



Program Quality Assurance Manual

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Version 4.0



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Quality assurance at SAIT	4
Background	4
Program Quality Assurance overview	6
The SAIT Program Quality Assurance (PQA) System	7
The Self-Study Phase	9
Why a Self-Study?.....	9
What is a Self-Study?	10
People Involved.....	10
External Review Phase	11
Why an External Review?.....	11
What is an External Review?.....	11
External Review Team	12
Action Planning phase	13
Why Action Planning?	13
What is an Action Plan?	13
People Involved.....	14
Annual Self-Assessment	15
References	16



REVISIONS TABLE		
Version	Date	Description
2.7	May 30, 2017	Modifications in manual to reflect the PQA Roles and Responsibilities document.
2.8	June 13, 2017	Modifications to the external review and site visit section to reflect the External Review Nomination Form document.
2.9	July 18, 2017	Annual review and update of the document
3.0	October 17, 2017	Finalizing updates
4.0	July 27, 2018	Annual review and update of the document



QUALITY ASSURANCE AT SAIT

The program quality assurance manual that follows, as referred to in the SAIT Program Quality Assurance (PQA) policy, is intended to provide an overview of the requirements for cyclical review at SAIT.

Background

It is the policy of the Board of Governors that SAIT maintains a PQA process that ensures programs align with SAIT's strategic direction and with internal, external, and industry requirements. The process is one way SAIT assures the community that it is a leader in post-secondary education and meeting industry requirements for skilled graduates. Students, alumni, government, post-secondary partners, and employers must be confident that SAIT has done what is necessary to ensure that graduates have met program goals and learning outcomes and have been engaged in a high quality learning experience along the way.

The SAIT Board of Governors approved the PQA policy and procedure in May 2016 (*AC.2.19*, 2016; *AC.2.19.1*, 2016). The review process supports SAIT's commitment to advancing the success of our students by focusing on five key areas in SAIT's education plan:

1. **Student-first culture**
2. **Engaging students**
3. **Effective teaching methods**
4. **Focused applied education programs**
5. **Relationships**



SAIT's Educational System

The deliberate alignment of programming to market requirements to provide graduates with the skills and competencies for career success (Big Thinking, Applied: Education Plan 2017-2020).

SAIT's quality assurance lens makes certain that SAIT programs are reviewed holistically. SAIT recognizes that a program goes beyond its curriculum to the human, financial, physical, and technological resources that contribute to student success. Regular monitoring of the effectiveness and efficient use of these resources is foundational to quality assurance.

The theoretical framework for SAIT's quality assurance process rests primarily within the discipline of program evaluation. Michael Quinn Patton, a recognized expert in the field, suggests that **program evaluation** is the systematic collection and analysis of information about program activities, characteristics, and outcomes to make judgments about the program, to improve program effectiveness and/or to inform decisions about future programming (Patton, 1997).

Program evaluation is an evolving academic discipline and offers a variety of approaches to evaluation. Theoretical approaches to program evaluation have to be applicable to the environment in which they are situated. At SAIT, action-oriented thinking is integral to the institution's system and when embedded in its people, will support a culture shift to an evaluative mindset and an evidence-based culture of decision-making.

Programs are expected to complete the Program Success Plan (PSP) until they enter the PQA cycle.



PROGRAM QUALITY ASSURANCE OVERVIEW

At SAIT, the quality culture is in development. Well-defined policies/procedures/processes, evidence-based decision-making, engaged stakeholders, and effective communication will help SAIT achieve this shared vision.

Program Quality Assurance provides SAIT programs with the opportunity to tell their quality story - and to make sure that they are engaging in the right activities to meet the promise to students and partners. The process ensures that SAIT programs engage with the appropriate **stakeholders** to and make informed adjustments based on feedback from a range of inputs and a multitude of data sources.

The Program Quality Assurance Cycle requires:

- Well-defined key performance indicators that are monitored regularly
- Regular analysis of stakeholder feedback for decision-making
- Constancy in the use of environmental scanning to stay relevant and competitive
- Foresight, vision and effective strategic planning

Procedure AC.2.19.1 Program Quality Assurance states:

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 (AC.2.19.1, 2016).

The quality assurance process applies to programs as defined in the procedure (see above). It is a mandatory activity for all SAIT programs in scope.

Procedure AC.2.19.1 Program Quality Assurance states:

The program quality assurance process may be modified for programs subject to external accreditation reviews, for apprenticeship programs, and for non-credit programs, in order to limit redundancies and to ensure process efficiencies. Modifications may include, but are not limited to, adapting the timelines and/or scope of the review. The vice president academic, in consultation with Quality Council and the program's dean, must approve the modifications to the process (AC.2.19.1, 2016).

