

**Commission d'évaluation  
de l'enseignement collégial**

Analytical Framework

Evaluating the Effectiveness  
of Strategic Plans  
in the Cégeps

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# Table of Contents

Introduction .....	5
The self-evaluation process.....	7
A.    Expectations of the Commission.....	7
B.    Methodology .....	7
C.    Analysis of data.....	8
Evaluation of the effectiveness of the plans.....	9
A.    Achievement of plan objectives .....	9
B.    Critical analyses of the plans.....	9
Development context .....	9
Monitoring of plans.....	11
C.    Overall assessment.....	11
D.    Follow-up plans.....	11



This document describes the Analytical Framework on which the expectations of the Commission are based and identifies the elements to be taken into consideration for the Commission's analysis of the reports from the colleges on their evaluations of the effectiveness of their strategic plans.

## **Introduction**

Changes made in December 2002 to the *General and Vocational colleges Act* and the *Act respecting the Commission d'évaluation de l'enseignement collégial* required all cégeps to adopt multi-year strategic plans, including student success plans, and submit them to the Commission for evaluation. The changes also made it mandatory for the colleges to henceforth make updates on progress toward meeting the objectives in their strategic plans an integral part of their annual reports. These new legislative provisions were designed to contribute to the government's goal of improving services to the general public and modernizing Québec public administration, with special emphasis on results-based management practices, application of the principle of transparency and increased accountability.

The development of strategic plans meant that the colleges, after analyzing their own particular situations and the issues associated arising from them, were in an excellent position to choose orientations that best reflected their priorities and so propose corresponding strategic objectives. In the Analytical Framework for strategic plans sent out to the colleges in February 2005, the Commission stated that it planned to monitor the implementation of the strategic plans, in particular through an evaluation of their effectiveness.

This evaluation is one part of a continuum of actions carried out by the Commission designed to contribute to the ongoing improvement of the quality, credibility and recognition of the importance of college-level education in Québec. The evaluation process enables the Commission to both monitor the implementation of strategic plans in the colleges and pursue its evaluation of the effectiveness of the various quality assurance components (institutional program evaluation policies, institutional policies on the evaluation of student achievement and the colleges' strategic plans, including student success plans) stipulated in the regulations as being fundamental to ensuring the quality of education given by all institutions in the system. The evaluation of college strategic plans is a tool whereby the Commission can help colleges improve their planning processes while also constituting a crucial reference for them during the development of subsequent plans.

As it has done in the past, the Commission established an advisory committee in the fall of 2007 to work with it during the operation for evaluating the effectiveness of the strategic plans. The committee was consulted on both the Guidelines and the Framework of Analysis.

In the Guidelines document<sup>1</sup> sent out in January 2008, the Commission specified that each cégep was expected to choose its own process for evaluating the effectiveness of its strategic plan and assessing results, in relation to its initial objectives, while at the same time carrying out a critical analysis of its particular plan. This would give the college the opportunity to review its situation by assessing the processes used for the development, implementation, monitoring and updating of the strategic plan, in addition to presenting its own analysis of its strong points, and of areas where improvements to its strategic planning should be made.

The evaluation report to be prepared by the Commission will consider the quality of each college's evaluation process; it will appraise the effectiveness of the institution's strategic plan, review the extent to which objectives have been achieved, and give its assessment of areas or processes where the strengths of the college lie and of those needing further attention in the subsequent strategic plan.

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1. Commission d'évaluation de l'enseignement collégial, *Evaluating the effectiveness of strategic plans in the cégeps – Guidelines* – December 2007. ([http://www.ceec.gouv.qc.ca/publications/ORIENTATION-DOC/EffecacitePS\\_anglais.pdf](http://www.ceec.gouv.qc.ca/publications/ORIENTATION-DOC/EffecacitePS_anglais.pdf)).

## **The self-evaluation process**

Each college should determine the processes and methodology to be used for this operation, in reference to its own particular context. These processes should allow it to assess the effectiveness of its strategic plan, including its student success plan, through a review of target objectives and the results obtained and through a critical analysis of the plan as a whole. Reports by colleges to the Commission should describe the processes used in carrying out the self-evaluation.

