

# Curriculum Review: Action Plan and Final Report



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# Action Plan

## What is an action plan?

A concise summary of how, over the period between curriculum reviews, the faculty in a program will address findings emerging from the Curriculum Review process. The Action Plan will be referenced in the midterm report and subsequent curriculum review processes (University of Calgary, 2015, p. 8).

## Context of the Action Plan

- The action plan is a mandatory element in your review
- It is part of both the Internal and Public Report
- It is your accountability piece: What are you doing to improve the program?
- There is little guidance in the QA Handbook about how to structure your action plan
- The VP of Teaching and Learning is very interested in your action plan

## Parts of an Action Plan

Although there is no standard format for the action plan, it is recommended that you include enough detail to guide curriculum work. The following components have been used by others in the past:

- Recommendation: The suggestion to be addressed.
- Action items: Specific details about how the recommendation will be implemented. There can be more than one action item per recommendation.
- Timeline: Length of time needed to implement the action items. One possible way to approach this would be to have short-term (one year or less), medium-term (2-3 years), long-term (4-5 years) and ongoing action items.
- Rationale: Offers a reason for providing the recommendation. The rationale section can also point to the data that support the recommendation.
- Responsibility: Outlines who is responsible for implementing each action item, usually stated by role rather than by name.
- Alignment with strategic plan: If the recommendation supports a specific institutional, faculty or department strategic priority, it can be stated here.
- Comments: Add other relevant information.
- Evaluation: Outline how a recommendation will be evaluated in future.

## How the Action Plan will be Used

This curriculum review process will generate an action plan for improving the program, and the impact of the review will be determined by evidence of implementation success (University of Calgary, 2015, p. 2)

Some of the uses of the action plan:

- Guide curriculum work for the next few years
- Inform students, staff and faculty of the enhancements taking place
- Outline who will take responsibility for the work
- Provide accountability to the Provost's Office

## Some Categories for Action Items

Many of your action items will be related to curriculum, at both the course and program level. However, they may not be restricted to curriculum. They may also relate to things such as:

- Administration
- Student advising
- Marketing
- Faculty and staff professional development
- Other categories

## How Many Recommendations and Action Items?

The Quality Assurance Handbook Curriculum Reviews (University of Calgary, 2015) does not specify how many recommendations or action items to include in your report. In general, the larger your recommendations, the fewer you will include in your report. If your curriculum review results in major program changes, you might want to concentrate on just one or two recommendations. For example, if you are adding a new minor to the degree, you are looking at a long timeline and many different action items. In this case, any other recommendations would likely be quick and easy to implement.

Regardless, we suggest including a couple of 'easy wins' in your action plan so that your team can experience some quick success.

Another suggestion is to include at least one action item that is shared between all instructors. This will allow your entire faculty or department to share in the responsibility of implementing the action plan. For example, all instructors could be responsible for the following action items:

- Each term, instructors will review their course outcomes for accuracy, currency and relevancy
- Collect real examples of the high-impact practice 'Collaborative Assignments and Projects' within the discipline to provide strategies and ideas so that instructors can use/ adapt them within their own courses
- Hold a brown bag lunch series highlighting a different pedagogical approach in each session, hosted by different instructors who have used that approach within their course

# Examples of Action Plan Items

## Example 1: Chart Format

Recommendations – Program Level				
Recommendation	Action Item	Timeline for Implementn.	Lead Responsibility	Evaluation
Increase emphasis on Ethics (PLO #7), especially at the Developing and Advanced levels	Incorporate learning on Ethics (PLO #7) into the following required courses at a minimum level of developing: 301, 305, 309	1 year	Program Coordinator, Instructors	Examine course outlines, Student learning
	Determine which 300-level and 400-level courses to include a component of Ethics (PLO #7) at an advanced level	2 years	Undergraduate Curriculum Committee	Examine course outlines, Student learning

Recommendations – Administration				
Recommendation	Action Item	Timeline for Implementn.	Lead Responsibility	Evaluation
Develop a process for ongoing student feedback on the program	Implement an exit survey for graduating students	1 year	Department Head, Evaluation subcommittee	Has it been implemented or not?
	Implement an exit survey for students who leave the program	1 year	Department Head, Evaluation subcommittee	Has it been implemented or not?

1. What do you like about this format? How is it effective?
2. What information is missing?

## Example 2: Rationale Included

<b>Item:</b> Offer 201 as a block week course in both fall and winter in addition to regular term offerings.
<b>Timeline:</b> Short term
<b>Responsibility:</b> Department Head
<b>Rationale:</b> Several students noted in survey responses that they had difficulty registering for 201 because sections fill quickly. OIA data confirmed high enrollment. Instructors added that typically students from various faculties are registered in the course.

