AQIP Categories

The nine AQIP Categories provide a framework that colleges and universities can use to examine their key processes to make sure they are investing energy and resources in ways that will help achieve their goals.

Each AQIP Category deals with a related group of key processes and allows an organization to analyze, understand, and explore opportunities for improving these processes and the interrelationships among them. Because each Category analyzes processes present in all higher learning organizations, the Categories promote critical reflection that allows colleges and universities to share and learn from other organizations' experience and insight.

AQIP expects each institution to use the Categories to structure its Systems Portfolio, an organizational resource that describes key institutional systems and their performance results. A repository for information that is shared throughout an institution, the Systems Portfolio becomes a key management and communication tool for continuous improvement.

Each Category includes Context, Process, Results, and Improvement items, which pose questions asking:

- How does your organization approach its key systems?
- How do you design robust processes that consistently to achieve your goals?
- How broadly have you implemented effective approach across your different departments, operations, and locations?
- How do you measure your processes and evaluate your results?
- How do your results and trends compare with those of other organizations that are trying to achieve similar goals?
- How do you use information about your processes' performance results to improve your own approaches?
- How do you learn to improve continuously from your experience with these processes?
- How effectively are your processes meeting your students' and other stakeholders' needs?

AQIP Category One: Helping Students Learn

Category One identifies the shared purpose of all higher education organizations and is accordingly the pivot of any institutional analysis. This category focuses on the teaching-learning processes within a formal instructional context, yet also addresses how the entire organization contributes to student learning and overall student development.

1C1	What common student learning objectives do you hold for all of your students (regardless of their status or particular program of study) and what pattern of knowledge and skills do you expect them to possess upon completion of their general and specialized studies?
1C2	By what means do you ensure your student learning expectations, practices, and development objectives align with your mission, vision, and philosophy?
1C3	What are your key instructional programs? What delivery methods are used within these key programs? To what degree is technology used within the formal instructional context?
1C4	What practices do you use to ensure that the design and delivery of student learning options prepare students to live in a diverse world and accommodate a variety of student learning styles?
1C5	By what means do you create and maintain a climate that celebrates intellectual freedom, inquiry, reflection, respect for intellectual property, and respect for differing and diverse opinions?
1P1	How do you determine your common student learning objectives as well as specific program learning objectives? Who is involved in setting these objectives?
1P2	How do you design new programs and courses to facilitate student learning? How do you balance educational market issues with student needs in designing responsive academic programming?
1P3	How do you determine the preparation required of students for the specific curricula, programs, courses, and learning they will pursue?
1P4	How do you communicate expectations regarding student preparation and student learning objectives (for programs, courses, and the awarding of specific degrees or credentials) to prospective and current students? How do admissions, student support, and registration services aid in this process?
1P5	How do you help students select programs of study that match their needs, interests and abilities? In providing this help, how are discrepancies between the necessary and actual preparation of students and their learning styles detected and addressed?
1P6	How do you determine and document effective teaching and learning? How are these expectations communicated across the institution?
1P7	How do you build an effective and efficient course delivery system? How do delivery decisions balance student and institutional needs?
1P8	How do you monitor the currency and effectiveness of your curriculum? What process is in place for changing or discontinuing programs and courses?
1P9	How do you determine student and faculty needs relative to learning support? How are learning support areas involved in the student learning and development process?
1P10	How are co-curricular development goals aligned with curricular learning objectives?
1P11	How do you determine the processes for student assessment?
1P12	How do you discover how well prepared the students who are completing programs, degrees, and certificates are for further education or employment?
1P13	What measures of student performance do you collect and analyze regularly?
1R1	What are your results for common student learning objectives as well as specific program learning objectives?

1R2	What is your evidence that students have acquired the knowledge and skills base required by the institution and its stakeholders (that is, other educational institutions and employers) for the awarding of specific degrees or credentials?
1R3	What are your results for processes associated with helping students learn?
1R4	Regarding 1R1 through 1R3, how do your results compare with the results of other higher education institutions and, if appropriate, organizations outside the education community?
1I1	How do you improve your current processes and systems for helping students learn and develop?
1I2	With regard to your current results for student learning and development, how do you set targets for improvement? What specific improvement priorities are you targeting, and how will they be addressed? How do you communicate your current results and improvement priorities to students, faculty, staff, administrators, and appropriate stakeholders?

AQIP Category Two: Accomplishing Other Distinctive Objectives

Category Two addresses the processes that contribute to the achievement of the major objectives that complement student learning and fulfill other portions of the mission.

