



ONTARIO UNIVERSITIES
COUNCIL on QUALITY ASSURANCE

**SUMMARY OF AUDITORS' REPORT ON THE
SCOPE OF ALGOMA UNIVERSITY'S RESPONSE
TO THE QUALITY ASSURANCE AUDIT**

JULY 2021

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AUDITOR'S REPORT ON THE INSTITUTIONAL ONE-YEAR FOLLOW-UP RESPONSE ON THE QUALITY ASSURANCE AUDIT OF ALGOMA UNIVERSITY

SUMMARY

July 28, 2021

The Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance undertook an audit of Quality Assurance at Algoma University in 2019. As with all such audits, the purpose was to assess the extent to which Algoma University is in compliance with its own Institutional Quality Assurance Processes (IQAP) and to affirm that institutional practices are consistent with the Quality Assurance Framework that governs all Ontario Universities.

The 2020 Audit Report of Algoma University contained one Cause for Concern, five recommendations, and nine suggestions. Under the Quality Assurance Framework, universities must satisfy audit Causes for Concern and recommendations, as they identify institutional practices that are not compliant with the university's IQAP. Suggestions are made by the audit team in the spirit of encouraging reflection on how practice might be improved; compliance is not mandatory.

Algoma University submitted an interim status report on November 25, 2020 and, further to a Quality Council request, a revised version followed on December 10, 2020. The first version of the Institutional One-year Follow-up response from Algoma University was received in May 2021 and further to a request for clarifications the final version was received on June 7, 2020. Auditors have concluded that Algoma University's One-Year Response satisfactorily addresses the Cause for Concern and its five recommendations.

Cause for Concern: Ensure that the Cyclical Program Review processes are completed in compliance with the timeline that is described in the IQAP or established during the orientation meeting.

The University provided the Audit team with a table listing the status of all Cyclical Program Review (CPR) processes as of June 29, 2021. This revealed that all of the programs undergoing review at the time of the virtual site visit have been completed. Furthermore, the University has implemented a CPR process tracking sheet that provides up-to-date information, clearly delineates the authority responsibilities of the Chief Academic Officer (CAO) and Academic Dean and enables relevant stakeholders to take timely action. To address the Cause for Concern, Algoma University is also implementing measures that are expected to incentivise the departments or programs to comply with timelines. The enhanced process and incentives demonstrate the institutional commitment and satisfy the auditors' Cause for Concern.

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

New templates, CPR checklists, improved signing procedure and the creation of a central repository satisfy Recommendation 1.

Recommendation 2: Provide adequate support to ensure that clear and relevant program-level learning outcomes are developed for each program and that the proposed methods of assessment are appropriate to assess student achievement of the intended program learning outcomes.

The redesign and schedule of the workshop on learning outcomes in addition to the assistance for development and assessment satisfy Recommendation 2.

Recommendation 3: Ensure the entire process for selecting the external reviewers (nominating, selecting, and appointing) is initiated earlier in the CPR process.

The auditors believe that new deadline for submitting section 3 of the self-study report addressed Recommendation 3.

Recommendation 4: Ensure that all Final Assessment Reports and Implementation Plans are submitted to the Quality Council, as per Section 4.2.6 a of the Quality Assurance Framework.

The continuous involvement of the Quality Assurance Committee, Academic Dean and Chief Academic Officer satisfies Recommendation 4.

Recommendation 5: Revise the relevant sections in the IQAP to clarify the responsibilities with regard to the creation of the Final Assessment Report and Implementation Plan.

The auditors believe that the changes in the process for revising the IQAP effectively addressed Recommendation 5.

The audit of Quality Assurance at Algoma University has revealed significant efforts to meet the expectations of the 2010 version of the Quality Assurance Framework, especially in recent years. The auditors are satisfied that the University has responded to the Cause for Concern identified by the auditors and has taken appropriate steps to ensure the CPR process is completed in a timely manner. The recommendations made by the auditors were provided with a view to supporting Algoma University's further revisions and implementation of its IQAP and fostering the development of a culture of maintenance and continual enhancement of program quality. The auditors are satisfied that Algoma University's One-year Follow-up Response demonstrates the institution's commitment to these principles and that it, along with the additional documentation, satisfactorily addresses the concerns outlined in the Audit Report's one Cause for Concern and five recommendations.

Algoma University's Final Report in Response to the Principal Findings of the Quality Assurance Audit of Algoma University

May-June 2021

Algoma University was audited in November 2019 under the Quality Assurance Framework (QAF). The objective of the audit was to assess whether Algoma University has complied with the parameters of its Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP), as ratified by the Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance (the Quality Council), for cyclical program reviews and major program modifications. Three arm's-length members of the Quality Council Audit Panel conducted the audit over two days in November 2019. The findings of the audit process were communicated to Algoma University on May 25, 2020.

