COLLEGE OF
THE ROCKIES

Response to Quality Assurance Process Audit

Assessors' Report of November 29, 2022

> College of the Rockies gratefully accepts the feedback from the Quality Assurance Process Audit (QAPA) and respectfully submits this response and action plan as prepared by the Vice President Academic and Applied Research and Dean, Innovation in Teaching and Learning and approved by the President and Education Council.

The QAPA site visit for College of the Rockies ("the College") was held on November 23 and 24, 2022 at the College's main campus in Cranbrook, B.C. The QAPA assessors' report, received on November 29, 2022 focused on three areas:

Commendations: Areas where the College has shown exemplary practice in program quality assurance and improvement. The assessors commended the College in the following areas:

1. Commitment to quality assurance as evidenced by numerous quality-related initiatives.
2. Establishing the Centre for Innovation in Teaching and Learning as a central resource to support quality.
3. Commitment to Indigenization and Truth and Reconciliation by embedding this as a core value at the College.
4. Focus on faculty-driven program review which has built trust and engagement.
   Response: The College appreciates the panel's recognition of our commitment and progress on quality assurance priorities that are based on valuing our people, their experience, and their dedication to excellence in educating students.

Affirmations: Areas where the College has identified a weakness and is in the process of improving it. The assessors noted the College is in the process of addressing these key areas of improvement:

1. Strategic Enrolment Management (SEM) planning which includes program quality metrics.
2. Availability and consistency of institutional data including a newly implemented Student Experience Survey.
3. Implementation of an annual review period process to continue improvements and follow-up on recommendations of program reviews.
4. Sharing outcomes of program reviews internally at the College and with external partners.
   Response: These affirmations accurately reflect the College's self-study findings and plans to strengthen quality assurance processes. All improvement plans are in-progress.

Recommendations: Areas in need of improvement to strengthen quality assurance. Each of the recommendations are provided below, together with the College's response, and our plan for addressing the recommendation.

1. **Plans to assess progress on quality assurance initiatives**

   Recommendation: The College has initiated an impressive number of initiatives related to quality assurance and continuous improvement. Some of these have evolved organically initially, and there is value in reviewing them and potentially establishing greater structure and consistency to support and sustain them. It is important to establish evaluation plans and mechanisms to review these new quality assurance initiatives to determine whether they are meeting their identified needs and/or should be refined after an initial period. It will be important to consider the inter-connectedness among initiatives to find synergies and efficiencies in order to make them sustainable. Such a process will also ensure that identified effective practices and approaches to these initiatives are captured and shared across the institution.

   Response: The college welcomes this suggestion to create further opportunities to develop increased transparency and a systems approach to our overall quality assurance plan. We have been consistently reflecting on our program quality processes and as such, our program quality processes have adjusted with every year since our quality assurance reboot in 2019. We concur that a formal collection of feedback at the end the program review processes will assist current and future quality assurance teams. We also agree that it would be beneficial for planning and institutional well-being to tie emerging themes from quality assurance with college-level priorities.

   Lead: Dean of Innovation, Teaching and Learning and CITL staff.

   Planned Actions: The Dean of Innovation, Teaching and Learning will work with the CITL faculty to develop and implement a post-review feedback loop. The college has already initiated a repository for internal program reviewers and Deans to access self-studies that have been completed. To augment systemic approaches to program review, the CITL team will create an annual summary of themes arising from that year's program reviews. In addition, the CITL team will create a survey on program review experience and implement it with each team. Common sticking points, successes, and suggestions for improvement will be collected in an annual report that will be used to inform continuous improvement of the review processes and support integrated planning for College priorities. This report will be shared with the Program Quality Assurance Committee, the Vice President's Academic Council and Education Council.

   Timeline: 2023-24

2. **Program Advisory Committees**

   Recommendation: Program Advisory Committees (PACs) are an integral connection to the community, and the panel commends the College on recent PAC policy

development. The panel recommends that the College ensure active engagement across all PACs, consistent involvement in processes such as program reviews and program development initiatives, and ongoing sharing of outcomes of these types of quality assurance processes. Incorporating quality assurance as a regular and standing item in PAC meetings will reinforce the College's commitment to quality, while highlighting the important role that PACs play in quality assurance. The College could consider seeking advisory committees' perspective on their satisfaction levels with engagement.

