

## PROGRAM QUALITY ENHANCEMENT

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| Section:     | Academic/Student (AC)                                                                |
| Subject:     | Programs and Curriculum                                                              |
| Legislation: |                                                                                      |
| Effective:   | April 6, 2016                                                                        |
| Revision:    | September 1, 2016 (reformatted); January 19, 2022; April 11, 2022; September 8, 2026 |

**APPROVED:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**President and CEO**

## POLICY

The policy of the Board of Governors is that SAIT maintains a comprehensive academic program quality framework that supports the development, revision, evaluation and continuous improvement of programs, ensuring alignment with SAIT's strategic priorities and academic quality standards, while meeting applicable internal, external, industry, Campus Alberta Quality Council (CAQC) and Ministry of Advanced Education requirements.

## PROCEDURE

### DEFINITIONS

#### Academic quality

Refers to how programs are designed, delivered, supported and improved over time to enable student success and to maintain and enhance academic standards. Academic quality is demonstrated through cyclical, evidence-informed review and continuous improvement, supported by shared responsibility and appropriate governance oversight.

#### Academic Quality Council (AQC)

Provides governance oversight of academic quality through review of program proposals, program changes, cyclical program evaluations, and related action plans for all academic credit-bearing programs.

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| <b>Academic Quality Domains</b>          | An interpretive lens used to understand program quality. Domains are considered only where they provide credible insight into learning experience and learning outcomes. Evidence related to domains should be proportional, contextual and outcome-referenced, avoiding prescriptive judgments about methods, delivery models or internal practices.                                                                       |
| <b>Academic Quality Framework (AQF)</b>  | Institution-wide system for governing and assuring academic quality across the program lifecycle, integrating governance, evidence, policies and procedures to ensure continuous improvement.                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>Action Plan</b>                       | A program-level document that sets out priority quality improvement actions, timelines, responsibilities, resources and indicators of success.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <b>Annual self-monitoring</b>            | The institutional process through which all credit-bearing programs annually review evidence of learning quality, progress on action plans and emerging improvement priorities.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <b>Cyclical Program Evaluation (CPE)</b> | An evaluation of an academic program, normally conducted every five to seven years, including a self-study, external review and an action plan. Cyclical Program Evaluation provides a periodic, in-depth examination of program quality, coherence and outcomes, drawing on accumulated annual self-monitoring documentation and additional evidence to inform broader judgments, external input and governance oversight. |
| <b>External peer review</b>              | An independent peer review of an academic program conducted by qualified reviewers who are external to the program, through the lens of the Academic Quality Domains and applicable institutional and external quality enhancement requirements.                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <b>Office of Academic Quality (OAQ)</b>  | The institutional unit responsible for enabling and supporting program evaluation and quality processes at SAIT, including the provision of shared tools, guidance, training, coordination and institutional records to support evidence-informed program evaluation and continuous improvement.                                                                                                                            |

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| <b>Program</b>    | A prescribed curriculum leading to a SAIT credential. A program is divided into a number of courses. For the purposes of this procedure, a program includes credit programs, apprenticeship programs and non-credit programs.      |
| <b>Self-study</b> | As part of the program quality assurance cycle, a systematic, structured examination of program quality criteria in relation to SAIT's Academic Quality Domains and to the program's internal, external and industry requirements. |

## GOVERNING PRINCIPLES

1. SAIT's Academic Quality Domains apply to all academic credit-bearing programs, including certificates, diplomas, applied degrees, degrees and apprenticeships, ensuring a consistent, holistic and evidence-based approach to academic quality. Quality inquiry within these domains is grounded in a scholarly orientation, emphasizing evidence, reflection and continuous improvement. The depth and intensity of that inquiry will reflect the credential level, program context and governing requirements.
2. Academic quality at SAIT is a shared responsibility, led by schools, faculty and program teams through reflective practice and self-study, and supported by institutional structures and governance.
3. Judgments and decision making about program quality and improvement priorities must be informed by multiple sources of documented evidence, rather than anecdotes or single indicators. Evidence is viewed through the lens of the Academic Quality Domains and may include curriculum documents, student and alumni feedback, labour-market data, institutional data, benchmarking and external input, as appropriate to program context.
4. Academic program evaluation supports continuous improvement and ongoing enhancement, not episodic compliance. Using the Academic Quality Domains, programs must regularly review goals, assess progress and adjust actions through annual self-monitoring and periodic cyclical evaluation. Improvement activities are expected to be proportionate, focused and responsive to evidence and context.
5. SAIT is committed to ensuring that program evaluation processes are transparent, fair and clearly communicated. Faculty, staff, students and relevant external parties must be engaged appropriately based on the review's scope and purpose. Domain-based program evaluation assesses program quality and learning outcomes, not individual performance.

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## PROCEDURE

### A. Cyclical Program Evaluation (CPE)

#### 1. Initiation:

- a) Programs must complete a CPE on a regular institutional cycle, usually every five to seven years, to ensure ongoing quality and relevance. The frequency of evaluation may vary based on program risk, accreditation, regulatory requirements and/or other institutional considerations. The vice president, academic approves the CPE schedule and any exceptions to it.
- b) In consultation with schools and programs, the Office of Academic Quality (OAQ) identifies and maintains a list of programs entering the CPE cycle. This list is updated annually and provided to deans/directors.
- c) The dean/director or designate is responsible for initiating the CPE cycle by notifying the relevant academic chairs for programs within their school/department that are entering the CPE cycle, and for approving the self-study team, which should include faculty, staff and students where appropriate.
- d) Degree programs are evaluated in accordance with Campus Alberta Quality Council (CAQC) requirements and schedules.

