

Brock IQAP Codicil

(December 15, 2021)

History of the Quality Assurance Framework (QAF)

The Quality Assurance Framework was originally approved in 2010 by the Executive Heads of Ontario Universities and the Council of Ontario Universities (COU). COU then established the Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance (Quality Council) as an arm's length body to administer the framework and provide oversight of quality assurance in the province.

As mandated in Section 6.2 of the Framework, an external review of the QAF and its administration by the Quality Council must be undertaken once every eight years, and the first such review occurred in 2018. The stated primary purpose of the review is to ensure that policies and procedures meet or exceed international standards of quality assurance.

The 2018 external review of the Framework resulted in revisions which were approved by COU through OCAV (the Ontario Council of Academic Vice-Presidents) in February 2021. The QAF now includes an explicit set of principles which explain the underlying reasons for Ontario's quality assurance procedures and has undergone revision to the protocols for new programs, cyclical reviews, major modifications and program discontinuations.

History of the Brock Institutional Quality Assurance Processes (IQAP)

The Brock IQAP was originally developed in 2010 based on the first version of the QAF and was reviewed by Senate in May of 2010, prior to submission to the Quality Council. The IQAP received final approval from the Quality Council on May 16, 2011 and was subsequently approved by Senate on June 2, 2011.

The Quality Council conducted an audit of Brock in 2012/13 to determine whether the institution was acting in compliance with its IQAP. Brock received an Audit Report in October 2013 from the Quality Council and a One-Year Report in December 2014 describing progress made on implementing the audit's recommendations. The IQAP was revised to address issues raised by the audit in consultation with institutional stakeholders and the Quality Council. The revised IQAP was approved by the Quality Council on March 24, 2016 and by Senate on May 25, 2016 and remains the official version of the document to this day.

The next scheduled audit of Brock by the Quality Council was postponed from 2021/22 to 2022/23, in large part due to the process associated with the review of the QAF upon which the audit would be based, but also as a result of the effects of COVID-19. It is expected that the 2022/23 audit will result in recommendations for revisions to the IQAP. These expected revisions would be in addition to those required by the new 2021 QAF. The IQAP Codicil will serve as an interim measure until the 2022/23 audit is completed and addressed.

QAF Principles Guiding Quality Assurance

The revised QAF (2021) states on page one:

Quality assurance is a shared responsibility between the Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance and Ontario's publicly assisted universities. This collaboration ensures a culture of continuous improvement and support for a vision of a student-centred education based on clearly articulated program learning outcomes. Quality assurance processes result in an educational system that is open, accountable, and transparent.

Recommendations resulting from a 2018 External Expert Review Panel have informed an evolution of the original 2010 Quality Assurance Framework. In its Report, the Review Panel acknowledged "the desire [of Ontario universities] to expand the focus of quality assurance beyond that of the institutions demonstrating compliance with the established standards of quality to that of encouraging investments in quality improvement". This principled approach to quality assurance would allow for a wider scope for interpretation and application and also provide recognition of the wider diversity in institutional strategies, special missions and mandates (for example, bilingualism) and student populations that is being encouraged by governments, institutions and others. By bringing Ontario's universities quality assurance practices into line with the latest international quality assurance standards, the Quality Assurance Framework also facilitates greater international acceptance of institutes' degrees and improves graduates' access to university programs and employment worldwide. With this latest iteration of the Framework, Ontario universities continue to be placed in the mainstream of quality assurance both nationally and internationally.

Existing Brock IQAP alignment with new QAF

1. Two External Reviewers for all new program proposals (QAF 2.2.1/IQAP 3.7)
Although the IQAP requires that one or two (for undergraduate) and two (for graduate) reviewers are selected for new program reviews, Brock's practice has been to constitute a team consisting of one internal and two external reviewers for all external reviews.
2. Provide faculty CVs to reviewers (QAF p.19 (footnote)/Brock PPB Template 5.1.2, Self Study Template 5.0)
Although the IQAP does not specifically state that CVs must be provided to the review team, Brock's practice has been to require that all Self Studies and Program Proposal Briefs (PPB) contain the CVs of faculty contributing to the program. Therefore, the Self Studies and PPBs provided to the reviewers in advance of the review always include the faculty CVs.

3. Include an Executive Summary in the Final Assessment Report (FAR) (QAF 5.3.2 b)
The Quality Council requested in a letter dated June 25, 2020 that Brock include an Executive Summary in all FARs and this was implemented on an ongoing basis from that point.
4. Provide a rationale in the Final Assessment Report for any rejected reviewer recommendations (QAF 5.3.2 a) 4./IQAP 2.12)
The Brock IQAP states that the FAR must “identify and explain the circumstances relating to any recommendations that will not be implemented”. Every FAR provides a disposition for each recommendation received from the reviewers, with a rationale as to why it was accepted or rejected.
5. Responses to Reviewer Report for single-department (or equivalent) program reviews (QAF 2.3.1 and 5.3.1/IQAP 2.11 and 3.10)
The IQAP requires a response to the Reviewer Report from both the proponent/academic unit and the division head (Dean or equivalent) for all new program proposals and cyclical program reviews.
6. Clarify purpose of major modification (QAF p.30/Brock Major Modification template)
Since Dec 2019, the form required to submit a “Request for Major Modification” has included a section asking for an explanation of the impetus behind the major modification related to continuous improvement and program objectives.
7. Identify an arbiter to determine minor modification, major modification or new program (QAF Major Modifications “Scope” p.30/IQAP 1.3)
The Brock IQAP states that “The institutional arbiter in defining what constitutes a major as opposed to a minor program change will be the Provost in consultation with ARC.”

Interim Practices to bring IQAP into alignment with new QAF:

1. External reviewer recommendations related to continuous improvement (QAF 5.2.1) for cyclical program reviews
Reviewers’ Report must include at least three recommendations for specific steps that will lead to continuous improvement of the program.
2. External reviewer recommendations related to resources (QAF 5.2.1) for cyclical program reviews
Reviewer recommendations related to resources must be directly linked to issues of program quality or sustainability.

3. Desk review/virtual site visit for certain new masters program proposals (QAF 2.2.1)
Subject to the Provost's (or equivalent) approval, the review of a proposal for certain new masters programs (such as a professional degree) may be conducted via desk review or virtual site visit, if the externals are satisfied with that option.

4. GDip Type 1 approval (QAF Definitions p. 57)
The submission of a proposed Graduate Diploma Type 1 that is associated with an existing parent program will be approved through the process associated with a major modification instead of the new program proposal (expedited) process.