Commission d'évaluation
de l'enseignement collégial

A Preliminary Approach

Evaluating the Effectiveness
of Quality Assurance Systems
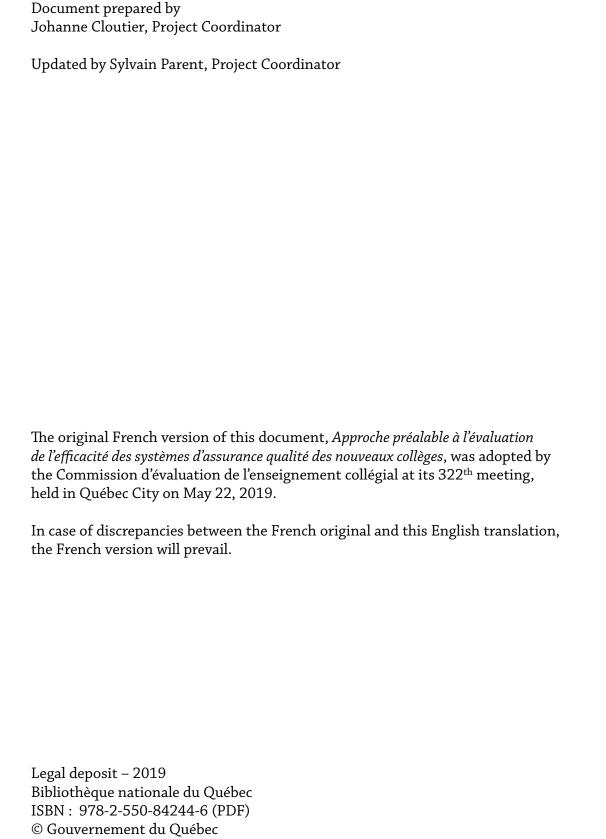in New Colleges

Guidelines and Framework
Second Edition

Québec

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Introduction

The Commission d'évaluation de l'enseignement collégial is an independent public quality assurance organization whose mission is to contribute to and demonstrate the development of the quality of college education.[1] The Commission is mandated to fulfill its mission with respect to all college-level institutions governed by the *College Education Regulations* (RREC).

In 2013, the Commission introduced a new evaluation approach that resulted in a significant change in the way it fulfills its mandate and in the way colleges assume their responsibilities in this area. This new evaluation approach changed the Commission's perspective. Rather than directly examining the quality and implementation of programs of study and the effectiveness of policies as it did previously, the Commission now evaluates the effectiveness of Québec college quality assurance systems (SAQC).

This guidance document is part of the paradigm shift in evaluation and is intended for new colleges or those that have not yet developed fully their quality assurance system. Its purpose is to facilitate the evaluation of the effectiveness of internal quality assurance systems in these colleges, a process in which they will subsequently be called on to take part.

In preparation for this evaluation, the Commission is asking these institutions to carry out a Preliminary Approach to Evaluating the Effectiveness of Quality Assurance Systems.[2] This process will lead them to develop and implement institutional quality assurance mechanisms and establish evaluation practices of their own.

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1. *Act respecting the Commission d'évaluation de l'enseignement collégial.*
2. See Appendix 1.

Development and application of key mechanisms: Policies

Institutional Policy on the Evaluation of Student Achievement (IPESA)

As stipulated in section 25 of the *College Education Regulations* (RREC), each college is required to adopt an Institutional Policy on the Evaluation of Student Achievement (IPESA) and ensure its application. The IPESA is a mechanism that contributes to the quality of the evaluation of student achievement.

Institutional Policy for the Evaluation of Academic Programs (IPEP)

As specified in section 24 of the RREC, each college is required to adopt an Institutional Policy for the Evaluation of Academic Program (IPEP), be it for programs leading to Diplomas of College Studies (DEC), Attestations of College Studies (AEC) or Specialization Diplomas in Technical Studies (SDTS). Each institution must then ensure the application of the policy. The IPEP is a mechanism that contributes to the quality of programs of study.

For its part, the Commission is mandated[3] to evaluate each institution's IPESA and IPEP as well as their application. Consequently, for each policy, the Commission evaluates its conformity and potential to be effective.

Where necessary, the Commission may issue recommendations. Colleges are required to report on any follow-up actions undertaken to address the Commission's recommendations.

