# Getting started with program review

## What is program review?

Program review is a process that identifies and promotes specific aspects of educational excellence within a program or group of programs, and identifies opportunities to improve the teaching/learning experience. At BCIT, program review is a collaborative, systematic, constructive, evidence-based examination of a program's quality. It is intended to ensure that the content, structure, admission requirements, learning outcomes, teaching and learning activities, assessments, and delivery methods are current and effective. The objective of the self-study component is to provide a thorough, reflective, self-critical, evidence-based analysis of the program.

This guide provides an overview of program review and an explanation of the process. Other guides provide more detailed information about the various stages of program review, including gathering data, writing the self-study report, conducting the external review, and concluding the review process.

The review process is designed to gather and report quantitative and qualitative data to describe what the program does, and to illustrate how well the program is meeting its goals, and the strategic vision, mission and mandate of BCIT. Essentially, the program review seeks to answer such questions as:

- What is it we say we do?
- What are we actually doing?
- What are we doing well, and how can we do more of it?
- What else should we be doing?
- How well are we meeting the needs of learners and others we serve?
- What can we do better?

Program review should be:

- **Formative** – ongoing collection of feedback that can be used to guide improvements to the program over time

- **Summative** – a formal review, conducted systematically within a prescribed time-frame, with the following characteristics:

  - ➢ Self-study conducted by the program area

  - ➢ External review, conducted by internal and external peers, including an on-site visit, written report, and program area response to the report

  - ➢ A final recommendations and action plan summarizing findings, conclusions, and recommendations for future changes to strengthen the program

- **Participatory** – using input from internal and external stakeholders, including learners, graduates, employers, program advisory committees, licensing or accreditation bodies, staff, faculty (including Flexible Learning), and administration

- **Standardized** – conducted using standardized, evidence-based processes, methodologies, and materials

- **Strategic** – leading to recommendations that facilitate short- and long-term planning for the program

- **Accountable** – to program faculty, staff, students, and administrators; Education Council (EdCo); and the Office of the Vice President, Academic (VPA); industry partners and accrediting bodies; and the Ministry

- **Iterative** – drawing on previous reviews and recommendations, with specific attention to trends and patterns

In addition to addressing institutional accountability and ensuring program quality and relevance, program reviews at BCIT are intended to assist both the program area and the Institute to identify and celebrate a program's accomplishments and strengths, identify its opportunities for growth and development, provide evidence to support future changes, and confirm its overall alignment with BCIT's mission and values.

Specifically, the objectives of program review are to:
- Assess the extent to which educational programs meet the requirements of BCIT's educational policies and the Ministry
- Ensure relevance to the communities that BCIT serves
- Ensure consistency with BCIT's mission and values
- Confirm that program goals and intended outcomes are met
- Ensure the program curriculum remains current with developments and advancements in its field
- Satisfy the requirements of internal and external stakeholders
- Identify additional objectives that reflect the program's goals for the review, in consultation with the program faculty, staff, administration, and stakeholders

## What guides program review at BCIT?

Program review is an integral part of ensuring we align with the Ministry's Degree Quality Assessment Board expectations for quality processes in post-secondary education in BC. In addition, program review is integral to aligning with our Vision, Mission, Mandate, and Strategic Plan, and ensuring that we continue to meet commitments to our stakeholders.

In order for BCIT to satisfy the strategic priority of quality programming, to maintain exempt status with the Ministry Degree Quality Assessment Board (DQAB), to successfully apply for future external accreditations and memberships, and to align with norms and expectations for quality in post-secondary education, it is necessary to have a systematic and objective program review process. BCIT's program review process is articulated in Policy 5402 Program Review and Procedure 5402-PR1 Program Review Process. These are supported by the resources, guidelines, and templates established to guide program review at BCIT.

For convenience, all templates, guidelines, policies, and manuals related to program review at BCIT can be found at the BCIT Academic Planning and Quality Assurance website: https://www.bcit.ca/apqa/

**List of abbreviations**

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| APQA | Academic Planning & Quality Assurance |
| APQA Lead | Manager, APQA |
| DQAB | Degree Quality Assessment Board (within Ministry responsible for post-secondary education in BC) |
| EdCo | Education Council |
| ERT | External Review Team |
| IRP | Institutional Research & Planning Office |
| LTC | Learning and Teaching Centre |
| IDC | Instructional Development Consultant |
| PC | Program Champion |
| SSR | Self-study Report |
| SST | Self-study Team |
| VPA | Vice President, Academic |

## Benefits of Conducting a Program Review

There are numerous benefits of conducting a comprehensive program review:

- **Program review assesses the extent to which programs meet credential-level standards.** Program review affords an opportunity for program areas to return to their original proposal and confirm that appropriate rigour has been established in the program, and where appropriate, that the requisite breadth and depth requirements are being met.

