

Quarterly Report

OCTOBER 2021

Quality Assurance (QA) Edition

There are many aspects of Aurora College transformation that are critical to its success; however there is one major step that will ultimately determine whether or not it can become a polytechnic university and that is the completion of a Quality Assurance (QA) Review.

This edition of the Quarterly Report will show how important QA is to the transformation process and what it entails.

What are Quality Assurance and Continuous Quality Improvement?

Students and employers rely on Canadian universities to meet national standards and best practices in the delivery of post-secondary education programs. An external quality assurance review and processes of continuous quality improvement are the primary means of ensuring the ongoing strength of an institution.

Quality Assurance is a comprehensive review of the overall ability of a post-secondary education institution to meet national standards and best practice. It is part of the NWT post-secondary education regulatory system and takes place when a new institution or new degree program is proposed. The review is conducted by a panel of experts with leadership experience at Canadian universities.

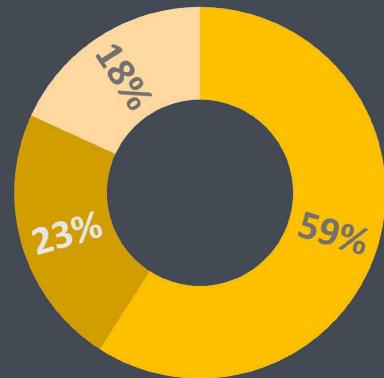
Continuous Quality Improvement is a system for continually and consistently improving programs and services that includes the ongoing analysis of outcomes, identifying how they can be improved, implementing improvements and then continuing an ongoing cycle of assessment. To be effective, continuous quality improvement must be rooted in policies, process and organizational culture. From teaching methods to student support to financial management, continuous quality improvement applies to all aspects of an institution.



The polytechnic university is for every NWT resident and will have a presence in every NWT community.

The transformation is a multi-year process involving changes to every aspect of the institution. The plan will evolve as work is completed and timelines will be adjusted accordingly.

2021 Projects



- Completed
- In Progress
- Not Yet Started

You can follow our progress at:

[Aurora College Transformation](#)

<https://www.ece.gov.nt.ca/aurora-transformation/en>

Why are they important to the transformation of Aurora College?

In order to be recognized as a degree-granting post-secondary education institution in the NWT, Aurora College must go through a quality assurance review. This is a requirement of the *Post-Secondary Education Act*. If the reviewers recommend the institution is ready to complete the transformation process, the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment may then begin the formal legislative process of establishing Aurora College as a polytechnic university. At this stage, the *Aurora College Act* will be replaced by a polytechnic university act in 2024/25.

Quality assurance reviews take place at a single point in time. However, long-term success requires that an institution remain responsive to emerging opportunities and risks over time. As such, processes of continuous quality improvement must be in place to successfully complete a quality assurance review.

What does the process look like for the transformation?

The quality assurance process assesses whether or not an institution adheres to standards and practices that help to ensure it will be effective, efficient and sustainable. In the case of Aurora College's transformation, the Campus Alberta Quality Council (CAQC) will conduct the assessment following their CAQC Handbook. Much of the work done to-date in Aurora College Transformation Phase 1: *Strengthening the Foundation and Planning for Change*, has been focused on ensuring success during the quality assurance review.

The College team is beginning development of a Self Study Report to demonstrate how standards have been achieved or will be achieved over the remainder of the transformation process. Once the Self Study Report is completed, it is submitted to the CAQC and a panel of experts will complete the examination process. They may recommend that Aurora College is ready to transform into a polytechnic university or highlight where additional changes are needed.

It is not unusual for some issues to come to light as a result of the quality assurance review. This reflects the value of the processes and Aurora College will work with the Department of Education, Culture and Employment to respond to any concerns and recommendations from reviewers.



What is covered by a quality assurance review?