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3. *Act Respecting the Commission d'évaluation de l'enseignement collégial*, s.13.4: "In addition, for general and vocational colleges and private educational institutions accredited for purposes of subsidies under the Act respecting private education (chapter E-9.1), the Commission shall evaluate the activities related to their educational mission as regards administrative and academic planning and management as well as instruction and support services. Such evaluation includes an evaluation of the strategic plan established pursuant to section 16.1 of the General and Vocational Colleges Act (chapter C-29)."

The process of the Preliminary Approach

The Commission favours a flexible approach to enable each college to adopt policies that best reflect their specific realities and issues and allows them to critically assess their effectiveness. In doing so, the Commission seeks to contribute to the development of a self-evaluation expertise.

Evaluation of a program of studies and of the application of policies

Once the policies have been evaluated by the Commission, colleges are asked to carry out a thorough evaluation of a given program of study using its IPEP. This evaluation must be conducted once at least one cohort of students has graduated. It must also take into account the six program evaluation criteria set out by the Commission, namely: relevance, coherence, suitability of pedagogical methods and student supervision and support, adequacy of human, material and financial resources for the educational needs of the program, effectiveness (including the evaluation of student achievement) and the quality of the management of the program. A self-evaluation report produced by the college will then make it possible to assess the quality of the evaluated program by presenting its objectives and standards, pedagogical structures and outcomes.[4]

During this evaluation, the college must also critically assess the application of its IPEP and IPESA using the conformity and effectiveness criteria.[5]

With regard to the IPESA, the review for conformity verifies whether the assigned responsibilities are carried out in accordance with the policy. More specifically, the college will verify whether all the rules and procedures stated in the IPESA, were applied by the players involved in comformity with the policy. This review can be included in the management of the program section of the self-evaluation report. On the other hand, the review of the **effectiveness** of the application of the IPESA verifies whether key policy objectives were met, that is, whether the application ensured a fair and equitable evaluation of student achievement. This can be included in the program effectiveness section of the report.

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4. See Appendices 3 and 4.
5. See Appendix 2.

With regard to the IPEP, **conformity** indicates the degree of alignment between the approach used by the college during its evaluation of a program, and the content of its policy. In other words, the college must verify whether the program evaluation has been conducted following procedures and criteria stipulated in the policy. As for the **effectiveness** of the application of the IPEP, the college must verify whether the expected outcomes have been achieved and more specifically, whether it has resulted in a balanced and accurate assessment of the program, whether it has had an impact on the improvement of the program and lastly, whether it supports decision-making in the management of the program.

The Commission's Ruling

In its report, the Commission will render a ruling on the quality of the program evaluated, on the conformity and effectiveness of the application of the IPEP and IPESA, as well as on the college's self-evaluation process.

On the program evaluation, the Commission will render a ruling on each of the criteria and conclude whether it is a quality program, outlining its strengths and area for improvement, or, whether it has shortcomings. For the application of policies, the Commission will first judge, based on the criteria, whether the application of the IPEP conformed, partially conformed or minimally conformed to the policy and whether it was effective, partially effective or minimally effective. Then it will judge whether the application of the IPESA conforms, partially conforms or minimally conforms to the policy, as well as whether it is effective, partially effective or minimally effective. Lastly, the Commission will provide a brief assessment of the overall quality of the college's self-evaluation process.

In its evaluation reports, the Commission emphasize strengths and, where applicable, makes comments and delivers opinions in regard to any element requiring improvement. Opinion and judgements can take the form of invitations, suggestions, or recommendations. Recommendations require a follow-up by the colleges, whereby they must demonstrate by a deadline agreed upon with the Commission, the improvements made to address the shortcom¬ings identified by the evaluation.

The Commission's Role

The Commission's involvement in this evaluation process will be as it has traditionally been: following an analysis of the college's self-evaluation report, a committee will visit the college. A preliminary version of the report will be produced and forwarded to the college, which can then provide feedback. The Commission will take note of these feedbacks when adopting the final report.