Effort is made to ensure that the PQA processes and external **accreditation** processes are complementary and redundancies are limited.

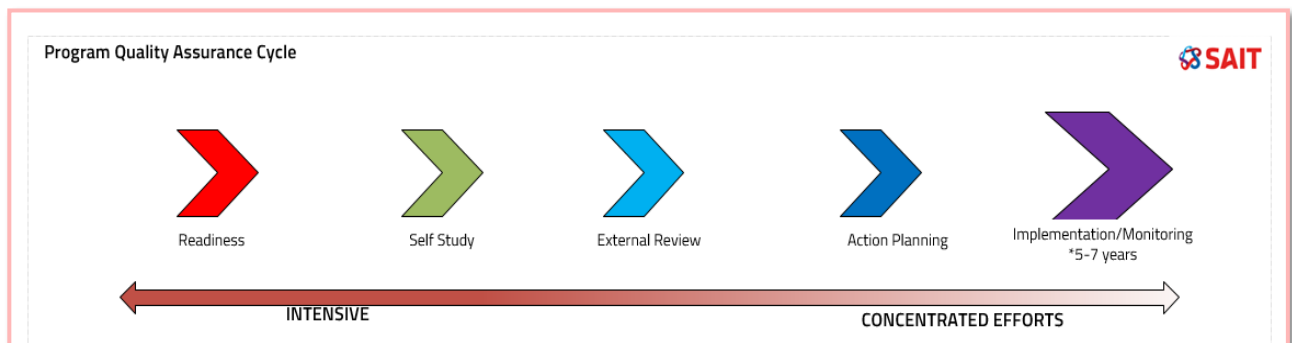
The SAIT Program Quality Assurance (PQA) System

Procedure AC.2.19.1 Program Quality Assurance states:

The program quality assurance process is a developmental process that includes a systematic collection and review of multiple program quality criteria and evidence from both a qualitative and a quantitative perspective. The program's faculty, support staff, and management work together in this process to evaluate and report on how well the program meets the needs of students and employers, and to recommend and implement improvements to the program (AC.2.19.1, 2016).

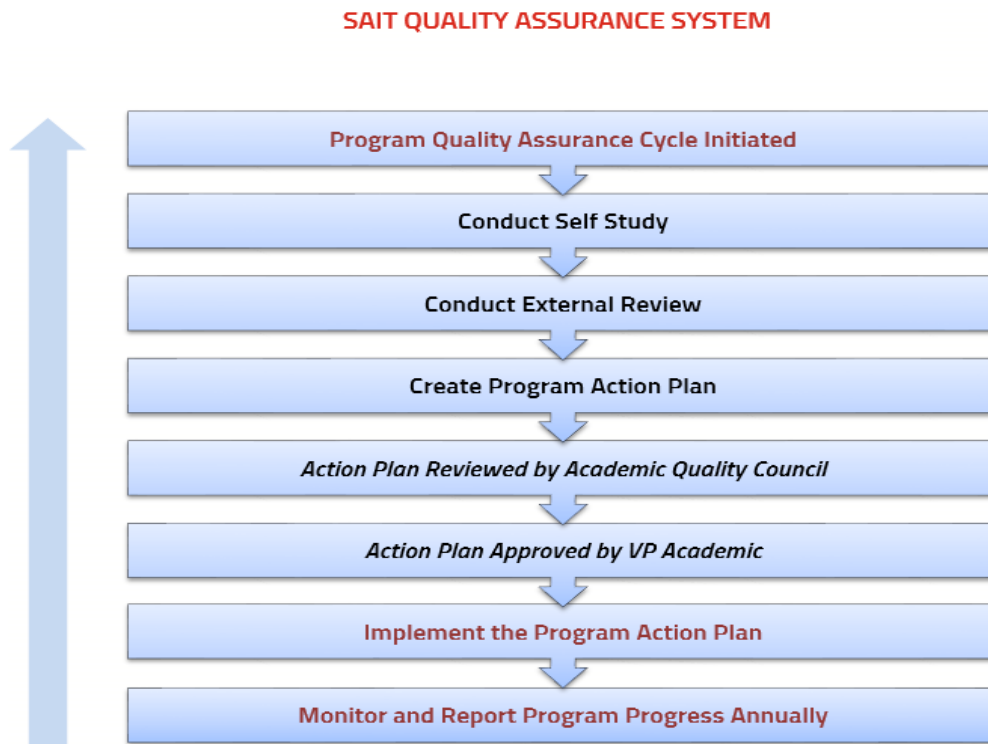
Program quality assurance follows a continuous improvement cycle with key phases and associated processes:

1. Programs are assessed based on SAIT's quality standards.
2. There are five phases to Program Quality Assurance (PQA) process including: readiness, the self-study, external review and completion of the comprehensive self-study report, action plan development and approval, and implementation and monitoring of the action plan.