  

<b>Item:</b> Maintain a listing of undergraduate research opportunities on the faculty website.
<b>Timeline:</b> Short term and ongoing
<b>Responsibility:</b> Associate Dean of Teaching and Learning
<b>Rationale:</b> Students stated that they would like more research opportunities for career development and to enhance their skills prior to entering graduate studies. Additionally, undergraduate research is a focus area for the University of Calgary.

1. What do you like about this format? How is it effective?
  
2. What information is missing?



### Example 3: References to Data

1. Create a flyer on program requirements to have available in the department office.

Target Date: August 2016	Data Sources: NSSE results, student survey (Q8)
Responsibility: Communications Team	
Comments: This will provide basic information to students on program structure, required courses, etc.	
Alignment with Strategic Plan: Aligns with the goal of providing better student advising.	

2. Schedule a faculty development series on student assessment.

Target Date: October 2016	Data Sources: NSSE results, student survey (Q10), faculty survey (Q7)
Responsibility: Associate Dean of Teaching and Learning	
Comments: Students are not always sure how they received their grades. NSSE results show that formative feedback is an area for improvement in the faculty. Also, we have several new faculty members who may benefit from presentations and discussions about student assessment.	
Alignment with Strategic Plan: Aligns with the goal of improving assessment practices.	

1. What do you like about this format? How is it effective?
  
2. What information is missing?

# Final Report

## Definitions from the Quality Assurance Handbook – Curriculum Reviews

### Curriculum Review Internal Report:

Written by the Review Lead in consultation with the review team, the internal report will include a brief summary of the program context, a checklist of the process followed, and the findings and action plan emerging from the Curriculum Review, including points of alignment with the University of Calgary Academic Plan (University of Calgary, 2015, p. 3).

### Curriculum Review Public Report:

The Curriculum Review Public Report will include a brief summary of the program context, the guiding questions, and the action plan emerging from the Curriculum Review (University of Calgary, 2015, p. 3).

So, essentially you are doing two versions of the same report, with the internal report being much more comprehensive than the public report.

## Mandatory Sections of the Reports

Internal Report		Public Report
Context Overview	→	Context
a) PLOs		
b) Program Structure		
c) Alignment with Academic Plan		
Guiding Questions	→	Guiding Questions
Curriculum Mapping (CM) Data		
Analysis of CM Data		
Student-provided Data		
Integration of Evidence from Other Sources		
Findings		
Action Plan	→	Action Plan
Communication Plan		

## Description of Mandatory Sections:

1. **Context:** A one-page summary created by the Review Lead and shared with the review team, to set the context in which the program is offered (history, how it is situated in the field of study, particular strengths, accreditation requirements, etc.)
  - Can be taken from a Unit Review or other documents – in many cases it is already written and may need minimal or no revisions
2. **Overview:** Consists of three sections
  - Program-level learning outcomes: What are the overarching areas of knowledge, skills and abilities that a graduate of this program is intended to acquire?
  - Program structure: how is the program organized in terms of required and elective courses? Majors, minors, concentrations, embedded Certificates? Horizontal and vertical integration? Course structures (labs, tutorials, projects, etc.)? Experiential learning? Integrating teaching and research? Internationalization? Special features of the learning experience? Links to other programs? In what ways do courses service other academic programs?
  - Highlight points of alignment with priorities of the University of Calgary's Academic Plan
3. **Guiding questions:** The critical questions or concerns that guided the curriculum review
  - List them in this section
4. **Curriculum mapping:** The data from the CM process
  - Approaches vary here – you can include the raw data (course maps), aggregate data, or both. What would be most helpful for future groups examining the data?
  - May want to include aggregate data in the body of the report and course maps in the appendices
  - Recommended: Include a description of the methods used to collect the data for reference, as well as suggestions to conduct the mapping process next time
5. **Analysis of the curriculum mapping output:** Are there gaps or unintended redundancies in content across courses and/or years? Is there evidence of alignment across intended outcomes, instructional methods and assessment strategies? Is there evidence of relevance/ meaningfulness/ alignment with the Academic Plan?
  - Also general trends, program strengths, emphasis and coverage of PLOs
  - Some include recommendations along with the analysis
6. **Student-provided data:** Results from student surveys, interviews or focus groups. You can include a summary of the data rather than raw data.
7. **Integration of evidence from other sources:** The Office of Institutional Analysis (OIA) will create a standard report for Curriculum Reviews. The standard report will include information relevant to curriculum reviews such as enrolment numbers, attrition, retention, DFW statistics, completion rates and times, and relevant survey results. Programs may choose to collect further information from students and/or other stakeholders.
  - List your data sources and give a brief analysis of the data from each

8. **Findings:** The Review Team will identify findings based on an analysis of data from the curriculum mapping process and other sources. The findings will form the basis of an action plan.
  - Use your guiding questions to structure this section of the report
  - Use different data sources as appropriate as you address each one
  - Include recommendations for your action plan
  