At the end of this process, the Commission will consider that the college have acquired an expertise in evaluation and is now able to collect data on and demonstrate the effectiveness of its quality assurance system. As a result, the college will be well-positioned to evaluate the effectiveness of its quality assurance system, in other words, verify the system's ability to ensure continuous quality improvement.[6]

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6. Please refer to the Commission's 2015 guidelines in *Évaluation de l'efficacité des systèmes d'assurance qualité des collèges québécois. Orientations et cadre de référence [Evaluating the Effectiveness of Quality Assurance Systems In Québec Colleges: Guidelines and Framework]*.

Appendix 1
Preliminary approach to Evaluating the Effectiveness of Quality Assurance Systems

Proposed Timeline

Schedule	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
IPESA	• Development by the college • CEEC Report	• Follow-up if required		
IPEP		• Development by the college • CEEC Report	• Follow-up if required	
Evaluation of a program of studies + (Application of IPESA and Application of IPEP)			• College's self-evaluation and report • Visit by CEEC	• CEEC Report • Follow-up if required

Appendix 2
Evaluation of a program of studies and of the application of the IPEP and IPESA

A. Evaluation of program of studies

1. The Relevance of the Program of Studies

The purpose of evaluating relevance is to assess the alignment of a program of study with the expectations and needs of the labour market, the students' expectations, and to assess whether the mechanisms implemented make it possible to adjust the program on an ongoing basis.

A program of study is considered relevant when the competencies it intends to develop adequately meet these needs and expectations.

Subjects to be Reviewed or Data to be Collected:
1. Labour market needs which the program is intended to meet;
2. Student expectations;
3. List of competencies to be developed ;
4. Employment data on graduates from programs leading to an AEC, including placement rates and employment status;
5. Data on graduation success rates;
6. Liaison mechanisms to maintain links between graduates and the labour market;
7. Other item(s) depending on the needs of the institution.

Assessment Questions:
- Are the program's competencies aligned with the needs of the labour market?
- Are graduates successfully integrating the labour market?
- Are the college's liaison mechanisms with graduates and the labour market effective?

Observations:

What are the program's strengths and areas for improvement regarding its relevance?

What actions should be considered to improve the program's relevance?

2. The Coherence of the Program of Studies

This criterion is used to review the relations of courses in the program of study given the competencies to be developed, as well as the course sequence based on student learning progress and course load.

A coherent program must comprise a set of courses that enable students to acquire specific competencies. These courses should be well-articulated and follow a sequence that facilitates acquiring, broadening and integrating program components. Course loads must be established in a clear and realistic manner and accurately reflected in course outline.

Subjects to be Reviewed or Data to be Collected:
1. Program competencies to which each course is linked, as well as links between the courses and the competencies;
2. Organization of courses (including any recent changes, if applicable). Tools used to ensure the coherence of this organization (e.g. course matrices or flowcharts);
3. Three weighting numbers established for each course;
4. Average weekly hours of individual work outside the classroom for each course, based on student estimates;
5. Other item(s) depending on the needs of the institution.

Assessment Questions:

- Do the courses take into account all of the program's competencies?
- Are the links between the courses and competencies clear?
- Is the structure of courses relevant, coherent and balanced, from the beginning to the end of the program?
- Does the course load demanded by the assigned weighting numbers match student estimates?

Observations:

What are the program's strengths and areas for improvement regarding its coherence?

What actions should be considered to improve the program's coherence?

3. The Suitability of Pedagogical Methods and Student Supervision and support for educational needs

This criterion is used to evaluate the alignment of pedagogical methods with the course objectives and their adaptation to student characteristics as well as student supervision and support and the availability of teaching staff.

The goal here is to verify whether pedagogical methods take into account the competencies to be developed, the course objectives, as well as the characteristics of students, whether student support measures are effective and whether the availability of teachers meets the needs of student supervision and support.

Subjects to be Reviewed or Data to be Collected:

1. Description of primary pedagogical methods used in the program and the rationale for their choice;
2. Description of student supervision and support measures and services;
3. Availability of teaching staff ;
4. Other item(s) depending on the needs of the institution.

Assessment Questions (notably taking into account student views):

- Are the pedagogical methods aligned with both the program competencies and student characteristics?

- Do existing support measures and services help students overcome learning challenges, persevere with the program and succeed in their studies, up to and including certification?

- Does the availability of teachers meet student needs?

Observations:

What are the strengths and areas for improvement regarding the value of pedagogical methods and student supervision and support?

What actions should be considered to improve the value of pedagogical methods and student supervision and support?

