



ONTARIO UNIVERSITIES
COUNCIL on QUALITY ASSURANCE

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

SEPTEMBER 2014

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Carleton University is one of three universities to be audited in the second 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 Carleton 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 March 17-19, 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 found Carleton University to be deeply committed to the quality-assurance process and their dedication was revealed in a number of ways, not least of which in the meticulously prepared documents made available to the audit team.

The audit included:

- Five cyclical program reviews:
 - Biomedical Engineering: MAsc (Joint program with University of Ottawa)
 - Cultural Mediations: PhD
 - Journalism: BJ, MJ (10-credit)
 - Physics: BSc Honours, BSc Major
 - Public Policy and Administration: MAPA, PhD, GDip (Type 3)
- Two new program approvals:
 - Bachelor of Health Sciences: BHSc
 - Philanthropy and Nonprofit Leadership: MPNL
- One expedited new program approval:
 - Philanthropy and Nonprofit Leadership: GDip (Type 3)
- Two major modifications:
 - Business: BEng
 - Directed Interdisciplinary Studies

The auditors were most impressed with the institutional commitment to quality assurance and congratulate those at Carleton University who are charged with making the quality-

assurance process work seamlessly and meaningfully. From the support of its President and Provost, to the tireless support of its Vice-Provost/AVPA charged with ensuring the successful implementation of the institutional IQAP, to the program administrators and faculty who bear much of the task of preparing the documents for quality-assurance processes, the spirit of cooperation at Carleton is evident. Carleton University has produced a very thorough and well-organized IQAP and has worked diligently to align their cyclical program reviews and new program development processes with the quality-assurance agenda. The auditors' recommendations and suggestions are designed to assist the institution in refining that alignment and further strengthening the quality assurance activities that underpin delivery of its educational mission.

Recommendations are made when auditors have identified failures to comply with the IQAP; the institution must address these recommendations. Suggestions are forward-looking, identifying opportunities for the institution to strengthen its quality-assurance practices. Institutions are under no obligation to implement or otherwise respond to the auditors' suggestions, though they are encouraged to do so. Specific recommendations and suggestions arising from this audit are listed on pp. 3-4.

The four recommendations made by the auditors concern instances where Carleton University has not been compliant with its IQAP or with the Quality Assurance Framework. Three of the recommendations relate to the cyclical program review processes, particularly the guaranteeing of the arm's length status of the external reviewers, departmental participation in the preparation of self-study briefs, and the inclusion of all degrees and diplomas in programs under cyclical review. The fourth recommendation concerns the accuracy and transparency of programs in the Cyclical Program Review Schedule as compared with the Programs of Scope document.

The report also makes 14 suggestions, designed to assist Carleton University in strengthening its quality-assurance processes. These refer to issues related to the Joint IQAP with the University of Ottawa (clarification of institutional responsibilities in Cyclical Program Reviews and inter-institutional communication), issues related to the reviewers and their report (clarification of the role of the internal reviewer, emphasis on the importance of addressing the quality assurance framework in the Reviewers' Report, mechanisms for dealing with Reviewers' Reports that fail to address that framework, and the role of students in the cyclical program review process), issues related to the procedural steps of the process (matters of sign-off and approval by various bodies), and distinctions between minor-major and major-major modifications.

The report concludes with eight broader topics, four of which are syntheses of concerns raised in individual recommendations and/or suggestions that cut across multiple reviews (issues dealing with external and internal reviewers and their report). The others include concerns associated with securing institutional data for cyclical program reviews, the difficulties of aligning cyclical program reviews and accreditation processes, and a

predominantly positive note on learning outcomes. The final topic is the auditors' assessment of Carleton University's experience with implementing its IQAP.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Carleton University must:

- 1: follow its IQAP process for appointing potential external reviewers and confirming the arm's length status of potential reviewers.
- 2: consistently comply with the processes for departmental involvement, participation, and communication in the preparation of self-study briefs, as per Section 5.1.4 of its IQAP.
- 3: ensure that all degrees, diplomas, and sub-programs scheduled for review are reviewed according to its schedule and that the reviewers report on each program.
- 4: ensure accuracy and transparency of the list of programs offered at the institution on the Programs in Scope document and Cyclical Program Review Schedule.

SUGGESTIONS

Carleton University should:

- 1: revisit the Joint IQAP with the University of Ottawa to ensure that the various institutional responsibilities involved in the review of joint programs are clearly defined and differentiated.
- 2: clarify the various stages and mechanisms for inter-institutional communication and approval in its Joint IQAP.
- 3: amend the Joint IQAP to identify which institution assembles and ultimately maintains the materials documenting the new program or cyclical program review process for future potential audits.
- 4: clarify the role of the internal reviewer in the cyclical program review and new program proposal processes in its IQAP.
- 5: emphasize to the external reviewers the importance of addressing all aspects of the quality-assurance evaluation.

- 6: consider developing a mechanism for dealing with Reviewers' Reports that fail to address the evaluation criteria satisfactorily.
- 7: consider including a formal sign-off by the Office of Quality Assurance, indicating that the self-study is complete and compliant before the transition to CUCQA is made. This is especially important in cases where there is more than one version of the self-study resulting from revisions.
- 8: be consistent in its distinction between learning objectives and learning outcomes.
- 9: consider revising the program-approval process in its IQAP to reflect the fact that a program's proponents may be invited to meet with CUCQA.
- 10: ensure that documentation confirming approval by the Financial Planning Committee is included in the audit documents.
- 11: clarify the process of financial approval for new programs and better align the timelines for assessment of financial resources with those connected to academic approval.
- 12: consider defining the distinction between minor-major and major-major modifications more clearly, renaming them, and embedding those distinctions into its IQAP.
- 13: consider including in its IQAP clearly differentiated and articulated approval pathways, particularly with an accelerated and less complex one for the minor-major modifications.
- 14: consider establishing consistent parameters with respect to the way students are involved in cyclical program reviews, from the creation of the self-study phase to the posting of the Final Assessment Report and Implementation Plan.