

FAQ: QAF 2025-2030 Cycle—September 2025

1. The new rubric doesn't include an "NA" category. Why is that and what should programs do if a criterion is not applicable?

The program review rubrics were revised with institutional input and the intention of ensuring *all* programs could see alignment with the criteria at hand. In cases where the program provides “no evidence of attempting to meet [a] standard/expectation,” the reviewer will be asked to provide an explanation. As QAF shifts more toward a spirit of promoting continuous improvement, the intention is for all programs to be aligned with the criteria and to be evaluated on each area. Detailed guidance and instructional videos for external reviewers will be created to support accurate and fair evaluation of programs.

2. The new rubric shifts “meeting expectations” to a 2 rather than a 3. How will this impact scoring and performance?

The rubric as an evaluation tool is separate from scoring and total points. A conversation about how to adjust the scoring metrics accordingly will occur to ensure the new points allocations account for the shift in the rubric. Once a scoring mechanism and points allocation system is finalized, this information will be shared with campuses.

3. How can we ensure that external reviewers don't miss and/or score criteria that aren't applicable for the program level they are reviewing?

The rubric that was distributed is a master rubric, but separate rubrics will be provided to campuses that separate criteria by level to avoid confusion. This should also cut down on the need for an “NA” category and allow for accurate scoring.

4. What supports can we be expecting in the next few months to help with all the program review adjustments?

THEC staff will prepare and distribute a reviewer guide and training videos. An initial informal training video will be distributed soon for those piloting the new program review rubric. Formal, short video trainings will be developed over the next year and distributed to appropriate stakeholders including external reviewers.

5. Will virtual program reviews be allowed?

Yes, virtual reviews will be allowed for programs as appropriate. Programs with significant facilities and/or physical resources impacting instruction may want to prioritize an in-person visit.

6. Will academic audits continue in the new cycle?

No, academic audits will not be considered for QAF purposes in order to bring all program evaluations into alignment.

7. How are community college embedded certificates defined for the purposes of QAF?

Embedded certificates currently have a specific definition for the purposes of Quality Assurance Funding as follows: *An embedded certificate is defined as a certificate program with curriculum, content, and requirements contained within the greater requirements of a related associate degree. The associate degree assumes responsibility for quality control and assurance.* However, in practice, “embedded” also describes certificates that can be completed independent of an associates degree. THEC will be convening a working group to discuss embedded certificates and to determine how to move forward.

8. If we have newer programs seeking accreditation, should we add them into the planning files?

If accreditation status changes are anticipated mid-cycle, simply add the information to the “notes” section of the planning file. We plan to evaluate accreditation on a rolling basis rather than cycle by cycle with the aid of the API to make reporting simpler and to acknowledge the effort and value of accreditation.

9. If my institution elects to proceed with pilot program reviews during the pause year, how should we let THEC know?

If your campus will continue with program review(s), simply email us so we can note that you will be conducting reviews. If you are willing to share out experiences and pilot scores to allow for improvement of the rubric and materials, ***please let us know***. Improvement of the rubric and guidance is critical to the success, and we take all feedback seriously.

10. What if the pilot reviews go poorly or we have significant concerns about a program's performance?

We recognize that shifting the parameters and evaluation process for program review is not easy. Therefore, if a program review undertaken during the pause year does not meet campus expectations, the institution may choose to conduct another review later in the cycle. We don't want any campuses and/or programs willing to pilot the new rubric to be penalized.