3. PQA action planning follows the completion of the comprehensive self-study report. During this phase, the program identifies the program goals and the actions which will result in the continuous improvement of the program.
4. Implementation of the action plan is monitored by the program academic chair and dean until the program enters the quality cycle again. The program implements the PQA action plan over a four-year time frame.
5. The annual self-assessment of progress is provided to the vice president, academic.
6. The quality assurance process relies on input from numerous stakeholders, internal and external.
7. Processes and templates support the PQA policy and procedure (AC.2.19, 2016; AC.2.19.1, 2016).
8. Documentation to guide and support the PQA cycle is located on saitnow.ca and the following folder
O:\staff\Common\data\Quality Projects\Program Quality Assurance (PQA) Working

Following the readiness phase, programs enter the quality assurance system:



SAIT's institutional review schedule determines when programs enter the program quality assurance cycle.

Key outputs of the PQA cycle include:

Procedure AC.2.19.1 Program Quality Assurance states:

The program quality assurance process is a five-year cycle, unless modified as described above for accreditation requirements, apprenticeship requirements, or external requirements. This cycle starts with a review year, which is then followed by several self-assessment years (AC.2.19.1, 2016).

- Program information portfolio
- Comprehensive self-study report
- PQA action plan

THE SELF-STUDY PHASE

Procedure AC.2.19.1 Program Quality Assurance states:

Self-study: A systematic, structured examination of program quality criteria in relation to the program's internal, external and industry requirements (AC.2.19.1, 2016).

Why a Self-Study?

The self-study process requires the program to consider how well the program is meeting its goals and aligning with SAIT's strategic direction and education plan goals.

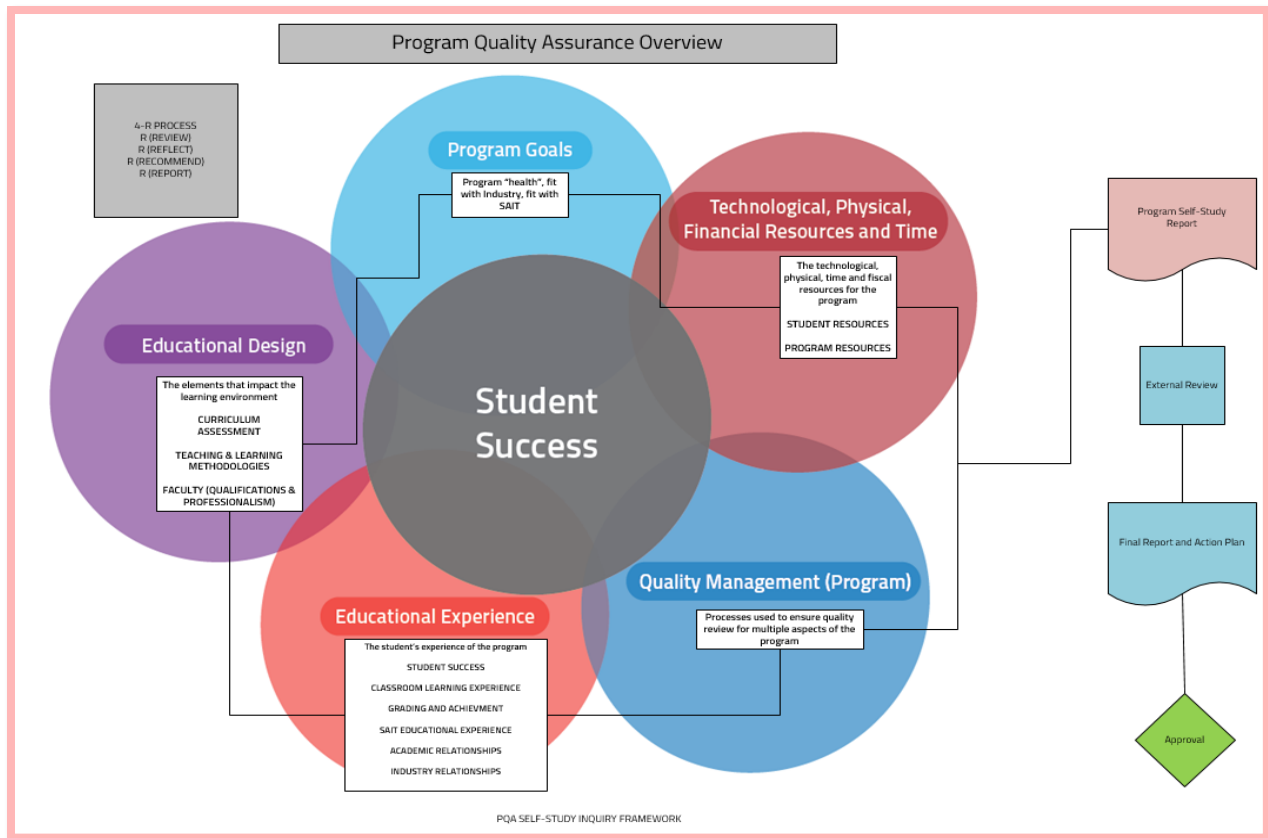
The self-study is guided by the **PQA Inquiry Framework**, which is organized into **five quality standards**. The five standards include:

- **Quality Management**
- **Program Goals**
- **Educational Design**
- **Educational Experience**
- **Program Resources (Technological, Physical, Financial and Time)**

The program quality standards provide structure for the self-study. The inquiry framework ensures that each program is assessed against established criteria and creates consistency within the review process. Each quality standard is supported by **enabling questions** which help participants create findings and recommendations related to each standard. The standards require those involved in the evaluation to demonstrate responsiveness and judgment specific to the evaluation context (Caruthers, Hopson, Shulha, & Yarbrough, 2011).

What is a Self-Study?

The self-study is a systematic and structured analysis of program data to produce a self-critical reflection of how well the program meets SAIT's quality standards.



Who is Involved?

Program quality assurance relies heavily on active engagement from program faculty, the academic chair, and the school and/or SAIT stakeholders. The self-study process uses participatory evaluation values and approaches.

The purpose of stakeholder engagement in the process is to seek feedback on the content of the report and engage all program stakeholders in the process. Feedback is generally gathered during facilitated meetings or through a virtual process. Stakeholders are asked to think of providing feedback as a response to the findings and recommendations.

Self-study projects are carried out with the support of the Program Quality and Development department, in collaboration with the school responsible for the program.



External Review Phase

Procedure AC.2.19.1 Program Quality Assurance states:

External review: A program review conducted by at least two reviewers who are external to the program's school and/or SAIT. Detailed information governing the selection of the reviewers and their roles and responsibilities are set out in the Program Quality Assurance Manual (AC.2.19.1, 2016).

Why an External Review?

An external review is an essential phase in the quality assurance system process and supports academic integrity. The external review provides an independent and objective assessment of the program/unit under review, assesses the quality of the program/unit in a broader academic and industry context, and provides new insights into how well the program/unit is meeting its goals. The review is considered to be at "arm's length" to reduce the potential for conflict of interest between the reviewers and SAIT. The external review process supports continuous improvement.

What is an External Review?

When the self-study report is complete, the program is ready for the next phase in the cycle – the external review. The self-study report is distributed to the external review team four weeks before the external reviewers are scheduled to conduct the external review site visit at SAIT.

Several potential academic and industry reviewers are nominated by the program and school to complete the external review. The Program Quality and Development department and school/program works with the program to interview the nominees for the review, at minimum selecting one academic reviewer and one industry reviewer to participate in the external review. The department works with the program to set the agenda and to plan the external review site visit. During the visit, team members have conversations with key individuals (students, faculty, staff, PAC) involved with the program. The site visit may require one or two days, depending on the needs of the program.

Following the site visit, the external reviewers report their findings to the Program Quality and Development department within four weeks of the site visit.



External Reviewers

The external reviewers normally consist of one academic reviewer and one industry reviewer.

To maintain the integrity of the process, external reviewers should not:

- Have served as a member of any SAIT Program Advisory Committee (PAC) in the past five years.
- Be or have been employed by SAIT.
- Have received a SAIT credential the same as or closely related to the program or unit under review.
- Have served as a mentor, supervisor, research collaborator, co-author, department member or external examiner to program faculty or the academic chair or school leadership.
- Be in a close family relationship with a member of the program or unit under review.
- Be or have been a Master's or Doctoral supervisor of anyone in the program or unit under review.
- Usually be a resident of Canada.