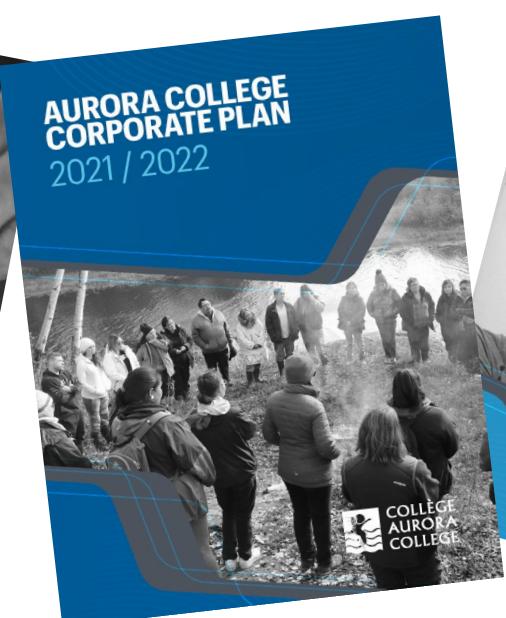
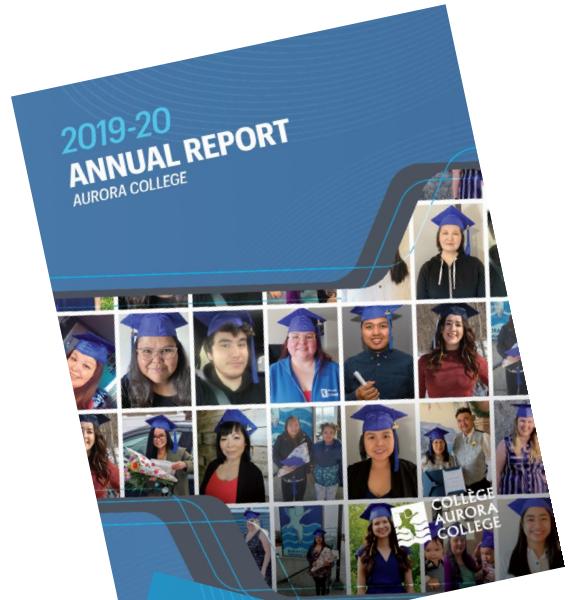
It is important to note that the CAQC Handbook provides a comprehensive framework for various types of quality assurance reviews. However, it is not as simple as having a checklist of tasks to complete. Specific standards or best practices manifest differently across institutions. It is the role of the reviewers to determine readiness in the context of an institution's strategy and operating environment.

As outlined in the CAQC Handbook, quality assurance reviewers will include consideration of:

- Institutional history;
- Mandate and Mission;
- Governance and administrative capacity;
- Academic and organizational policies;
- Financial planning and resources;
- Ethical conduct ;
- Faculty and staff capacity;
- Information services and systems;
- Student Services and support;
- Dispute resolution processes;
- Scholarly and research supports; and
- Facilities.

To understand the many aspects of a quality assurance review and the underlying intent, please refer to the CAQC Handbook:

<https://caqc.alberta.ca/handbook/>



Our Progress

The transformation of Aurora College began in October 2018. Significant achievements on the path toward quality assurance include establishment of the Post-Secondary Education Act (March 2019), NWT Post-Secondary Education Strategic Framework 2019-2029 (August 2019), Aurora College Transformation Implementation Plan (October 2020), Aurora College 3-Year Strategic Plan 2020-2023 (October 2020) and Aurora College 3-Year Academic Plan 2021-2024 (August 2021). As a result of these achievements, the GNWT now has an established approach to assessing quality assurance and Aurora College has the strategic documents in place to guide transformational changes critical to success in the quality assurance review.

Over the past two years, more than 60 Aurora College faculty and staff have been developing and implementing a wide range of transformational changes. A complete list of critical and key milestones, and their anticipated completion dates can be found on the Aurora College Transformation Website:

<https://www.ece.gov.nt.ca/aurora-transformation/>

What's Next

As the Aurora College Transformation advances into Phase 2: *Transformational Change*, the work will increasingly shift toward the implementation of new Aurora College policies and processes, as well as the release of formative planning documents for the polytechnic university.

With regard to quality assurance, Aurora College is beginning to draft the Self Study Report that will be submitted to CAQC in fall 2022. This will be coordinated by a team of Aurora College employees and will incorporate input from all areas of the institution. The most substantive input will come from Aurora College Transformation Working Groups that have developed and implemented a wide range of transformational changes.

At the same time, Aurora College will be implementing a continuous quality improvement policy. This will help to drive a significant shift in strategy, processes and organizational culture. Work to implement processes of continuous quality improvement has already begun with the integration of a balanced score card approach into Aurora College's annual corporate planning. For more information on the balanced score card, please see the Aurora College Corporate Plan 2021/2022.

<https://www.auroracollege.nt.ca/about-aurora-college/plans-and-reports/>

Coming January 2022 -- A look back at 2021 progress

Phase 1: *Strengthening the Foundation and Planning for Change* has been the focus of transformation for the past three years and the January Quarterly Report will reflect on the progress made and the key and critical milestones that have been completed.

As we enter Phase 2: *Transformational Change*, the overall planning for the establishment of a polytechnic university advances, and some of the milestone descriptions and dates will be revised as projects evolve.