### **A. Expectations of the Commission**

1. Each college should prepare a self-evaluation plan identifying issues to be addressed in the evaluation of the effectiveness of its strategic plan and specifying how the evaluation process will be carried out.
2. Colleges should evaluate the effectiveness of their strategic plans, looking in particular at target objectives and the results achieved.
3. Colleges should carry out a critical review of the effectiveness of their plans, in terms of the context of their development and implementation, the monitoring and revision of their plans and any updating carried out.
4. Each college should make an overall appraisal of its plan, identify where its strengths lie and where improvements need to be made in its strategic planning, and then prepare a follow-up action plan.
5. Each college should consult the appropriate organizational structures and groups concerned, both as regards the self-evaluation plan and the institution's self-evaluation report or any aspects of the report that involve them.

### **B. Methodology**

1. Colleges should make use of the most appropriate indicators available for assessing the achievement of target objectives, whether or not these indicators are identified in their plans.
2. Colleges should collect relevant and sufficient data for their analyses.

3. Colleges should be able to justify their choice of the methodology used for the process.
4. Colleges should ensure that all appropriate procedures are in place to guarantee the confidentiality of information collected, as required by the *Act respecting Access to documents held by public bodies and the Protection of personal information*.

### **C. Analysis of data**

1. Colleges should be rigorous in carrying out the analysis of the data they collect.
2. Conclusions that colleges arrive at should be relevant and based on the data collected and analyzed.

## **Evaluation of the effectiveness of the plans**

Colleges should evaluate the effectiveness of their strategic plans, including their student success plans, looking in particular at target objectives and the results achieved, as well as carrying out a critical analysis of the effectiveness of their plans as a whole

### **A. Achievement of plan objectives**

For all the target areas they have identified, colleges should present the results obtained and, where appropriate, explain the reasons for any differences between these results and the initial objectives. Colleges should take into consideration objectives adopted in their strategic plans, including objectives for student success and:

- Evaluate, with supporting arguments, the degree to which objectives have been achieved;
- Explain any differences identified between the initial objectives and the final results.

### **B. Critical analyses of the plans**

Colleges should carry out critical analyses of their plans and assess results obtained, with reference to their plan development, implementation and monitoring processes.

#### **Development context**

Each college should make a well-founded assessment of the analysis made of its own particular situation at the time the strategic plan was developed.

The college should be able to show whether it considers that:

- The analysis of the situation was complete;
- The results of the analysis enabled it to better understand its own situation, where appropriate, and that the exercise was a useful tool for mobilising the people involved;

- The results of the analysis enabled it to identify issues pertaining to its particular situation<sup>2</sup>; for the student success plan, the analysis helped the college better understand the characteristics of its clientele and identify barriers to their success.

Colleges should present a well-founded assessment of the processes used for the development of their strategic plans. They should be able to demonstrate that:

- Target areas for action and the challenges represented by them were identified as a result of the analysis of their situation. In the case of their student success plans, the identification of areas for action was based on their awareness of the characteristics of their different clientele and obstacles to their success;
- Target objectives were realistic and defined in ways that allowed the institution to demonstrate the degree to which they were achieved.

### **Plan implementation**

Colleges should present well-founded evaluations of the implementation of their plans. They should be able to demonstrate that:

- The chosen strategies were implemented and resulted in the desired outcomes being achieved;
- People or groups required to intervene in the process carried out their responsibilities seriously;
- Timelines for the process were respected;
- The indicators selected were valid instruments for monitoring progress toward the achievement of the desired results.

Making reference to issues identified during the evaluation of the effectiveness of their plans, colleges should also assess the efficiency of the different means used to put the plans into effect and be able to justify the choices made.

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2. That is, the college was able to identify areas of concern and issues or challenges it faced.

### **Monitoring of plans**

Colleges should present a well-founded evaluation of the effectiveness of the plan monitoring strategies used and show that the monitoring process made it possible to make any needed adjustments.

### **C. Overall assessment**

In conclusion to their strategic plan evaluations, colleges should present an overall assessment of their plans and be able to demonstrate that these plans are effective. They should also be able to conclude that their student success plans effectively led to successful results, perseverance in studies and success in obtaining diplomas. Colleges should ultimately be able to show that the plan development, implementation and monitoring strategies they employed contributed to the effectiveness of the plans themselves.

### **D. Follow-up plans**

All colleges should draw up follow-up plans identifying needed improvements, responsibilities to be taken and timelines for implementation. The follow-up process is a further way to increase the effectiveness of strategic planning in the colleges.