SUBJECT	Quality Assurance (QA) Policy

BACKGROUND

Northern College has a learner and community-oriented culture that lends itself to continuous improvement through evidence based decision making. Our employees will have a heightened awareness of quality assurance and its importance to our learners' environment and their experience at Northern College.   Northern College has implemented procedures and initiatives to enhance the quality of our learners' post-secondary education.

Quality Assurance (QA) at Northern College is a manifestation of the six standards set by the Colleges Quality Assurance and Accreditation Program (CQAAP). This policy helps assure awareness of the need for, and maintenance of, quality assurance at Northern College. There are many aspects of QA to consider, including but not exclusive to: curriculum, mode of delivery, program viability**,** student advising, student success protocols, and student mobility, as examples. Summative and Formative program reviews are part of this process. The essence of a strong quality assurance program is to assure overall opportunities for continuous improvement and growth through utilization of a continuous feedback loop.

A strong quality assurance program limits exposure to risk and improves liability management. Northern College operates within a strategic mandate agreement negotiated with the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development (MAESD), which drives accountability at the provincial level and links to the quality assurance process.   Quality assurance applies to every aspect of the organization.

POLICY

Northern College will ensure it maintains the CQAAP standards in all programs (including Northern College Board approved programs, partnerships and international program delivery). Through a strong Quality Assurance process, Northern College will meet the expectations of community and industry partners to produce highly qualified graduates.

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SCOPE

This policy applies to all Northern College employees. Each Northern College program or offering will ensure quality assurance mechanisms are in place to promote best practices in program delivery. The college will conduct periodic reviews of all programs in accordance with defined program review and renewal procedures. Formal mechanisms of quality assurance are targeted to the following areas:

- Learning outcomes and curricular improvements
- Improvements in pedagogy and measurement of learning
- Overall delivery of programs and other services
- Expertise and sufficient resources to support delivery
- External certification registration or licensing as it impacts programing
- Program marketing and recruitment
- Specified requirements of relevant quality assurance/accreditation bodies

RESPONSIBILITY

Overall responsibility for quality assurance rests with the Office of the Vice President Academic and Student Success.

A Quality Assurance Committee exists to provide recommendations and action plans to the administration of Northern College in the following areas:

a) Application and monitoring of the implementation of provincial accreditation standards and program reviews.

b) Development, review, and maintenance of academic policy to assure conformity with accreditation requirements.

c) Academic matters pertaining to curriculum and academic integrity, for example, review and mandate of General Education courses.

d) Availability and allocation of resources (human, physical, financial) and technological infrastructure to support student achievement.

Everyone has a responsibility to QA, and it rests with each individual to be aware of and follow QA processes.

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DEFINITIONS   (see also CQAAP resources at www.ocqas.org/quality-assurance/cqaap-resources/)

Accreditation: Different from an audit, accreditation is both a status and a process. As a status, accreditation provides public notification that an institution or program meets standards of quality set forth by an accrediting agency.

Audit: Audits evaluate the effectiveness and comprehensiveness of the institutions quality assurance system, and, in making a judgment, will express some level of confidence, based on the evidence provided, in the quality of the institutions' system to do what it says it is doing.

Continuous improvement: is an ongoing evidence based process of improving existing processes and practices.

Community: in the Northern College Board of Governors A-7 Ends Policy community includes business, local industry and the physical communities the College serves.

Quality assurance: is the process of assuring standards in any given program, process or operation are adhered to.

Quality Assurance Committee: at Northern College reports to the AOWG and prepares reports for the Board of Governors as prescribed by the Senior Management Team, as well as makes recommendations for academic policy change in accordance with the Provincial Quality Assurance Standards.

Program review: is the systematic process to assess continuous cycle of curriculum review, validation and maintenance. Program reviews are at the formative and summative level.

> **Formative:** interim review of program to assess program processes in relation to program quality.

> **Summative:** a comprehensive review of program quality at a minimum of 5 years, and maximum of 7 years.

Program viability: the ability for a program to continue to be offered given cost to deliver the program, labor market and industry needs, changing standards of practice and/or lack of enrolment.

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PRINCIPLES / GUIDELINES

Northern College

- builds a culture of continuous improvement through feedback cycles to improve and maintain processes
- utilizes a student centered approach to QA
- adheres to the Indigenous principles of Indigenous Quality Assurance
- uses evidence based approaches will be utilized to inform QA decisions
- recognizes everyone has a responsibility for QA

STATEMENT OF ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We gratefully acknowledge Conestoga College for their work on quality assurance policy.

APPROVED BY PRESIDENT

_____   _November 3, 2017_____
Fred Gibbons   **Date**

This policy replaces VPA-1 Academic Program Review Policy

INDIGENOUS QUALITY ASSURANCE

Four cultural standards are the basis for consideration of Indigenous quality assurance:

1. **Celebrating & Sharing:**

   Indigenous ways of knowing and doing are celebrated as invaluable to the entire college community and shared openly in a well-informed and culturally-based manner.

2. **Honour & Respect:**

   Indigenous peoples are respected as the collective authority of their knowledge systems and are honoured through active participation in key college activities.

3. **Place & Purpose:**

   Colleges are reflective and supportive of Indigenous learners and their experiences, and helps prepare them for mino-bimaadiziwin (the good life).

4. **Relationships with Land**:

   The college community acknowledges Indigenous peoples' relationship with land and develops their own connection with the land, supporting efforts of reconciliation and peace.

The cultural standards were the result of three Indigenous Knowledge Sharing Gatherings that occurred between August 2016-February 2017. These gatherings included college Elders, Indigenous leads and quality assurance leads.
- The Indigenous Northern Colleges (Cambrian, Canadore, Boréal, Confederation, Northern, and Sault) Collaborative Project: The "Indigenous Quality Assurance: A northern colleges' collaborative approach"