

## **Collecting and Showing Data to Support Cyclical Program Reviews**

- With regards to completing the Cyclical Program Review (CPR), what are the best ways for collecting and showing data to support the conclusions reached in CPRs?

### **Commendations / best practices arising from the first cycle of audits**

- Provision of standardized data sets provided to departments constituted a best practice at many universities. At one audit, auditors praised, in particular, the range of indicators provided, the grouping of data into faculty, research, and student quality indicators, and the clarity of presentation in the explanatory "Description of Data Elements" cover sheet. Input provided by the Library services was also impressive in its quality and value.
- The standardized data sets' grouping of data into faculty, research, and student quality indicators, and the clarity of presentation in the explanatory "Description of Data Elements" cover sheet received high praise in one audit.
- At another audit, the auditors were pleased to hear high praise for Tableau, a recently available central software and intelligence tool for improving data gathering and analysis. New program proponents in particular noted Tableau's value and its resulting efficiencies.
- Utilizing the services of the Alumni Office to obtain useful information related to activities undertaken by students after completing the program was commended as part of another audit.
- For units that offer professional programs, scheduling accreditation reviews in the same year as the CPR allows the units to use much of the same data in both processes rather than having to gather it twice.
- Another university's Offices of Institutional Research and Planning and Equity and Human Rights were commended for the supply of timely, useful data required to fill in parts of the review templates. In addition, the units reported receiving helpful advice and assistance from the School of Graduate Studies.

### **Related recommendations and suggestions arising from the first cycle of audits**

- Suggestions / Recommendations related to centralized data packages / support:
  - Multiple universities received a suggestion or recommendation (depending on the context) to review the package of data required for its self-studies, providing (centrally) as comprehensively as possible, complete data sets to units undertaking cyclical program review, and as per the requirements of the individual IQAP.
  - Similarly, the provision of data from multiple resources (e.g., the Registrar's Office and Institutional Planning (or equivalent) has been discouraged in several audits.
  - Several universities were also encouraged to develop a timeline to ensure the provision of data at an appropriate time in the process. Similarly, many universities received recommendations to ensure the timely provision of data sets for the completion of the self-study.

- NOTE: Data not being provided in a timely manner, and/or with central support on how best to interpret and use the data, was a frequent source of frustration by many program representatives met with as part of most audits. Solving this issue can go a long way to solving delays in process and facilitating a smoother CPR experience, thereby also encouraging greater engagement with and buy-in to the process.
- One audit suggested the university seek to determine how it can best support the tasks related to data collection and analysis to meet IQAP requirements, calculate what human and financial resources are required to facilitate this, and determine what new resources from which sources would permit.
- At one site visit, the auditors were informed that a project was underway to improve the accessibility and usefulness of the data available to the quality assurance processes. In a number of the audited programs, there were questions as to the usefulness and source of the data, with some units having to develop their own data for the various reports. The university was encouraged to bring this project to a conclusion as soon as practicable.
- One university was encouraged to provide “Lunch and Learn” workshops to help units and programs interpret and use the data.
- Template related Suggestions / Recommendations
  - Consider ways of streamlining the templates used in the cyclical reviews of the undergraduate and graduate programs to make them less onerous for faculty to complete and/or pre-populating the templates with the relevant data.
  - Modify and streamline the templates...to reduce redundancies and to reflect the requirements of the Quality Assurance Framework...also consider whether having some of the data pre-populated, perhaps by the Office of the Dean of the relevant Faculty, might assist in the timely completion of the templates. There should be links to each of the templates in a revised IQAP.
- Suggestions / Recommendations related to particular types of data
  - Consider incorporating alumni data into cyclical program reviews (multiple audits).
  - Consider the implementation of a system to collect data from alumni.
  - Take steps to ensure the collection of reliable program-level data concerning student employment after graduation.
- Misc. Suggestions / Recommendations
  - Consider permitting the use of alternative sources of data and evidence in the case of programs with low student numbers.
  - A number of universities received comments on the lack of integration of the data into the self-studies and were asked to explore opportunities for central supports for future CPRs.

## Other things to consider

- Outputs of a faculty retreat, focus group(s), survey results from current and recent alum of the program, etc. are all critical “data” inputs to the self-study, which should then clearly articulate how this information was used to inform the self-reflection that went into the creation of the self-study (see also the QAF Guidelines on *Creating an Effective Self-study* appended to Handout 1).
- Connections between a new program proposal and a new program’s first CPR:
  - Spending time to develop a strong curriculum map in a new program proposal can be greatly beneficial when it comes time for the first CPR of a new program
  - Similarly, laying out clear plans for how the new program plans to assess its students’ achievement of its program objectives and learning outcomes, as well as plans for how the resulting information will be used to inform continuous improvement, can also be immensely beneficial come the time of the program’s first CPR.
- Clearly articulating any actions taken to respond to the recommendations and outcomes of the previous CPR can help the external reviewers to quickly see any connections between the last review and the current one.