9. **Action Plan:** A concise summary of how, over the period between curriculum reviews, the faculty in a program will address findings emerging from the Curriculum Review process. The Action Plan will be referenced in the midterm report and subsequent curriculum review processes (University of Calgary, 2015).
  - In 2.5 and 5 years you will report on how successful you were in implementing your action plan
  - Action Plan is part of the Public Report
  - Reviewed and approved by the Vice-Provost of Teaching and Learning
  - Action plan items can refer to curriculum at the program and course level, administration, student advising, marketing, faculty development, and other areas that impact on the program
  
10. **Communication Plan:** Identification of the strategies that will be used to convey to students, faculty and staff the findings of the review and progress made at regular intervals.

## Optional Sections of the Report:

You may want to include one or more of the following in your internal report. Including detailed information about the process, timeline, and data collected could be useful down the road during the next cycle of the review.

1. **Title page:** Include the faculty logo, title of the document and date. Include an image on the title page if desired.
2. **Table of contents**
3. **Curriculum Review Team:** Near the front of the document you might want to include the names of people who were instrumental in the review. During the next review cycle the team could be quite different, and they may be able to get advice from people who were involved in the review the last time around.
4. **Executive summary:** A high-level overview of the review, including highlights of the process, findings, and action plan. A suggested maximum for the executive summary is 2-3 pages.
  - One paragraph describing the program.
  - Context for the review: How many years since the last one? Coordinated with an accreditation process, unit review, or strategic priorities process? How long did it take and who was involved?
  - A few sentences on the process of the review: When did it start and how long did it take? Did you write your program-level learning outcomes, were they revised from a previous set, or provided from an accrediting body? What data were collected? How were all faculty involved? How were students involved in the process? Include the details that are salient to your review process.
  - Highlight a few of the major findings. I would suggest including both positive results and aspects of the curriculum that you will work on.
  - Highlight perhaps three major action plan items that you will work on in the next five years.
  - Take the opportunity to brag about a couple of things. What went particularly well about your review? What would you like to emphasize about your program to the Provost's office?
  - If you'd like you could close the executive summary with a couple of reflections on the process and how it will inform discussions in your faculty or department.
5. **Timeline:** A list of the review steps, when they occurred, and who was involved. The timeline might be helpful for planning purposes for the next review.
6. **Appendices:** Appendices can include any reference material or sections that are not included in the body of the report. While some groups want to include all data (aggregate or not) in the appendices, others opt for a more streamlined report. Possibilities include:
  - Survey questions (student, alumni, and/or other groups)
  - Interview and/or focus group questions
  - Curriculum mapping templates or survey questions
  - Aggregate survey, interview, and focus group data

- Aggregate curriculum mapping data, and data for individual courses if required for accreditation purposes
- Selected NSSE data from faculty/ department reports
- Agendas from meetings and/or curriculum retreats
- List of course outcomes for all courses

# Approval and Reporting Process

The standard recommended process is outlined below. Your faculty might have a slightly different process. For example, if you are required to submit proposed changes to the Curriculum and Academic Review Committee (CARC), you may need to add steps to the process. Check with your Associate Dean of Teaching and Learning for guidance.

1. Review of Draft Curriculum Review **Internal Report** by the review team
  - Revisions to the report based on feedback received
2. Review of Draft Curriculum Review **Internal Report** by all faculty, if desired
  - Revisions to the report based on feedback received
3. Submission of CR **Public Report** to Dean/ Director (or designate) and the Associate Dean of Teaching and Learning for discussion and signature of approval, and in the case of course-based Master's programs, also to the Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies, for review and signature of approval.
  - Depending on the faculty, you might meet with your dean and/or designate to discuss the report
  - Revisions to the report based on feedback received
4. CR **Public Report and signed approval form** submitted to Heather Smith-Watkins, Review Coordinator, Provost's Office
5. CR **Public Report** is reviewed and discussed with the Vice-Provost of Teaching and Learning
6. Submission of CR **Public Report** for information to:
  - The Academic Program Subcommittee for undergraduate programs
  - The Graduate Academic Program Subcommittee for course-based Master's programs
  - The Curriculum Review Coordinator for posting on the Curriculum Review website
7. Interim **Progress Report** is submitted to the Provost's Office at mid-cycle and copied to the Academic Program Subcommittee or Graduate Academic Program Subcommittee as appropriate (University of Calgary, 2015, p. 5-6)

## References

University of Calgary. (2015). *Academic quality assurance handbook curriculum reviews*. Retrieved from [http://www.ucalgary.ca/provost/files/provost/curriculum\\_review\\_handbook\\_gfc\\_dec\\_2015.pdf](http://www.ucalgary.ca/provost/files/provost/curriculum_review_handbook_gfc_dec_2015.pdf)