- **Program review can contribute to purposeful change.** With shifting learner demographics; changes in technology, field knowledge and theory; changes in the economy and demands from employers; changes in BCIT policies and Ministry expectations; ongoing changes to programs are necessary. Information generated by the program review can help ensure that decisions are evidence-based; and that they are made proactively, based on data and research, rather than reactively.

- **Program review provides a systematic process for getting answers** to questions that those in the program often raise, yet rarely get the opportunity to explore. The following questions are representative of those that come up during many reviews: How are graduates of our program really doing? How well are recent changes to our program working? Is there a curriculum or skill demand to which we could better respond? What recent research, reports, or studies have an impact on how we serve our learners? Is our curriculum reflective of current trends in our discipline? What are the changes impacting the industry our graduates will be working in, and how can we best prepare our students for career success?

- **Connections between the review and positive changes to the program are clearly linked**. When improvements occur as a result of data collection and analysis, the changes can be justified, resourced, and implemented more effectively and more easily.

- The review process **contributes to a culture of self-reflection** and research-based inquiry that promotes the practice of on-going program assessment and improvement.

- Program review **fosters a dynamic sense of the program's uniqueness** as the program's strengths and its contributions to the Institute and the community are identified.

- The review process **cultivates dialogue on issues of teaching and learning.**

- The review process **clearly identifies areas of growth, success, and strength**, the recognition of which is often overshadowed by the day-to-day tasks and concerns of the program.

- The review process **creates a systematic process** by which faculty and staff can step outside the program and view it through the perspectives of those it serves.

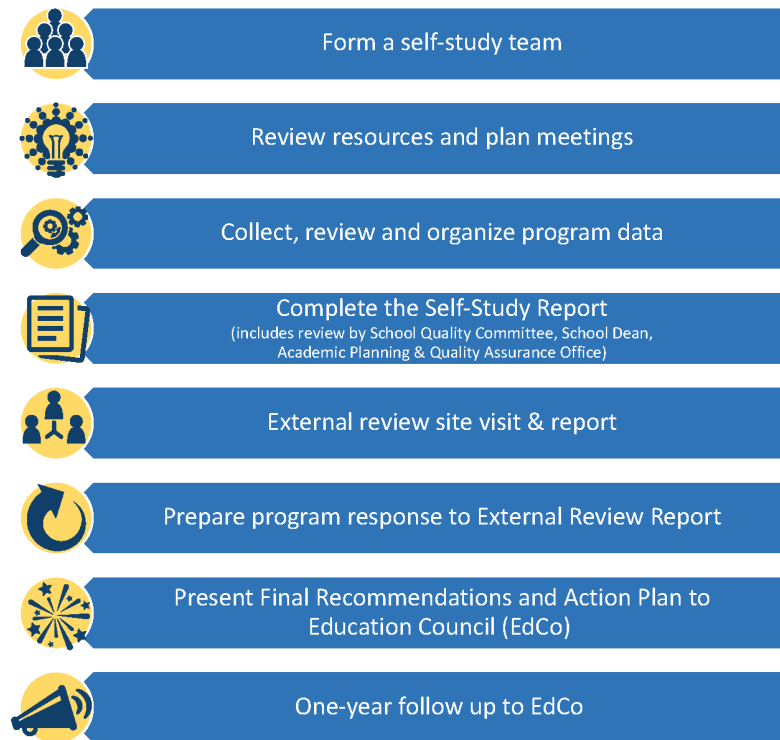### How often are program reviews done?

Program review at BCIT is conducted on a cyclical basis to ensure ongoing alignment with stakeholder needs and with Ministry expectations for post-secondary education in BC. All BCIT degree programs (and programs that ladder into degrees) undergo review at least once every five years. All remaining programs are reviewed at least once every seven years.

### What are the stages of program review?

Each review will include the following key stages:
- An **internal self-study** undertaken by program faculty and administration, based on collection and analysis of data
- An **external review** conducted by a panel of three members
- A **program response** to the external review report, including final recommendations as an outcome of the program review (i.e., an action plan)
- An **institutional response** to the findings and recommendations by way of a report to EdCo by the school dean, where questions and comments will be considered
- A **post-review follow up** one year later, reported to EdCo by the school dean

APQA has created a [Program Review Checklist](#) to help guide program teams through the process.

