



ONTARIO UNIVERSITIES
COUNCIL on QUALITY ASSURANCE

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

JUNE 2016

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

June 2016

Ryerson University is one of two universities to be audited in the fourth 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 Ryerson University's IQAP and 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 January 25-27, 2016. 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 site visit was extremely well planned and the audit team would like to thank those charged with organizing the meetings for their hospitality and for providing assistance throughout the three-day visit. The auditors left the site visit with the impression that Ryerson University is deeply committed to excellence in teaching and learning and sees continuous refinement of its quality assurance procedures as a key component in achieving excellence in post-secondary education.

The audit focused on the following programs:

Cyclical Program Reviews:

- Arts and Contemporary Studies, BA: Undergraduate
- Biology, BSc: Undergraduate
- Hospitality and Tourism Management, BComm: Undergraduate
- Master of Management Science in the Management of Technology and Innovation, MMSC: Graduate

New Programs:

- Master's in Digital Media, MDM
- Sport Media, BA

Expedited Review:

- Dietetics, GDip (Type 3)

Major Modifications:

- Graphic Communications Management, BTech
- Master of Business Administration, MBA

Ryerson University has demonstrated its deep commitment to quality assurance, not least of which through the ongoing support provided by the Vice-Provost's Office in general and the appointment of a Director of Curriculum Quality Assurance in particular. The support from these offices to academic units undergoing cyclical program review and those seeking to propose new programs has included frequent workshops the usefulness of which was communicated to the auditors time and time again. It is clear from the handling of program-level learning outcomes in some of the programs audited, that this staple of the Quality Assurance Framework is receiving serious attention. Although some of the programs audited were either reviewed or developed as new programs during the initial phasing in of Ryerson's IQAP and, moreover, during a period of changes in administration, it is clear that every attempt was made to follow the procedures as accurately as possible. Out of those experiences, refinements to the institution's IQAP will no doubt be made, which is another indicator of Ryerson University's determination to embed quality assurance into its educational mission.

The audit report makes ten recommendations, identifying instances of institutional practice that are noncompliant with the IQAP. Two of the recommendations, including the one most frequently cited in the audit report, concern the various IQAP procedures pertaining to the Peer Review Team: its composition and arm's-length status, communication with and the materials provided to the Peer Review Team (PRT), the PRT's site visit, and the response to the PRT report. Three other recommendations are focused on the completeness and documented approval of self-studies, Letters of Intent, new program proposals, and major modifications. The remaining five recommendations deal with the need for improved definitions in the IQAP, more complete documentation of IQAP processes, better alignment across IQAP policies, and the posting of Final Assessment Reports and Executive Summaries on the website.

In addition to the recommendations, the audit report includes fourteen suggestions, which are offered to assist Ryerson University in strengthening its already commendable commitment to the quality assurance agenda and especially to the student learning experience. The suggestions refer to:

- Additions to or refinements of the IQAP (definitions, approval pathways for particular processes, clarification of roles and responsibilities);
- Student engagement with the CPR process;
- User-friendliness of the website;
- Development of a central document management system.

In summary, the auditors were impressed with the obvious commitment Ryerson University has made to the quality assurance process and to its ongoing involvement in refining that process. From the support of its President and Provost, to the tireless support of its Vice-Provost Academic charged with ensuring the successful implementation of Ryerson's IQAP, to the highly engaged Academic Standards Committee and the program administrators and faculty who bear much of the task of preparing the documents for quality-assurance processes, Ryerson University has clearly acknowledged the importance of and demonstrated its commitment to quality assurance in the teaching and learning dimensions of post-secondary education.

Recommendations

Ryerson University must:

- 1:** ensure that the data package provided to academic units undergoing cyclical program review is current and complete as per the requirements of Policy 126 Section I.B.1.
- 2:** ensure that self-studies for Cyclical Program Reviews, Letters of Intent and Program Proposals for new programs, and the documentation supporting major modifications are complete and that all steps pertaining to their approval are followed and documented as per Policy 126, 112 and 127, as appropriate.
- 3:** adhere to all procedures outlined in its IQAP (Policies 126 and 112) pertaining to the Peer Review Team (PRT), especially those concerning a) composition of and communication with members of the PRT; b) arm's-length status of the PRT; c) selection of and role of the internal reviewer where one is used; d) materials provided to the PRT; e) details of the PRT site visit, and f) distribution and approval pathway of the PRT report.
- 4:** document the presentation of relevant material to the Board of Governors.
- 5:** amend its IQAP to make it clear who is responsible for inviting the Peer Review Team and providing them with the necessary documentation prior to their site visit, and clarify who may contact potential external reviewers to seek their willingness and availability to serve as reviewers.
- 6:** ensure that there is a Final Assessment Report, Implementation Plan, and Executive Summary for each Cyclical Program Review and that they are posted on the website and sent to the Quality Council.
- 7:** document all relevant steps pertaining to the follow-up report and progress on the development plan as outlined in its IQAP, Policy 126 Section VII.
- 8:** revise its IQAP to include an expanded description of the expedited approval process in accordance with the Quality Assurance Framework.
- 9:** revise its IQAP to include the full definition of a new program as outlined in the Quality Assurance Framework in order to better differentiate new programs from major modifications.
- 10:** revise its IQAP to ensure alignment across its various policies with respect to processes, procedures, and responsibilities.

Suggestions

Ryerson University should:

- 1:** consider implementing additional mechanisms to engage students in the preparation of self-study reports in the Cyclical Program Review process, with a view to better fulfilling the requirement of active involvement noted in Policy 126 Section I.
- 2:** document discussion and approvals that result in a revised timeline that includes significant departures from a timeline specified in the IQAP.
- 3:** include a comprehensive definition of arm's-length relationship in its IQAP; it may also be helpful to have it included in the template given to academic units preparing for a Cyclical Program Review or to those starting the new-program proposal process.
- 4:** consider adding to its IQAP a requirement to document the source and date of initial notification to academic units regarding upcoming Cyclical Program Reviews, including a list of the materials provided to academic units at that initial stage.
- 5:** include on its Cyclical Program Review (CPR) schedule the year of the last review of each program in order to ensure that the 8-year requirement is met. Care must also be taken to update the CPR schedule to capture program name changes.
- 6:** consider including in its IQAP a more explicit and clear pathway for the development and approval of interdisciplinary programs.
- 7:** consider revising its IQAP, Policy 112 Section 4, to make the pathway for the Peer Review Team report and responses to the report, including the role of the Dean(s) of Record, explicit and clear.
- 8:** consider revising the "Procedures" portion of Policy 112 to include a reference regarding the shared responsibility for new program monitoring as well as a more detailed description of what the monitoring process entails.
- 9:** consider establishing a central document management system to house all documents and correspondence associated with the procedures and approval pathways outlined in its IQAP.
- 10:** consider including in its IQAP the name of the University Committee that is responsible for making changes to the IQAP.
- 11:** consider renaming Section 4.4 of Policy 112 and Section IV.D of Policy 126 from the current "Provided to the Peer Review Team During the Site Visit" to "The Peer Review Team Site Visit."

12: consider expanding the current description of the process and responsibilities for the review of joint programs in its IQAP if additional joint programs are created.

13: review the sections of its IQAP that deal with the composition and responsibilities of the Peer Review Team to ensure clarity regarding the requirement and responsibilities of an internal reviewer.

14: consider adding to the list of 'Quick Links' on the Provost's homepage a direct link to the Curriculum Quality Assurance page to make it easier to find the Executive Summaries and Final Assessment Reports.