Response: New policies and tracking tools were implemented in 2022 to ensure all programs have an active PAC. Progress has been made to refresh several dormant PACs, ensuring every program has an active advisory group. A new standard template for PAC agendas was adopted in 2022 which includes discussion points on new program ideas, industry trends and follow-up to review recommendations.

Lead: Deans

Planned Actions: In addition to the actions already taken as described above, the Deans will be activating all PACs with consistent agenda topics that reflect quality assurance processes such as new program ideas, industry trends, and program review recommendations. PACs will have an opportunity to inform the review of programs and review recommendations, as well as opportunities to contribute to the development of new program ideas. The College is now collecting PAC agendas, minutes and key documents in a central repository which supports consistency in practice and tracking of PAC engagement. The College will also develop a survey tool or other mechanisms to gather feedback from PAC members on their satisfaction levels with engagement.

Timeline: 2023-24

3. **Program level outcomes**

   Recommendation: The panel recognizes that the College has learning outcomes at the course level and with the support of CITL is focusing on ensuring effective assessment of learning outcomes. Programs are also mapping courses and learning outcomes. The panel encourages the College to consider the significant benefit in establishing program level outcomes for all programs – for students, for faculty, and for external partners. This provides a way of communicating graduate abilities on completion of a program, and these outcomes are important to revisit over time as the landscape changes in the relevant disciplines/industry. In this way, program level outcomes can act as an important foundation from which to start program reviews. The College has started discussions around establishing program level outcomes, and the panel recommends that this be prioritized with a clear process and road map for their development across all programs.

   Response: As highlighted in the institutional self-study, the College agrees that this is a priority. We recognize the significant value in having program level outcomes and seek to ensure that every credential has clear and well-mapped outcomes. The alignment of

program and course level outcomes is essential to the quality of our educational offerings. Currently, all programs that undergo quality assurance review engage in a curriculum mapping exercise that produces program outcomes. This means that every credential will have program outcomes by 2026 upon completion of the full cycle of reviews. Meanwhile, the CITL works with Deans who are interested in updating and/or revising program outcome development at any time and can provide training and support for faculty as needed.

Lead: Deans and The Centre for Innovation in Teaching and Learning.

Planned Actions: We currently have an inventory of all programs with program level outcomes and those that are still needed. We also have developed a schedule for completing the full development of program level outcomes. As each program conducts their program review, the development and/or review of program level outcomes will be an essential part of the review process, such that all programs will have both program level outcomes and course level outcomes clearly articulated. The CITL currently has a process in place for assisting faculty with creating and aligning program outcomes. Program outlines will be updated accordingly when program outcomes are created and/or revised.

Timeline: The development of program level outcomes will continue as part of regular program review. This means that every College credential will have a mapped curriculum with program level outcomes by the end of Academic Year 2026-27.

4. **Program review flexibility versus consistency**

   Recommendation: The current program review process has been designed with flexibility in mind, which has been well received by faculty and will lead to important learning about what level of flexibility is needed for the range of programs offered at the College. As the College reviews the program review process, there would be benefit in determining what elements of program review should be considered essential for all programs (i.e. strategic directions of the College), and which elements can be addressed flexibly depending on program type. This would provide balance between flexibility for program teams while ensuring a level of consistency in quality assurance processes. The panel recommends that this be clearly noted in the template used to guide program review self-study reports, as well as in any resources used to guide faculty in the process. As part of this process, it will be important to clarify either the division of responsibility between the faculty team and CITL, or at least the process for determining the division of responsibilities.

   Response: While the site visit conversations seemed to heavily emphasize flexibility, it may have left the impression that it was optional to cover core steps or content. This is not the case. Each program team is carefully guided to ensure they cover essential content including program outcome alignment, student satisfaction and success (during and after they receive the credential). Moreover, every credential review explains how it contributes to the college mandate, the College's strategic plan priorities, and the needs of industry partners. Finally, every program review has an "essential elements

summary" that serves as a cover page indicating vital components common to every review. Our new post-self-study feedback gathering (as discussed above) will further sharpen this process.

Lead: Dean of Innovation, Teaching and Learning.

Planned Actions: The college agrees that clarifying what is essential, what is optional, and who is responsible for different parts of the review will be helpful. As such, an update to the program review template will be initiated to clarify and outline essential requirements and parse out the different roles and responsibilities. We will initiate a review of the self-study template to indicate what is essential for all programs. At the same time, clarity on who (faculty or CITL) is responsible for each element will be more clearly established. While the Dean of Innovation is the primary lead, other stakeholders will include the Program Quality Assurance Committee, The Vice President's Academic Council, Education Council, the Deans and Department Heads.