#### 2. Self-study:

- a) The academic chair or a designated faculty member will coordinate self-study teams within their programs and is responsible for leading self-study activities. Self-study teams will utilize standardized institutional templates maintained by the OAQ. The self-study must be evidence-informed and appropriate to program context, credential type and review purpose.
- b) Program self-studies are examined through the Academic Quality Domains and informed by institutional data and program specific data and analysis provided through Business Intelligence and Analytics, combined with data from other sources e.g., Program Advisory Committees, faculty feedback and with guidance from the OAQ.

#### 3. External peer review:

- a) The dean/director or designate will select reviewers, in consultation with OAQ and provide a rationale for their selection; to ensure that there is no conflict of interest.

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- b) External peer review is conducted by reviewers from outside the program and may take the form of an in-person site visit or in a virtual environment, where evidence can be thoroughly assessed. The format will be determined by the dean/director based on evidence such as self-study, action plan and external accreditation.
  - c) The external peer review team will assess all collected evidence, offer insights and prepare a formal report for the academic chair or designate, as well as the relevant dean/director. The report will be based on the Academic Quality Domains and will include commendations and recommendations.
  - d) If a program undergoes recognized external accreditation and the accreditation report includes sufficient, relevant and current evidence of program quality, a separate external peer review may not be required. Accreditation findings may be used directly to inform and validate the action plan.
4. Response and final action plan:
- a) The self-study team will prepare a response and an action plan that outlines the planned improvements in relation to the Academic Quality Domains. The action plan:
    - i) Identifies priorities for improvement;
    - ii) Includes if/how the recommendations from the review team will be addressed; and
    - iii) Serves as the foundation for ongoing annual self-monitoring through regular review of the completed action plan.
5. Governance review:
- a) Academic Quality Council (AQC) reviews action plans following a cyclical review, provides feedback and confirms alignment with institutional quality expectations. AQC recommendations are shared with the deans/directors of the relevant schools/departments.
  - b) Schools/departments retain primary accountability for developing, implementing and monitoring the action plans for their programs.

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- c) All programs are reviewed through action plan submission and annual self-monitoring, which is supported by institutional recordkeeping and consolidated reporting by OAQ.
- d) Schools/departments submit their action plans to the AQC and to their dean/director. A copy of the action plan must also be filed with the OAQ.
- e) Schools/departments must ensure annual self-monitoring processes are followed for their programs and will submit confirmation to their dean/director and to the OAQ.
- f) OAQ consolidates annual self-monitoring results and reports annually to SAIT's Senior Academic Leadership Team (SALT) and to the Council for Learning and Program Excellence (CLPE).

Note: Governance review requirements differ by credential type. Degree programs will follow the established CPE submission process and reporting pathway.

## **B. Annual Self-Monitoring**

1. Annual self-monitoring supports program-level improvement, institutional reporting and governance oversight within the Academic Quality Framework, using the Academic Quality Domains as the common lens for reflection and monitoring.
2. Annual self-monitoring applies to all programs, regardless of credential type or Cyclical Program Evaluation (CPE) status, including:
  - a) New programs;
  - b) Programs between CPE cycles; and
  - c) Programs that have not yet undergone CPE.
3. Programs complete annual self-monitoring using a standardized institutional template and guidance from the Office of Academic Quality (OAQ).
  - a) Annual self-monitoring documents program progress, including any material updates since the previous year.
  - b) The self-monitoring process should reflect on key quality signals within the Academic Quality Domains, using evidence appropriate to the program (for example, progress on action plan items, key quality indicators such as enrolment,

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retention and graduation, learner and stakeholder feedback, as well as any changes to curriculum, teaching, assessment, delivery or program resources).

- c) New programs will participate in annual self-monitoring from their first intake, reflecting on early quality signals within the Academic Quality Domains, paying particular attention to enrolment trends, early learner outcomes, curriculum implementation and resource sufficiency.
4. School/department and program leadership are responsible for ensuring that annual self-monitoring processes are implemented, maintained and completed in alignment with institutional requirements as established by the OAQ.
5. Deans/directors must confirm completion of annual self-monitoring to the OAQ, who maintain the institutional records of self-monitoring activities and provide an annual report to the vice president, academic, to support oversight of institutional program quality expectations.

### **C. Degree Programs and CAQC Monitoring**

1. Degree programs are subject to additional external quality assurance expectations through the Campus Alberta Quality Council (CAQC). Academic Quality Domains in align with CAQC standards and expectations.
2. Annual self-monitoring and Cyclical Program Evaluation activities support program health and CAQC's expectations for ongoing monitoring of degree program quality between cyclical evaluations:
  - a) Annual self-monitoring and action plan updates demonstrate ongoing quality enhancement and continuous improvement within the program;
  - b) Records generated through the monitoring process may be used to support CAQC reporting, cyclical program reviews and focused follow-up activities, as required;
  - c) Submission to CAQC occurs only through established institutional governance pathways and does not alter the school owned nature of annual self-monitoring.
3. The Office of Academic Quality coordinates institutional processes related to CAQC submissions and supports schools/departments in aligning program evaluation documentation with CAQC requirements.

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**D. Accreditation-Aligned Modifications and Exceptions**

1. Programs with external accreditation may align CPE timelines and evidence requirements with accreditation cycles.
2. Accreditation reports may replace the external peer review, where it is sufficient.
3. Exceptions will require approval from the associate vice president academic, teaching and learning.

**POLICY/PROCEDURE REFERENCE**

AC.2.19      [Program Quality Assurance policy](#)