

# THE AQIP CATEGORIES & PROCESS MAPPING

## 1 WHAT ARE THE AQIP CATEGORIES?

The Revised AQIP Pathway Categories (now six in number) provide a framework that institutions can use to examine their key processes and allow institutions to analyze, understand, and explore opportunities for improvement. The use of the categories is fundamental to the development of the institution’s Systems Portfolio.

- Category 1: Helping Students Learn focuses on the design, deployment, and effectiveness of teaching-learning processes (and on the processes required to support them) that underlie the institution’s credit and non-credit programs and courses.
- Category 2: Meeting Student and Other Key Stakeholder Needs addresses the key processes (separate from instructional programs and internal support services) through which the institution serves its external stakeholders in support of its mission.
- Category 3: Valuing Employees explores the institution’s commitment to the hiring, development, and evaluation of faculty, staff, and administrators.
- Category 4: Planning and Leading focuses on how the institution achieves its mission and lives its vision through direction setting, goal development, strategic actions, threat mitigation, and capitalizing on opportunities.
- Category 5: Knowledge Management and Resource Stewardship addresses management of the fiscal, physical, technological, and information infrastructures designed to provide an environment in which learning can thrive.
- Category 6: Quality Overview focuses on the continuous quality improvement culture and infrastructure of the institution. This category gives the institution a chance to reflect on all its quality improvement initiatives, how they are integrated, and how they contribute to improvement of the institution.

## 2 HOW IS AN INSTITUTION EVALUATED IN TERMS OF THE CATEGORIES?

Institutions write to a series of prompts in each category. The prompts focus on our processes, results, and improvements. The peer review team then reads the portfolio and for each section of processes, results, and improvements, they assign one of four levels of “systems maturity.” These levels are reacting (lowest rating), systematic, aligned, and integrated (highest rating). A sample rubric for maturity of processes is below.

**Table 1: Stages in Systems Maturity: Processes**

REACTING	SYSTEMATIC	ALIGNED	INTEGRATED
The institution focuses on activities and initiatives that respond to immediate needs or problems rather than anticipating future requirements, capacities or changes. Goals are implicit and poorly defined. Informal procedures and habits account for all but the most formal aspects of institutional operations.	The institution is beginning to operate via generally understood, repeatable and often documented processes and is prone to make the goal of most activities explicit, measurable and subject to improvement. Institutional silos are eroding and signs of coordination and the implementation of effective practices across units are evident. Institutional goals are generally understood.	The institution operates according to processes that are explicit, repeatable and periodically evaluated for improvement. Processes address key goals and strategies, and lessons learned are shared among institutional units. Coordination and communication among units are emphasized so stakeholders relate what they do to institutional goals and strategies.	Operations are characterized by explicit, predictable processes that are repeatable and regularly evaluated for optimum effectiveness. Efficiencies across units are achieved through analysis, transparency, innovation and sharing. Processes and measures track progress on key strategic and operational goals. Outsiders request permission to visit and study why the institution is successful.

### 3 WELL, HOW DID WE DO?

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You can see all of the peer review team’s ratings in Appendix B of the Systems Appraisal (pg. 17). Overall, most of our processes and almost all of our results were rated as “reacting” and our processes were a combination of “systematic” and “reacting.” What does that mean? Basically, we’re so-so at documenting and following clear processes, and we’re not great using the results from those processes (data) to make improvements. Before we can improve in these areas, though, we need to really understand what a process is.

### 4 WHAT IS A PROCESS?

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There are several ways to define a process. At its core, a process is series of decisive steps that an institution takes to achieve an end. Another way to look at it is that a process is a series of activities conducted in order to have a particular impact.

### 5 WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PROCESSES AND ACTIVITIES?

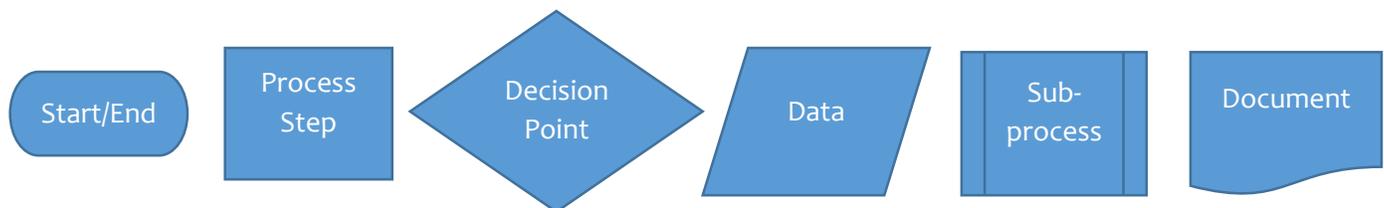
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Activities make up the steps in a process. A process should have a starting point and an end point, and a series of steps in between. Sometimes when a person asks, “How do we do X?” the response we initially give is a list of activities. However, in order for something to qualify as a process, there needs to be connection and flow between the activities, and the activities should lead to an end point which is how we know that the process has been completed.

### 6 HOW DO I MAP A PROCESS?

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Process mapping can be done in a variety of ways. Arrows direct the flow from one step to the next. When visually representing a process, it is important to be consistent across the college. Below are some common shapes we use for process mapping at RRCC.



Defining the beginning and the end of a process is the first step. This gives you the scope of the process you are mapping. Next, either individually or as a group, you begin to identify the steps in the process. Having multiple stakeholders together for this conversation is helpful, since everyone’s viewpoint of the process is different and different people may understand or have more detail on different activities/steps within the process. There will likely be lots of rearranging during this part as you determine the order of steps and where decision points lead, so working in pencil is a good idea, and an even more adaptable approach is to use sticky notes on a wall so that you can rearrange/add/delete steps as necessary.