Timeline: 2023-24

5. **External review within program review**

Recommendation: An external review process has been established within the program review requirements, and has recently started being implemented. There is great value in integrating external review perspectives as part of a program review. The panel recommends that the outcomes of external reviews be integrated consistently into the process, showing how feedback from external reviews is addressed, and how this impacts final recommendations and action plans. There is a recognition that existing external accreditation activities can help inform or be informed by the program review process. Determining a clear process that balances the need to minimize duplication, while serving the intent of the existing review process (self-study, external review) will ensure that the external review within the program review is authentic and valuable.

Response: We agree with a need for greater consistency and effective sequencing of the external review component. Increased clarity and efficiency of reviews involving programs with external accreditation will make the external reviews' input more impactful. As stated in the institutional self-study, external reviews were introduced in 2021. Our first use of external feedback was implemented late in the self-study processes. We have adjusted our process and our current round of reviews requires that self-studies are more intentional in preparing for, and then incorporating, external reviewers' feedback.

Lead: The Dean of Innovation, Teaching and Learning

Planned Actions: The Dean of Innovation, Teaching and Learning and the CITL staff will implement a clarified process for integrating external reviews in program self-studies. They will ensure external review of all programs' self-studies are conducted before program reviewer's recommendations are made. Consequently, each self-study can more intentionally incorporate the external reviewers' feedback. This can then better

inform the College's response from the Dean in the final stages of program review. We will adjust guidelines and procedures as necessary to make this process clear.

Timeline: Beginning 2023 and ongoing.

6. **Program development and change policies/procedures**

    Recommendation: To support greater clarity around the development of new programs and processes to change existing programs and courses, the panel recommends updating the policy and procedures supporting these processes. In addition, there may be opportunity to establish additional resources such as guidance from CITL staff or developing new resource guides to support faculty and staff in navigating development and change processes. This will be important to coordinate with the planned implementation of the new curriculum management software, and with involvement of Education Council governance representatives.

    Response: The College is always open to augment faculty resources on new programs, curricular revisions, and increasing transparency on curricular redesign. The CITL staff works with individual faculty and Deans and program coordinators on the revision of courses, the introduction of new courses, and tracking curricular changes. As our curriculum management platform rolls out, we have further opportunities to increase digital resources within that platform to guide faculty on evidence-informed practices for impactful curricular practices.

    Lead: The Program Quality Assurance Committee (PQAC) which includes the Centre for Innovation in Teaching and Learning.

    Planned Actions: Members of PQAC will review policy and update procedures to emphasize and clarify the role of external review input in new program development. The Committee will consider a how-to-guide as necessary to supplement our existing procedures. The College has engaged the Office of Marketing and Communication on developing a resource website for faculty on course change processes. The CITL, Registrars' and Deans' support staff are rolling out a plan for working with faculty on curricular developments. Deans will continue to engage PACs regularly on advising curriculum and program development and staying current with industry needs.

    Timeline: 2023-24

7. **Establish mechanisms to support institutional decision-making**

    Recommendation: To support institutional decision-making, the panel recommends establishing structured mechanisms/processes to encourage institutional-level learning from program reviews. This may involve, for example, identifying institutional-level recommendations from which numerous programs would benefit, or patterns and trends arising from multiple program reviews that would benefit from deeper analysis.

Response: We agree with the reviewers' suggestions to keep the institutional self-study gaining momentum. The College can leverage the energy and efforts of the recent institutional self-study, along with a summary of prominent themes that emerge from program review findings to identify and act on key priorities for student success and educational quality. A systems approach to program review can combine input from program self-studies with other strategic activities such as: policy revisions, program advisory engagement, institutional research, enrollment management, budgeting, responding to provincial mandates, and college strategic planning.

Lead: Vice President Academic and Applied Research (VPAAR)

Planned Actions: Under the coordination of the VPAAR, an annual summary of themes from program review recommendations and program review feedback will be generated to identify opportunities for institutional level continuous improvement, resource needs and priority initiatives. This annual summary will be utilized to inform College planning processes and resource allocations under the authority of related positions and committees. The college has recently initiated strategic enrollment management and is about to embark on a new strategic plan. The timing of these activities as well as this recently completed institutional self-study make the 2024 academic year the most advantageous time for this initiative to begin.

Timeline: 2024