

Advice on Launching a Cyclical Program Review

- What has the QC reviewed that showed the best ways informing programs (or departments) about their upcoming CPRs and what needs to be done?

Some advice to consider:

- If helpful / necessary, reminding units at some point that the requirement to undergo a CPR does not only come from the university through its IQAP, but is also a requirement of the Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) and therefore applicable to all publicly assisted universities in the province. It may also be helpful to indicate that while the government is at arm's length from our quality assurance processes, the ministry does require that the QAF be followed and that non-compliance has implications for approval of requests for government funding of a new program, which will not be approved until MCU receives confirmation of the Quality Council's approval of the program, as well as to assure the government there is sufficient rigour in the sector's QA work to continue to function as a self-regulating system. While there are numerous ways to approach this relaying of information, one example is available here on the University of Toronto's website: [Top 5 Review Workshop Takeaways – Office of the Vice-Provost, Academic Programs, University of Toronto \(utoronto.ca\)](https://www.utoronto.ca/academic-programs/quality-assurance-framework/top-5-review-workshop-takeaways)
- Use positive language that describes the benefits of a CPR wherever possible, but especially during the launch of the process (see sample letter below).
- Ensure the launch occurs in a timely manner, with sufficient notice ahead of when the first key element is due, whether this is some form of terms of reference for the review, stipulated time to work with your Centre for Teaching and Learning on curriculum mapping, program-level learning outcomes, assessment methods, etc., or the self-study itself.
- Ideally, send the launch letter / memo / email to the program / department coming up for review, rather than a single notification to all programs / departments scheduled for review in a particular year.
- Help manage expectations from the outset with a clear summary of key steps and any associated deadlines.
- Ensure the launch letter provides links to any relevant templates and guidelines, as well as contact details for the central resource person for the program / department head to contact during the course of the CPR.
- If one is not already offered, consider designing and implementing a CPR orientation workshop to be offered shortly after the launch and on an annual basis to those programs coming up for review.
- Where possible, identify to the unit / department any QA "champions" and / or other programs that have been recognized as having done a particularly good job of their CPR. These can be excellent resources, especially for someone who has not gone through a CPR before, to speak with about their experiences and lessons learned: what worked well? What might they do differently next time? Etc.

- For those programs / departments that may have challenges in meeting the review timeline, encourage them to come speak with you, ideally in person, to discuss their challenges and develop a plan together on how best to overcome these.
- Again, if not already offered, consider providing a second orientation workshop to programs / departments that are coming up due to provide a monitoring report on a FAR/IP. This will be some time after the original launch of the CPR, so it is worth having a separate information session on, if feasible.
- Reach out to your QA Key Contact colleagues across the province to see what templates and materials for launching CPRs they may be willing and able to share.
- See also the extract from the Omnibus Report within Handout 3 on Approaches to Continuous Improvement, which summarizes some related excellent advice relating to communications and other things to consider, as offered by other QA Key Contacts across the province.

(See also the sample launch letter below)

Sample Launch Letter based on Examples from other Universities

Dear XXX,

As you may know, according to the schedule for the cyclical review of academic programs, approved by *(name applicable governing committees / bodies / Senate that has approved the review schedule)*, the following programs within the Department of XX are scheduled to be reviewed in the 20XX-20XX review cycle:

- BA (Hons) in XX
- BSc (Hons) in XX
- MA in XX
- Etc.

The periodic external review of programs and the units in which they reside is a critical facet of the university's commitment to quality assurance. These reviews provide an unparalleled opportunity to secure the expert advice of leaders in the field concerning academic and administrative issues, to assess our performance against leading national and international programs, and receive expert guidance on key strategic directions. The review report is taken forward to governance as a measure of its importance.

The first step will be for the *(insert applicable Office or instruct the program / Department to do so)* to develop *(terms of reference, review guidelines, etc.)* for this review during the summer 20XX. Once these have been finalized, my office will be back in touch with more details on next steps. In the meantime, please plan for the review to occur in the *(early fall/winter, etc.)* of 20XX.

A critical element of the review process is the preparation of a self-study. The template for the self-study, as well as additional information and resources, is available here *(insert link)*. This should be an inclusive process that involves the participation of faculty, staff and students. The resulting self-study should emphasize critical analysis, be broad-based, thoughtful and reflective, and set out a vision for future improvement. It should also be structured to address the agreed-upon review terms of reference. The self-study will be provided to the reviewers in advance of their visit. I would also ask that you provide copies of any relevant recent external accreditation or last cyclical review reports.

To help you prepare the self-study, I am forwarding the IQAP section on the cyclical review of units and programs. As outlined in the policy, the cyclical review consists of the following key stages:

1. Finalizing the *(terms of reference / guidelines / review methodology)* by *(insert date)*
2. Preparation and submission of a draft self-study, due by *(insert date)*. Assistance is available from *(insert names of applicable central resources, such as the Centre for Teaching and Learning (or equivalent), Institutional Planning (or equivalent), the University Librarian, Academic Advising, Equity Office, IT, etc.)*

3. Submission of the slate of proposed external reviewers, due by *(insert date)*. Guidelines for selecting arm's length reviewers is available here *(insert link)*
4. External reviewers' site visit and report
5. Unit response to the external reviewers' report, due by *(insert date)*
6. Decanal response to the external reviewers' report, due by *(insert date)*
7. A Final Assessment Report, to be authored by *(insert, as per requirements of IQAP)*, in consultation with *(as per IQAP)*. This report addresses both the external reviewers' report and the internal responses, and includes an Implementation Plan for those recommendations that are accepted for action;
8. A monitoring report(s) on the status of the Implementation Plan, to be submitted *(insert timing, as per IQAP requirements)*

Early in *(month, year)*, *(name of data source, such as Institutional Planning)* will provide you with a common set of institutional data that we would ask you to incorporate into the self-study. You are of course very welcome to supplement this data with additional material. We will also provide you with a library report for inclusion in the self-study.

XX, *(insert title)* will be your main point of contact and source of support during the review process. *(S/he/they)* will contact your office to set up a time to meet to discuss the review process and its various elements. I would appreciate it if the person who will be coordinating the business elements of the review is present at this meeting. In addition, an orientation workshop will be offered by XX on *(date)* to support your cyclical review efforts.

Best wishes for a constructive and successful review. If you have any questions, or if there is any way I or my office can help as you begin the self-study please let me know.

Sincerely,

(Provost / Vice-Provost / Dean)

cc: *(as applicable)*