



ONTARIO UNIVERSITIES
COUNCIL on QUALITY ASSURANCE

**SUMMARY OF THE PRINCIPAL FINDINGS
OF THE QUALITY ASSURANCE AUDIT OF
THE UNIVERSITY OF WINDSOR**

MAY 2015

Summary of the Principal Findings of the Quality Assurance Audit of the University of Windsor

May 2015

University of Windsor is one of three universities to be audited in the third year of this first cycle of quality assurance audits under the new Quality Assurance Framework (QAF). The primary objective of the audit is to determine whether or not the institution has complied with the parameters of its Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP) for cyclical program reviews and the development of new programs, as ratified by the Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance (the Quality Council). Three arms-length members of the Quality Council Audit Panel conducted the audit, with assistance throughout the process from Quality Council staff.

The audit itself included a review of the University of Windsor's IQAP and its amended versions. It focused on a number of programs that have undergone various processes outlined in the Quality Assurance Framework. A desk audit of documents for each program preceded a three-day site visit, which took place November 26-28, 2014. During the site visit, auditors met with faculty, staff, and students associated with the programs selected for audit, as well as with senior academic administrators. The audit team appreciated the careful organization of our meetings during our tightly scheduled site visit. The auditors were, moreover, impressed to note the enthusiasm and professionalism of the organizers of our visit.

The auditors selected and focused their attention on the following academic programs:

Cyclical Program Reviews:

- Biological Sciences: BSc
- English: BA
- Nursing: BScN, MScN, MN, GDip Oncology/Palliative Care
- Business Administration: MBA and MoM

New Programs:

- PhD in Kinesiology
- International Master's Program in Automotive Engineering (MASc) Dual Degree with Torino Polytechnical

Expedited Review:

- MEd Second Language Acquisition Culture and Society (addition of a new Field to an existing program)

Major Modifications:

- Biology/Biochemistry (Introduction of a new stream)
- Political Science (Degree Completion)

The audit team found University of Windsor administration, faculty and staff were committed to the quality-assurance process, but to varying degrees. It registered strong leadership support from the President and from the Office of Quality Assurance under the Dean of Graduate Studies' purview. At the decanal level, concerns were expressed about three elements of the IQAP process: its complexity; its unclear correlation with other forms of accreditation; and finally the availability of additional resources to ensure a successful and thorough process. Strengthening the IQAP culture among its senior academic leaders will be critical to the success of achieving quality-assurance goals at the University of Windsor. Academic heads, faculty and students conveyed their interest in practices and aspects of the IQAP that might enhance the provision, quality and delivery of their programs. Standing Committees such as the Faculty of Graduate Studies Council and the Program Development Committee were evenly and assuredly committed to the quality-assurance agenda.

Overall, the University's commitment to improve the learning experiences of its students is clear. Its commitment to its own educational mission, and to delivering high quality academic and professional programs, is equally clear. The audit team commends the University community for taking initiatives to implement new structures and for amending its IQAP diligently in order to refine its quality assurance processes and activities.

The auditors' recommendations and suggestions are aimed primarily at supporting the University of Windsor in achieving its quality assurance goals. The eleven recommendations made by the auditors identify instances where the University of Windsor has not been compliant with its IQAP or with the Quality Assurance Framework. Eight of the recommendations highlight improvements to the cyclical program review processes, particularly faculty and student involvement in the preparation of self-study briefs, full examination of evaluation criteria within the self-study, inclusion of all versions of programs under cyclical program review, consultation with contributing partners (within the university and beyond), the assurance of the arms-length status of the external reviewers, and a more active role for the Deans in the monitoring of the

academic programs under their purview. Three of the recommendations deal with strengthening the process for new programs, starting with a clear understanding of what constitutes a new program, to the development of explicit learning outcomes at the program and course levels, and finally but most importantly, compliance with its own 'new program protocol' set out in its IQAP.