2C1	What are your explicit institutional objectives in addition to *Helping Students Learn* (Category 1)?
2C2	By what means do you ensure your other distinctive objectives align with your mission, vision, and philosophy?
2C3	How do your other distinctive objectives support or complement your processes and systems for helping students learn?
2P1	How do you determine your other distinctive objectives? Who is involved in setting these objectives?
2P2	How do you communicate your expectations regarding these objectives?
2P3	How do you determine faculty and staff needs relative to these objectives?
2P4	How are these objectives assessed and reviewed? Who is involved and how is their feedback incorporated in readjusting the objectives or the processes that support them?
2P5	What measures of accomplishing your other distinctive objectives do you collect and analyze regularly?
2R1	What are your results in accomplishing your other distinctive objectives?
2R2	How do your results in 2R1 compare with the results of peer institutions? How do they compare, if appropriate, with the results of other higher education institutions, and organizations outside of the education community?
2R3	How do your results in accomplishing other distinctive objectives strengthen your overall institution? How do they enhance your relationship with the community and region you serve?
2I1	How do you improve your systems and processes for accomplishing your other distinctive objectives?
2I2	With regard to your current results for accomplishing your other distinctive objectives, how do you set targets for improvement? What specific improvement priorities are you targeting and how will they be addressed? How do you communicate your current results and improvement priorities to students, faculty, staff, administrators, and appropriate stakeholders?

AQIP Category Three: Understanding Students' and Other Stakeholders' Needs

Category Three examines how the organization works actively to understand student and other stakeholder needs.

3C1	Into what key groups do you subcategorize your students and other stakeholders? How do you define and differentiate these student and other stakeholder groups?
3C2	What are the short-term and long-term requirements and expectations of your student and other stakeholder groups?
3P1	How do you identify the changing needs of your student groups? How do you analyze and select a course of action regarding these needs?
3P2	How do you build and maintain a relationship with your students?
3P3	How do you identify the changing needs of your key stakeholder groups? How do you analyze and select a course of action regarding these needs?
3P4	How do you build and maintain a relationship with your key stakeholders?
3P5	How do you determine whether new student and stakeholder groups should be addressed within your educational offerings and services?
3P6	How do you collect complaint information from students and other stakeholders? How do you analyze this feedback both in a formative and summative manner and select a course of action? How do you communicate your actions to students and stakeholders?
3P7	How do you determine student and other stakeholder satisfaction? What measures of student and other stakeholder satisfaction do you collect and analyze regularly?
3R1	What are your results for student satisfaction with your performance?
3R2	What are your results for the building of relationships with your students?
3R3	What are your results for stakeholder satisfaction with your performance?
3R4	What are your results for the building of relationships with your key stakeholders?
3R5	Regarding 3R1 through 3R4, how do your results compare with the results of other higher education institutions and, if appropriate, organizations outside of the education community?
3I1	How do you improve your current processes and systems for understanding the needs of your key student and other stakeholder groups?
3I2	With regard to your current results for understanding the needs of your key student and other stakeholder groups, how do you set targets for improvement? What specific improvement priorities are you targeting and how will they be addressed? How do you communicate your current results and improvement priorities to students, faculty, staff, administrators, and appropriate stakeholders?

AQIP Category Four: Valuing People

Category Four explores commitment to the development of faculty, staff, and administrators, since the efforts of all are required for success.

4C1	In what distinctive ways do you organize your work environment, work activities, and job classifications to strengthen your focus on student learning and development?
4C2	What key institutional and geographic factors determine how you address your work environment and job classification? In what ways do you use part-time employees?
4C3	What demographic trends do you analyze as you look at your workforce needs over the next decade?
4C4	What key faculty, staff, and administrative training initiatives are you currently undertaking or planning to implement in the near future?
4P1	How do you identify the specific credentials, skills, and values required for faculty, staff, and administrators? How do your hiring processes make certain people that you employ people who possess these characteristics?
4P2	How do you recruit, hire, and retain employees? How do you orient all employees to your organization? How do you plan for changes in personnel?
4P3	How do your work processes and activities contribute to communications, cooperation, high performance, innovation, empowerment, organizational learning, and skill sharing? How do you ensure the ethical practices of all employees?
4P4	How do you train and develop all faculty, staff, and administrators to contribute fully and effectively throughout their careers with your institution? How do you reinforce this training?
4P5	How do you determine training needs? How is your training aligned with your plans addressed in Category 8, Planning Continuous Improvement, and how does it augment your focus on helping students learn and accomplishing other distinctive objectives?
4P6	How do you design and use your personnel evaluation system? How does this system align with your objectives in Category 1, Helping Students Learn, and in Category 2, Accomplishing Other Distinctive Objectives?
4P7	How do you design your recognition, reward, and compensation systems to align with your objectives in Category 1, Helping Students Learn, and in Category 2, Accomplishing Other Distinctive Objectives? How do you support employees through benefits and services?
4P8	How do you determine key issues related to the motivation of faculty, staff, and administrators? How are these issues analyzed and how is a course of action selected?
4P9	How do you provide for and evaluate employee satisfaction, health and safety, and well-being?
4P10	What measures of valuing people do you collect and analyze regularly?
4R1	What are your results in valuing people?
4R2	What are your results in processes associated with valuing people?
4R3	What evidence indicates the productivity and effectiveness of your faculty, staff, and administrators in helping you achieve your goals?
4R4	Regarding 4R1 and 4R3, how do your results compare with the results of other higher education institutions and, if appropriate, organizations outside of the education community?
4I1	How do you improve your current processes and systems for valuing people?
4I2	With regard to your current results for valuing people, how do you set targets for improvement? What specific improvement priorities are you targeting, and how will these be addressed? How do you communicate your current results and improvement priorities to students, faculty, staff, administrators, and appropriate stakeholders?