External Academic Reviewers	External Industry Reviewers
To maintain the integrity of the process, external academic reviewers should:	To maintain the integrity of the process, external industry reviewers should:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be full professors/instructors (where possible), or associate professors/instructors or adjunct faculty from another post-secondary institution. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have a recognized credential and/or certification in an industry area or discipline that is the same as, or closely related to, the program or unit under review.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have doctoral degrees or the highest possible credential in a discipline that is the same as, or closely related to, the program or unit under review. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actively employed in a relevant industry position
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Usually be from a post-secondary institution comparable in size to SAIT. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have academic credentials that may enhance the review

ACTION PLANNING PHASE

Procedure AC.2.19.1 Program Quality Assurance states:

The program's academic chair/coordinator, faculty and support staff work together to develop an action plan in response to the self-study and the external review. The action plan contains specific recommendations for program improvement and enhancement. (AC.2.19.1, 2016).

Why Action Planning?

The action plan is one of the products of SAIT's program quality assurance cycle. The plan describes the program's goals for the next 4-5 years based on the findings and recommendations in the comprehensive self-study. It is future-oriented and outlines how the program will achieve its goals, as well as the goals of the organization.

The action plan is a response to the gaps identified through the self-study. It addressed the question: "Where are we now and where do we want to be?" The specifics in the action plan provide a framework for moving the program forward, making evidence-based decisions, and staying aligned with SAIT's and the school's strategic direction.

What is an Action Plan?

The action planning process starts immediately after the site visit with the goal of receiving action plan approval by the vice president, academic (VPA) within six months of the external review site visit.

A SAIT Program Quality Assurance Action Plan describes how recommendations for improvement and enhancement identified during the self-study and external review will be acted upon. The plan (including executive summary, detailed action plan table, and annual progress summary) describes long-term program goals, time-phased actions or projects, measurable indicators of success, and the rationale behind the development of the plan.

The plan's executive summary is the link between the comprehensive self-study report and the action plan itself. It explains what the program wants to accomplish in response to the self-study and what changes are required. The first step in developing an action plan is to identify program goals. Recommendations developed during the PQA self-study and external review transition into program goals that guide action planning. Measures are identified to answer the question, "How will we know that we have made progress toward the achievement of the goals?" The requirement to identify goals and measures supports the link between the action plan and the next quality assurance cycle and strengthens continuity in the quality system.



Actions/projects are outlined in the Detailed Action Plan table. The table describes the intended outcomes of actions/projects and how the effect of an action/project will be determined. The table is also used to identify responsibilities, timeframes and strategic alignment for actions/projects. Resources and responsible individuals are determined -- they are central to an action plan that is achievable. Tactical plans may be used to support the achievement of the plan's actions/projects but are not developed during action planning.

When all components of the action plan are completed, stakeholders and school leadership provide feedback. The action plan is considered final when approval is received from the vice president, academic following a review by SAIT Academic Quality Council.

Who is Academic Quality Council?

The development and approval of the action plan involves a number of key individuals. Refer to PQA roles and responsibilities documentation for the responsibilities of the roles listed below

Procedure AC.2.19.1 Program Quality Assurance states:

A council that reviews the internal self-study, the external reviewers' report, and the program's action plan, and that reports to the vice president, academic. Detailed information governing the Council and its roles and responsibilities is set out in the Program Quality Assurance Manual (AC.2.19.1, 2016).

SAIT's Academic Quality Council reviews the program's action plan and provides recommendations to SAIT's vice president, academic regarding implementation and approval of the action plan.

In terms of quality assurance, the council's responsibility is to carry out activities as per the provisions of policy AC.2.19 Program Quality Assurance (AC.2.19, 2016), its accompanying procedure and accompanying processes. The Academic Quality Council Terms of Reference (*Terms of Reference*, 2016) provides more detail about the council's membership and responsibilities.

IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING PHASE

Procedure AC.2.19.1 Program Quality Assurance states:

During subsequent self-assessment years, the program's academic chair/coordinator, faculty and support staff work together to conduct an annual self-assessment and to provide an update to the program's dean and the Office of the vice president academic, including an update on the progress that the program has made towards the goals identified in its action plan (AC.2.19.1, 2016).

An annual check-in on the program and the progress towards the goals identified through the PQA process is completed during non-self-study years. SAIT's review process emphasizes continual improvement based on reflection and assessment of educational quality. All programs conduct an annual self-assessment on the anniversary of their action plan approval date, which supports ongoing reflection and planning and serves as a resource for programs when they undertake comprehensive review.

The completion of the annual program report is the responsibility of the dean; the academic chair administers the ongoing review and improvement process outlined in the action plan.



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