4. The Adequacy of Human, Material and Financial Resources for the Educational Needs

This criterion relates to the number of teachers and their qualifications. It also involves the contributions of technical staff and the alignment of teaching facilities (e.g. buildings, laboratories), equipment and other material resources with the needs of the program.

The purpose here is to verify whether the number of teachers and technicians is adequate, their qualifications appropriate for developing program competencies and meeting needs, as well as whether material resources are available and sufficient both in number and quality.

Subjects to be Reviewed or Data to be Collected:

1. Key data on the qualifications, experience and responsibilities of each teacher, specifying their status;
2. Qualification or experience of technical staff hired to support the program;
3. Main teaching facilities, equipment and material resources available (e.g., buildings, specialized platforms, laboratories, IT equipment, devices);
4. Acquisition and renewal plan for specialized equipment;
5. Other item(s) depending on the needs of the institution.

Assessment Questions:

- Considering the competencies intended to be developed, student characteristics and teaching responsibilities, is the number of teachers sufficient and are their appropriate?

- Is the contribution of technical staff adequate for meeting the program's objectives?

- Given the program's requirements and *considering the views of teachers and students* are available material resources adequate?

Observations:

What are the strengths and areas for improvement regarding the adequacy of human, material and financial resources?

What actions should be considered to improve the alignment of these resources?

5. The Effectiveness of the Program of Studies

This criterion relates to the capacity of the college to show the relationship between admitted candidates, the competencies of the program and student success and graduation.

Efficient program, recruitment and selection measures enable admitted candidates to succeed in the program. Student evaluation methods and tools are suitable in appropriately evaluating the achievement of course objectives according to established standards and proficiency in program competencies; course success rates are satisfactory and an acceptable percentage of students graduate within a reasonable time frame.

Subjects to be Reviewed or Data to be Collected:

1. Description of the college recruitment and selection mechanisms and definition of "qualifications deemed sufficient" in admitting students;

2. Alignment of objectives and established standards in course outlines and final course evaluations for a representative sample of courses, including at least:

   - one in the specific education, for each term of the program;

   - one in a contributing discipline, if applicable;

   - an internship or a final research project, with a description of the coordination or supervision method. Should there be no internship or final research project, then a course offered during the final year of the program.

3. Methods for implementing the various evaluation rules established in the IPESA;   **IPESA**

4. Success rates for all courses in the program, for the last three cohorts;

5. Other item(s) depending on the needs of the institution.

Success rates for all courses in the program for the last three cohorts

The institution can use the following table as an example.

Course Number	NCA	SCA %	NCB	SCB %	NCC	SCC %
Course						
Course						
Etc.						

Legend:

NCA: Number Enrolled in Cohort A	NCB: Number Enrolled in Cohort B	NCC: Number Enrolled in Cohort C
SCA: Success Rate for Cohort A	SCB: Success Rate for Cohort B	SCC: Success Rate for Cohort C

Graduation rates for the program within the observation period and over the last three cohorts

The institution can use the following table as an example.

The graduation rate for the last three cohorts represents the percentage of students enrolled who were granted a diploma both during the observation period and afterward.

Cohort (Indicate program start date for each cohort)	Number of students enrolled	Graduation within the program's timeframe (%)	Graduation over the maximum observation period (%)
Cohort A (Date)			
Cohort B (Date)			
Cohort C (Date)			

Assessment Questions:

- Are the recruitment and selection mechanisms effective in ensuring that admitting candidates capable of succeeding in the program?

- Do the student evaluation tools measure the attainment of course objectives, including internships, according to standards?

- Do the student achievement evaluation tools ensure proficiency in one or more course competencies for which students received prior learning assessment recognition?

- Do the student evaluation methods ensure a fair and equitable evaluation?

  - **An evaluation is fair** when students are clearly informed of the evaluation rules (notably through the course outline), when it is carried out impartially, and when students have the right to appeal should they not be satisfied with their evaluation (grade review).

  - **An evaluation is equitable**, particularly a final evaluation, when it measures the attainment of objectives according to established standards, when it corresponds to the content taught, and when it is equivalent in the case of courses given by a number of different teachers.

IPESA

- Considering the context, is the success rate of each course satisfactory?
- Considering the context, is the graduation rate satisfactory?

