outcomes, especially as a cyclical program review approaches. Librarians who serve on departmental curriculum committees will have opportunities to formally integrate information literacy outcomes at the program level. Those who do not will miss a tremendous chance for partnership. Similarly, librarians who are already assessing collections and instruction are well-prepared to report on library impact. There will be a steep learning curve for those who do not have these strategies in place.

## where is it going?

Since 2010, every publicly-assisted Ontario university must adopt the Quality Assurance Framework including the library, which is acknowledged as an academic service that affects program quality. Check the timelines for your departmental program reviews to gather and prepare the data needed for library reports. Colleges are also introducing a <u>self-regulatory quality agency</u>.

## what are the implications for libraries?

More than ever, librarians need to be proactive in partnering with curriculum committees in academic departments, establishing information literacy programs with clear learning outcomes and assessment strategies, analysing library collections against rigorous criteria, and contributing to the development of university-wide learning outcomes.