Form a self-study team

Review resources and plan meetings

Collect, review and organize program data

Complete the Self-Study Report
(includes review by School Quality Committee, School Dean,
Academic Planning & Quality Assurance Office)

External review site visit & report

Prepare program response to External Review Report

Present Final Recommendations and Action Plan to
Education Council (EdCo)

One-year follow up to EdCo

## Who is involved?

Program review is conducted by the program faculty with support from several departments at BCIT, including the Learning & Teaching Centre, the Institutional Research and Planning Office, and the Academic Planning & Quality Assurance Office. A detailed matrix is available to describe roles/responsibilities at each stage of the program review process. A summary is provided below:

**Program area faculty and staff** participation, more than that of any other group, is essential to the success and usefulness of the program review. Throughout the course of the review they will:

- Participate in the program review planning sessions
- Participate in discussions related to the program review process
- Participate in data and information gathering
- Provide periodic feedback as needed
- Participate in surveys or focus groups
- Provide resources and materials that will help with the reports
- Engage in regular program review updates at department meetings
- Participate in the external review team site visit
- Participate in the development of recommendations and the response to the external review team's report

**The Self-Study Team (SST)**

The SST is supervised by the associate dean, usually led by the program head or department head (referred to as the **program champion, or PC**), an IDC from the LTC, and can include additional faculty member(s). The SST will:

- Coordinate the comprehensive, evidence-based review of the program
- Engage program faculty (including Flexible Learning) and staff in a variety of review activities
- Provide regular program review updates at department meetings
- Receive all data, reports, and other information pertinent to the self-study
- Meet regularly with the APQA lead (for example, at key milestones as appropriate)
- Compile a Self-study report to submit for reviews as outlined in the program review process
- Integrate feedback based on reviews as appropriate
- Make recommendations to the school dean and Dean, APQA for selection of candidates for the external review team
- Coordinate and draft a response to the external review team report
- Write the final recommendations and action plan
- Manage the process within the agreed timelines

**Learning and Teaching Centre, Instructional Development Consultants (IDC)**

The IDCs support the self-study team (SST) throughout the process by:

- Participating in the program review kick-off meeting, facilitating the planning session and scheduling/organizing milestone meetings
- Helping participants focus the review so it is reasonable in scope, yet still addresses the initially-defined key concerns of the program
- Working with the self-study team to customize standard surveys to obtain data specific to the program area
- Assisting the self-study team in collecting and analyzing data needed to assess the program's key quality indicators (including a summative review of the curriculum).
- Assisting the self-study team with writing the self-study report, the response to the external review team report, and the final recommendations and action plan to be presented to EdCo
- Performing other activities as appropriate that assist with the timely, effective completion of a program review

**Manager, Academic Planning & Quality Assurance (APQA lead)**

Incumbents in this position are responsible for ensuring the program reviews are conducted effectively and efficiently. Specifically, the APQA lead is responsible for:

- Supporting program review across the Institute in accordance with the policies and procedures developed by BCIT's Education Council (EdCo)
- Guiding SSTs on expectations for stakeholder consultation and the development of evidence-based recommendations
- Assisting the self-study teams as they work their way through the program review process, including conducting the program review kick-off meeting (orientation session), helping with the planning session (as appropriate), discussing stakeholder involvement, key findings, and draft recommendations arising from the data analysis, liaising with all participants of the review

process, reviewing the SSR document and performing numerous other activities that facilitate the smooth functioning and timely completion of the process
- Coordinating all aspects of the external review process
- Assisting the SST with the program response to external review, all reports that go to EdCo; submitting reports to EdCo and liaising with school deans on presentations to EdCo
- Advising on program (re)design considerations related to Institutional policies

**Institutional Research & Planning Office (IRP)**

The IRP supports the program review process by providing a standardized set of data, and acting as a specialized resource for research and data collection and analysis. The IRP specifically:

- Collects, tabulates, and analyzes a standardized set of data such as the program's key performance indicators (Program Mix Analysis – PMA report) and additional metrics as determined to be appropriate (by the self-study team in conjunction with the APQA lead, IDC, and IRP).
- Assembles information from the Ministry Graduate Outcome survey, BCIT student satisfaction survey, and other relevant data sources
- Provides summary reports (PMA, Student Outcomes Survey data, Entry Student Survey data, Course Grade Analysis data, etc.) for use by the self-study team and participates in the program review kick-off meetings
- Assists the self-study team with the interpretation of the data as required
- Provides consultation on research methodologies and practices in conjunction with the LTC, to collect and analyze data where additional information is required