The audit team also offers eleven suggestions, designed to assist the University of Windsor in refining its quality-assurance processes and in developing best practices within its community. These suggestions refer to issues related to:

- timeliness of cyclical program reviews and the development of a comprehensive tracking system;
- the procedural steps of the quality-assurance process (orientation, matters of sign-off, approval by various bodies);
- decanal involvement in the monitoring of self-studies and shepherding of new program proposals;
- provision of data (format and strategic support); and
- streamlining IQAP and accreditation processes as well as gaps (inclusion of MOUs and MOAs, Articulation/Transfer agreements or relevant sections thereof).

These recommendations and suggestions are also aimed at creating a strong quality-assurance culture in which faculty, staff and students are collectively involved in the process, sharing best practices, and working concertedly to enhance the quality of Windsor's academic programs. These outcomes will undoubtedly lead to achieving Windsor's quality-assurance goals.

In summary, the audit team applauds the University of Windsor's pro-active approach to quality improvements in its academic programs and to the broader quality-assurance agenda. The following list of recommendations and suggestions is meant to guide and assist the University of Windsor in achieving its quality-assurance goals.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The University of Windsor must:

1. ensure that faculty and students are engaged in the preparation of the self-study.
2. ensure that recommendations from previous reviews are appropriately addressed in the self-study.
3. ensure that all evaluation criteria in the IQAP are addressed in the self-study.
4. ensure that all existing programs develop and assess learning outcomes at the program level as part of the cyclical program review.
5. ensure that when a program is reviewed, all contributing academic units are consulted and included, in the self-study, and in the cyclical program review process.
6. ensure that it adheres to the protocols in its IQAP regarding the nomination and selection processes for external reviewers.
7. enhance the methods of briefing the external reviewers on the requirement to address all aspects of the quality-assurance evaluation set out in its IQAP.
8. ensure accuracy and transparency in listing all programs on its cyclical review schedule, including programs that are on hiatus as well as all collaborative, concurrent and consecutive programs offered on campus or at other locations.
9. ensure that all new program proposals include explicit program level learning outcomes.
10. include in its IQAP the full definition of “new program” from the Quality Assurance Framework.
11. ensure that the introduction of all new programs follows its IQAP protocol and that the criteria used to identify new programs are consistent with the Quality Assurance Framework.

SUGGESTIONS

The University of Windsor should:

1. consider developing a comprehensive monitoring and reporting system to track each step in the cyclical reviews of its undergraduate and graduate programs, in order to ensure timely completion of these reviews.
2. consider a formal sign-off by the Dean and/or responsible authorities, indicating that the self-study is complete and contains all of the elements required in the University's IQAP, before submitting it to external reviewers.
3. develop protocols to deal with incomplete reviewer reports.
4. ensure that documents prepared in compliance with its IQAP (such as the Reviewers' Report or the Dean's Response to the External Review...), are clearly signed and dated by the relevant parties named in its IQAP.
5. enhance communication with the program being reviewed by ensuring that the Dean's response to a program review and any Committee response(s) are shared with the units responsible for the program. This is especially important when the Dean and/or Committee may not be in a position to support all of the recommendations that emerge in a review.
6. review the package of data required for its self-studies, providing as comprehensively as possible, complete data sets to units undertaking cyclical program review. The University should also develop a timeline to ensure the provision of data at an appropriate time in the process.
7. consider strengthening its IQAP to include more information about its partnership arrangements with partners including international Universities to facilitate program development and program review with greater transparency.
8. list examples of Major Modifications on its Quality Assurance website as well as provide more guidance to the community as to its definition and processes.
9. capitalize on its best practices, such as seen in the cyclical program reviews of English, and Nursing, to enhance its quality-assurance program reviews and activities.
10. look for ways to streamline its IQAP processes and to align, where appropriate, accreditation processes with cyclical program reviews.

11. strengthen its IQAP by elaborating the process for developing joint programs, especially those of an inter-institutional and dual credential nature.