AQIP Category Five: Leading and Communicating

Category Five addresses how the leadership and communication structures, networks, and processes guide the organization in setting directions, making decisions, seeking future opportunities, and building and sustaining a learning environment.

5C1	Describe your leadership and communication systems. (A brief chart or summary of groups, committees, or teams and their functions may be useful.)
5C2	In what ways do you ensure that the practices of your leadership system - at all institutional levels – align with the practices and views of your board, senior leaders, and (if applicable) oversight entities?
5C3	What are your institutional values and expectations regarding ethics and equity, social responsibilities, and community service and involvement?
5P1	How do your leaders set directions in alignment with your mission, vision, and values that are conducive to high performance, individual development and initiative, organizational learning, and innovation? How do these directions take into account the needs and expectations of students and key stakeholder groups and create a strong focus on students and learning?
5P2	How do your leaders guide your institution in seeking future opportunities and building and sustaining a learning environment?
5P3	How are decisions made in your institution? How do you use teams, task forces, groups, or committees to recommend or make decisions, and to carry them out?
5P4	How do your leaders use information and results in their decision-making process?
5P5	How does communication occur between and among institutional levels?
5P6	How do your leaders communicate a shared mission, vision, values and high performance expectations regarding institutional directions and opportunities, learning, continuous improvement, ethics and equity, social responsibilities, and community service and involvement?
5P7	How are leadership abilities encouraged, developed and strengthened among faculty, staff, and administrators? How are leadership best practices, knowledge, and skills communicated and shared throughout your institution?
5P8	How do your leaders and board members ensure that your mission, vision, and values are passed on during leadership succession? How is your leadership succession plan developed?
5P9	What measures of leading and communicating do you collect and analyze regularly?
5R1	What are your results for leading and communicating processes and systems?
5R2	Regarding 5R1, how do your results compare with the results of other higher education institutions and, if appropriate, organizations outside of the education community?
5I1	How do you improve your current processes and systems for leading and communicating?
5I2	With regard to your current results for leading and communicating, how do you set targets for improvement? What specific improvement priorities are you targeting and how will these be addressed? How do you communicate your current results and improvement priorities to students, faculty, staff, administrators, and appropriate stakeholders?

AQIP Category Six: Supporting Institutional Operations

Category Six addresses the support processes that help provide an environment in which learning can thrive.

6C1	What are your key student and administrative support service processes? What are the support service process needs of students and other stakeholder groups?
6C2	How do your key student and administrative support services reinforce processes and systems described in Category 1, Helping Students Learn, and Category 2, Accomplishing Other Distinctive Objectives?
6P1	How do you identify the support service needs of your students?
6P2	How do you identify the administrative support service needs of your faculty, staff, and administrators, as well as other key stakeholder groups (e.g., oversight board, alumni, etc.)?
6P3	How are your key student and administrative support service processes managed on a day-to-day basis to ensure that they are meeting the needs of students and key stakeholder groups? How do you document your processes and encourage knowledge sharing, innovation and empowerment?
6P4	How do your key student and administrative support areas use information and results to improve their services?
6P5	What measures of student and administrative support service processes do you collect and analyze regularly?
6R1	What are your results for student support service processes?
6R2	What are your results for administrative support service processes?
6R3	Regarding 6R1 and 6R2, how do your results compare with the results of other higher education institutions and, if appropriate, organizations outside of the education community?
6I1	How do you improve your current processes and systems for supporting institutional operations?
6I2	With regard to your current results for student and administrative support processes, how do you set targets for improvement? What specific improvement priorities are you targeting and how will these be addressed? How do you communicate your current results and improvement priorities to students, faculty, staff, administrators, and appropriate stakeholders?

AQIP Category Seven: Measuring Effectiveness

Category Seven examines how the organization collects, analyzes, and uses information to manage itself and to drive performance improvement.