**The Associate Dean will:**
- Take administrative responsibility for ensuring the program review is conducted according to BCIT policy in a timely manner and within budget
- Support the self-study team as appropriate
- Inform the school dean and Dean, APQA of issues requiring intervention as appropriate
- Keep the school dean informed of key findings, recommendations, and associated costs
- Support the implementation of the recommendations as appropriate

**The School Dean will:**
- Ensure the school's associate dean, SQC, and program champions are aware of the commitment and expectations for effective and timely program reviews
- Ensure adequate resources are budgeted to conduct the scheduled program reviews, with a commitment to providing adequate release time for program champions
- Review the self-study report before forwarding to Dean, APQA
- In conjunction with the Dean, APQA, select the members of the external review team
- Participate in the external review site visit
- Along with the Dean, APQA, receive the external review team report
- Review the self-study team's response to the external report and approve the final recommendations (and approve costs associated with implementing recommendations, ensuring school budgets are adjusted appropriately to account for these costs)
- Deliver the final report to EdCo outlining key recommendations that will be implemented

- Deliver the follow-up report to EdCo, reporting on the status of the recommendations, one year after the initial report to EdCo

**The School Quality Committee (SQC)**

In conjunction with the school dean and program area associate dean, the SQC will:
- Review the Self-study report to offer feedback to the SST and school dean on how effectively the Self-study report addresses the eight program review categories and whether the recommendations are based on evidence presented in the report.

**The External Review Team (ERT)**

ERT members are selected from nominations submitted to the school dean and Dean, APQA by the SST. The external review team:

- Reviews the Self-study report
- Undertakes a site visit to validate the findings and recommendations of the Self-study report
- During the site visit, seeks the input of various sources including students, faculty (including Flexible Learning), industry, and administration
- Compiles the ERT report on how effectively the Self-study report recommendations reflect the findings of the Self-study report and the site visit, and may offer further suggestions to the self-study team
- Submits the external review team report to the school dean and the Dean, APQA

**Dean, Academic Planning & Quality Assurance (Dean, APQA) on behalf of VP Academic Office:**

The Dean, APQA oversees the program review process and is responsible for ensuring it meets the Institute's needs. Specifically, the Dean, APQA is responsible for:

- Ensuring the process meets Ministry and DQAB expectations for program review
- Ensuring key Institute departments (LTC, IRP) support program review, and the academic leaders (school deans and associate deans) are aware of the process, resources, timing, and reporting expectations
- Collaborating with the Deans' Council to set the schedule for program reviews
- Approving and accepting all reports on behalf of the VP Academic Office
- Monitoring the status of all active program reviews

**Education Council (EdCo):**

- Exists under the authority of the College and Institute Act
- Receives the Final Recommendations and Action Plan from the VPA via APQA
- Requests clarifications and makes comments as appropriate
- Receives the one-year status report update via the school dean

## Reviews of related programs

Depending on the credential type, there are differing levels of analysis expected in the program review process. While all sections of the self-study report are relevant and required for all programs undergoing a review, smaller credentials such as associate certificates (if reviewed independently) are not expected to have the amount/depth of analysis in their self-study reports as are larger credentials such as degrees.

Where there are several related programs, it is encouraged that the related program areas will be scheduled for program review at the same time to increase the efficiency of the process, and increase integration among related programs. In these cases, one self-study report would usually be used for all related programs. Program reviews that include a series of credential levels within a disciplinary area should normally focus on the larger credentials (e.g. diploma, bachelor), and include only brief discussion on implications for related credentials (e.g. certificates offered via Flexible Learning). For example, course changes that are recommended for a diploma may also impact a certificate, and in most cases these certificate course changes need only be stated as an implication of the diploma changes.

## Programs with external accreditation

For programs with external accreditation, the program review process is designed to complement accreditation review processes, minimizing duplication whenever possible. BCIT's program reviews are scheduled to take place synchronously with program accreditation reviews, and accreditation review materials and reports can be used for the BCIT program review. The intent is to make the program review process easier to navigate while meeting the expectations of the Ministry, Education Council, and external accrediting bodies.

Depending on the requirements of the accreditation process, there may be reduced requirements for the Institute's program review process. This is discussed further in the guide titled "Program review – programs with external accreditation".