Observations:

What are the strengths and areas for improvement regarding the program's effectiveness?

What actions should be considered to improve the program's effectiveness?

6. The Quality Management of the Program of Studies

This criterion concerns the management of a program, the division of roles and responsibilities, as well as the communication between teachers and administrative or pedagogical bodies within the institution. Among other things, it considers teachers evaluation procedures and professional development as well as pedagogical super-vision and the application of the IPESA.

The goal here is to verify whether management structures and functions, as well as means of communication, are well articulated and promote the proper functioning of the program of study, whether the program description is duly distributed and explained to both students and teachers, and whether this description is effective.

Subjects to be Reviewed or Data to be Collected:
1. Functions, roles and responsibilities of individuals and bodies that ensure the management of the program. Details of the institution's decision-making process;
2. Information on communication methods amongst teachers and between them and management;
3. Pedagogical support and professional development measures for teachers;
4. Measures, rules or procedures overseeing teacher management and supervision;
5. Responsibilities of individuals and bodies in the application of the IPESA;
6. Approval mechanisms for course outline and the application of the IPESA;
7. Means used to ensure that the key features of the program (competencies, course objectives and standards, organization of conforms, partially conforms or minimally conforms to the policy courses) are known and understood by both teachers and students (program description is made available to both students and teachers);   **IPESA**
8. Other item(s) depending on the needs of the institution.

Assessment Questions (notably taking into account the views of teachers and, if applicable, those of students):

- Do the sharing of responsibilities and the decision-making process promote efficient management of the program?

- Does communication between the players involved in implementing the program promote efficient management?

- Do recruitment, evaluation and professional development measures for teachers have a positive impact?

- Is pedagogical support for teachers adequate?

- Is the IPESA applied consistently, more specifically are the different responsibilities carried out as required—in other words, are all the different rules and processes implemented as established in the IPESA?

  - For example, do course outlines respect the content of the IPESA and are they developed and approved in accordance with it?

  - Are the final course evaluations planned as prescribed by IPESA rules?

  - Is the grade review process implemented in accordance with the IPESA?

    IPESA

  - Are methods of prior learning assessment recognition implemented following the IPESA (or the document that contains them)?

- Have the objectives in implementing the IPESA been met?

- Do teachers and students receive sufficient and relevant information on the program's objectives and learning activities?

Observations :

What are the strengths and areas for improvement regarding the quality management of the program?

What actions should be considered to improve the quality management of the program?

B. Critical Assessment of the application of the IPEP

1. Conformity of the application

Subjects to be Assessed:

1. The choice of program;
2. The information system;
3. The evaluation process.

Assessment Questions:

- Was the choice of the program made in conformity with the rules and procedures prescribed in the IPEP?
- Was the information system used as stipulated in the IPEP?
- Were the responsibilities related to the program evaluation process carried out as specified in the IPEP?

2. Effectiveness of the application

Subjects to be Assessed:

- The usefulness and relevance of the IPEP's key components (goals and objectives, the sharing of responsibilities; program evaluation follow-up; method for determining an evaluation; evaluation criteria and process).

Assessment Questions:

- Did the evaluation result in a fair and accurate assessment of the program?
- Did the evaluation make it possible to develop an action plan to improve the program?

Observations:

What are the strengths and areas for improvement regarding the application of the IPEP?

What actions should be considered to improve the application of the IPEP?

Appendix 3
Suggested content of the Self-Evaluation Report

1. Introduction, including a general description of the institution;
2. Self-evaluation process;
3. Evaluation of the program using the six criteria;[7]
4. Critical assessment of the application of the IPEP;
5. Action plan, including a timetable and responsibility sharing;
6. Appendices.

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7. Conformity of the IPESA's implementation can be reported in the management of the program of study section and the effectiveness of the IPESA's implementation in the program effectiveness section.

Appendix 4
Supporting Documents to the
Self-Evaluation Report

- Governing board's resolution;

- Organizational chart;

- Self-evaluation plan;

- Institutional Policy on the Evaluation of Student Achievement;

- Institutional Policy for the Evaluation of Academic Program;

- Course grid;

- Competency flowcharts and course matrices;

- Representative sample of course outlines together with final course evaluations;

- Survey compilation;

- Internship handbook and evaluation criteria;

- Action plan;

- All other documents deemed pertinent by the College.

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