7C1	In what ways do you collect and store information and data, both in centralized and decentralized circumstances? In what ways is this information made accessible to those that need it?
7C2	What are your key institutional measures for tracking effectiveness?
7P1	How do you select, manage, and use information and data (including current performance information) to support student learning (Category 1), overall institutional objectives (Category 2), strategies (Category 8), and improvement efforts (all Categories)?
7P2	How do you determine the needs of your departments and units related to information and data collection, storage, and accessibility? How are these needs met?
7P3	How do you determine the needs and priorities for comparative information and data? What are your criteria and methods for selecting sources of comparative information and data within and outside the education community?
7P4	How, at the institutional level, do you analyze information and data regarding overall performance? How is this analysis shared throughout the organization?
7P5	How do you ensure that department and unit analysis of information and data aligns with your institutional goals regarding student learning (Category 1) and overall institutional objectives? How is this analysis shared?
7P6	How do you ensure the effectiveness of your information system(s) and related processes?
7P7	What measures of the effectiveness of your system for measuring effectiveness do you collect and analyze regularly?
7R1	What is the evidence that your system for measuring effectiveness meets your institution's needs in accomplishing its mission and goals?
7R2	Regarding 7R1, how do your results compare with the results of other higher education institutions and, if appropriate, organizations outside of the education community?
7I1	How do you improve your current processes and systems for measuring effectiveness?
7I2	With regard to your current results for measuring effectiveness, how do you set targets for improvement? What specific improvement priorities are you targeting and how will these be addressed? How do you communicate your current results and improvement priorities to students, faculty, staff, administrators, and appropriate stakeholders?

AQIP Category Eight: Planning Continuous Improvement

Category Eight examines the planning processes and how strategies and action plans are helping achieve the mission and vision.

8C1	What is your institution's vision of what your institution will be like in the next 5-10 years?
8C2	What are your institution's short-term and long-term strategies? How are these strategies aligned with your mission and vision?
8P1	What is your planning process?
8P2	How do you select short-term and long-term strategies?
8P3	How do you develop key action plans to support your institutional strategies?
8P4	How do you coordinate and align your planning processes and overall institutional strategies and action plans with your varying institutional levels?
8P5	How do you select measures and set performance projections for your institutional strategies and action plans?
8P6	How do you account for appropriate resource needs within your strategy selection and action plan implementation processes?
8P7	How do you ensure faculty, staff, and administrator capabilities will be developed and nurtured to address requirements regarding changing institutional strategies and action plans?
8P8	What measures of the effectiveness of your system for planning continuous improvement do you collect and analyze regularly?
8R1	What are your results for accomplishing institutional strategies and action plans?
8R2	Regarding 8R1, what are your projections of performance for your strategies and action plans over the next 1-3 years?
8R3	Regarding 8R2, how do your projections for your strategies and action plans compare with those of other higher education institutions and, if appropriate, organizations outside of the education community?
8R4	What is the evidence that your system for planning continuous improvement is effective?
8I1	How do you improve your current processes and systems for planning continuous improvement?
8I2	With regard to your current results for planning continuous improvement, how do you set targets for improvement? What specific improvement priorities are you targeting and how will these be addressed? How do you communicate your current results and improvement priorities as well as performance projections to students, faculty, staff, administrators, and appropriate stakeholders?

AQIP Category Nine: Building Collaborative Relationships

Category Nine examines the organization's relationships -- current and potential -- to analyze how they contribute to accomplishing the mission.

9C1	What are your institution's key collaborative relationships?
9C2	In what ways do these collaborative relationships reinforce your institutional mission? If applicable, how do these relationships support changes in your institutional directions as addressed in Category 8, Planning Continuous Improvement?
9P1	How do you create, prioritize, and build relationships with the: -- educational institutions and other organizations from which you receive your students? -- educational institutions and employers that depend on the supply of your students and graduates who meet their requirements? -- organizations that provide services to your students? -- education associations, external agencies, consortia partners, and the general community with whom you interact?
9P2	How do you ensure that the varying needs of those involved in these relationships are being met?
9P3	How do you create and build relationships within your institution? How do you assure integration and communication across these relationships?
9P4	What measures of building collaborative relationships do you collect and analyze regularly?
9R1	What are your results in building your key collaborative relationships?
9R2	Regarding 9R1, how do your results compare with the results of other higher education institutions and, if appropriate, organizations outside of the education community?
9I1	How do you improve your current processes and systems for building collaborative relationships?
9I2	With regard to your current results for student learning and development, how do you set targets for improvement? What specific improvement priorities are you targeting and how will these be addressed? How do you communicate your current results and improvement priorities to relationship partners, faculty, staff, administrators, and appropriate students and stakeholders?