



ONTARIO UNIVERSITIES
COUNCIL on QUALITY ASSURANCE

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

MAY 2016

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

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York University was audited in the fourth year of the first eight-year cycle of quality assurance audits under the Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) for Ontario universities. The objective of the audit is to determine whether an institution has complied with the provisions of its own Institutional Quality Assurance Policy (IQAP), as ratified by the Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance (the Quality Council). In addition, the audit provides the opportunity to identify any inconsistencies between an institution's IQAP and the QAF, and, as appropriate, note best practices and share suggestions about other best practices.

The audit involved an examination of four cyclical program reviews (CPRs), two new program approvals, one expedited approval and two major modifications conducted under the provisions of York's YUQAP. In the desk audit phase, the auditors reviewed primarily the June 2013 YUQAP (since that version applied to the programs reviewed) and also took into consideration the March 2011, November 2011 YUQAP versions and all the documentation relevant to the CPRs sent by York University. During their site visit (November 18-20, 2015), the auditors met with administrators, faculty, staff, and students involved in the quality assurance processes at York University. The auditors wish to express their sincere thanks to all those with whom they met for being generous with their time and for their thoughtful and frank discussions.

In particular, the audit focused on the following:

- Four cyclical program reviews:
 - Earth and Space Science, MSc, PhD and Earth and Atmospheric Science, BSc
 - History BA, MA, PhD
 - International Studies, iBA (Glendon)
 - Law, JD, LL.M
- Two new program approvals:
 - Accounting MAcc;
 - Global Health, BA, BSc
- One expedited new program approval:
 - World Literatures, GDip (Type 2)

- Two major modifications:
 - Communications and Culture, MA, PhD (Joint York-Ryerson)
 - Professional Writing, BA

The auditors noted a generally positive approach to quality assurance among the members of York University and found a commitment to further developing a culture of quality assurance at the Keele and Glendon campuses. While there has been some turnover in those leading the process, there is significant engagement with the quality assurance processes and ongoing improvement of the YUQAP and its associated practices. Extensive effort has been made in the development of learning outcomes for programs and ongoing work has been dedicated to making these important in the assessment of the academic quality of each program.

While examining a number of programs in great detail, the audit report also makes general observations about areas for improvement. The collection and tracking of documentation is an area of challenge, and York should review the ways in which documents are submitted, tracked, and archived throughout the quality assurance processes. The external review process and its accompanying report also require further consideration. Aspects of the review process need more full or consistent documentation, and some reports are not addressing the complete range of evaluation criteria required by the YUQAP. Finally, while recognizing the commitment to quality assurance at York, the auditors encourage the University to continue efforts to more directly engage members of the community with the goals and practices of quality assurance.

The audit report contains 11 Recommendations and 12 Suggestions. The Recommendations are intended to assist the university in achieving its quality assurance goals and must be acted upon. They identify several areas for improvement where quality assurance practices are not fully in compliance with processes outlined in the YUQAP: The recommendations cover a wide range of areas. Some recommendations are overarching and concern the completeness and accuracy of documentation in general (1) and for self-studies in particular (3 and 4). Additional recommendations are designed to ensure the completeness of the Cyclical Program Review schedule (11), the regularity of CPRs (2), and the posting of appropriate documentation (10). Other recommendations address the use of review teams and are designed to enhance the process of working with external reviewers (5, 8, and 9), internal reviewers (7) and the reports they produce (6). The Suggestions are matters York University is encouraged to consider as it continues to review and improve its current quality assurance practices.

RECOMMENDATIONS

York University must:

RECOMMENDATION 1: Retain complete and accurate documentation for each stage of all quality assurance processes.

RECOMMENDATION 2: Ensure that every program is reviewed at least once every eight years.

RECOMMENDATION 3: Provide comprehensive information in the self-study or new program proposal to ensure that all of the evaluation criteria are addressed.

RECOMMENDATION 4: Ensure that identified authorities who approve the self-study check that the content of the document includes all the relevant information required by the YUQAP.

RECOMMENDATION 5: Document how external reviewers are chosen to participate in quality assurance processes.

RECOMMENDATION 6: Enhance the methods of briefing the external reviewers on the requirement to address all the evaluation criteria set out in the YUQAP.

RECOMMENDATION 7: Amend the YUQAP to establish a clear process for the selection of the internal reviewer in the CPR processes.

RECOMMENDATION 8: Ensure that responsibility for contacting, selecting and vetting potential external reviewers is formally assigned to the Office of the Vice Provost Academic in conformity with the YUQAP.

RECOMMENDATION 9: Ensure that the “senior academic lead” from the academic unit arranges and manages the site visit of the reviewers (as set out in 7.8.4) or revise the YUQAP to indicate that the Office of the Vice Provost Academic oversees these aspects of the CPR process.

RECOMMENDATION 10: Ensure that the final approved documents posted on the Vice-President Academic and Provost’s Website on Quality Assurance conform to the description set out in “Reporting requirements and Access” (YUQAP 7.9.4).

RECOMMENDATION 11: Include on the Periodic Review Schedule all programs offered.

SUGGESTIONS

York University should:

SUGGESTION 1: Consider requiring that the responsible authority sign and date the self-study as confirmation that it has been approved.

SUGGESTION 2: Consider implementing a process for dealing with the Review Committees' reports that do not meet the requirements of the YUQAP.

SUGGESTION 3: Enhance the communication with programs, concerning the Final Assessment Report and Executive Summary.

SUGGESTION 4: Establish practices for consistently involving students in the CPR, from the creation of the self-study to the 18-month Follow-Up Report.

SUGGESTION 5: Consider removing the current letter templates for "External Nominations for Cyclical Reviews."

SUGGESTION 6: Investigate how long it is taking to complete the cyclical reviews of its undergraduate and graduate programs, identify reasons for delays, and implement measures to reduce delays.

SUGGESTION 7: Consider amending the YUQAP to define the role of the internal reviewer.

SUGGESTION 8: Consider adding a brief note in the self-study template to indicate that the "Method and Preparation" section (1.3) should include reference to how stakeholders (faculty, staff, students, employers, alumni, etc.) took part in the development of the self-study and the overall cyclical review process.

SUGGESTION 9: Consider indicating on the Periodic Review Schedule where there are partner institutions and multiple sites.

SUGGESTION 10: Consider revising the YUQAP to clarify the steps involved in developing a proposal for a program that is subject to expedited approval.

SUGGESTION 11: Consider revising the YUQAP to reflect the current practice of University committees (APPRC, FGS, or FC) that are, or should be, involved in the approval pathways of cyclical program reviews, new programs, or expedited program approvals.

SUGGESTION 12: Add a statement in the YUQAP about the delegation of decision making on the distinctions between major and minor modifications to the Faculties by the Vice Provost Academic.