The Report identified one cause for concern: "Ensure that the Cyclical Program Review processes are completed in compliance with the timeline that is described in the IQAP or established during the orientation meeting." The auditors also made five recommendations and nine suggestions to Algoma University, to address the noted concern.

Algoma University was invited to submit a 6-month interim status report, to describe the progress made and indicate the measures already put in place to address the concerns identified by the Quality Council.

In the following, we list each recommendation and suggestion by the Quality Council, followed by the list of specific measures that have been/are implemented to address it. Of the Cause for Concern and five recommendations, a number highlight areas of concern with quality assurance that Algoma University had previously identified and were either in the midst of resolving or were prepared to address.

Algoma University will finalize revisions to its IQAP at the same time as responding to the other changes required in order to bring the IQAP into alignment with the revised Quality Assurance Framework.

Cause for Concern

Ensure that the Cyclical Program Review processes are completed in compliance with the timeline that is described in the IQAP or established during the orientation meeting.

Appendix 1 below contains a table listing the status of all CPR processes as of June 29, 2021. Furthermore, we have implemented at the level of the institution a [CPR process tracking sheet](#) that accomplishes the following three essential goals:

- 1) Provides up-to-date information to relevant stakeholders on where the various processes stand at any given point in time
- 2) Clearly delineates the authority and responsibilities of the CAO and Academic Dean (Designate of CAO) related to the various steps of the cyclical program review process, and
- 3) Enables relevant stakeholders to take timely action to remedy the reasons behind any potential delays in any given cyclical program review process step.

To address the main cause for concern, Algoma University shall implement the following main measures, that are expected to incentivise compliance with IQAP timelines:

- The Office of the CAO has the authority to advise Senate Committees (Quality Assurance Committee (QualCom), the Curriculum Committee (CurrCom) and the Academic Planning and Priorities Committee (APPCOM)) to defer or not approve any program revisions put forward by Departments/Programs who are behind schedule by more than 3 months at any stage of the Cyclical Program Review that falls within their purview.
- If a Cyclical Program Review process is late at any stage that falls within the program's/department's purview by 3 months or more, consider not approving course overload applications for self-study committee chairs for the ongoing academic year, to give them the time needed to complete/oversee the completion of their CPR report in short order (Academic Dean).
- If a Cyclical Program Review process is late at any stage that falls within the program's/department's purview by 6 months or more, APPCOM may decide not considering/ranking the hire requests from the respective department. Arguably, if the department has not provided credible evidence of need and a clear implementation plan, it cannot properly assess where and whether hires are needed and how those hires will support increased enrollment, student success and the learning outcomes of the program in question (APPCOM). Notwithstanding scenarios would include those matters that would require immediate consideration to not impact student progression or the quality of the program (QualCom, CurrCom and APPCOM).

Recommendations

Algoma University must:

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

In order to address this recommendation, Algoma University has completed the following measures:

- The Quality Assurance Office shall ensure that all new templates include a signature page
- The Quality Assurance Office will develop checklists for all CPR processes. Responsibility for ensuring all steps are completed is held by the Quality Assurance Office
- The Quality Assurance Office shall allow typed signatures with dates, to streamline the signing process
- Determine a central repository or email for all quality assurance decisions and motions. This one office will ensure that proper approvals, signatures and steps are taken for all quality assurance processes.

Action item	Responsibility	Timeline	Resources needed
Ensure that all new templates include signature page	QA Office	Completed	None
Develop checklists for all CPR processes	QA Office	Completed/ Ongoing	Additional QA Office Personnel
Allow typed signatures with dates, to streamline the signing process	QA Office	Completed	None
Determine a central repository or email for all quality assurance decisions and	QA Office	Completed/ Ongoing	Additional QA Office Personnel

<p>motions. This one office will help ensure that proper approvals, signatures and steps are taken for all quality assurance processes.</p>			
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RECOMMENDATION 2: Provide adequate support to ensure that clear and relevant program-level learning outcomes are developed for each program and that the proposed methods of assessment are appropriate to assess student achievement of the intended program learning outcomes.

In order to address this recommendation, Algoma University has completed the following measures:

- Redesign the learning outcomes workshop that is held within 6 months of the submission of the self study committee composition to the CAO. This new workshop will better ensure that departments have an improved understanding of their program learning outcomes prior to the start of their program self study.
- Development of an online tool to assist departments in the development and assessment of program-level and course-level learning outcomes

To further address this recommendation we will undertake the following initiatives:

- The planned development of the Teaching and Learning Centre will provide assistance to all programs with the review/update of the program-specific learning outcomes

Action item	Person/unit responsible	Timeline	Resources needed
<p>Rethink/revise the learning outcomes workshop that is held within 6 months of the submission of the</p>	<p>QA Office</p>	<p>Completed</p>	<p>None</p>

self study committee composition to the CAO			
Develop an online tool that will assist Departments in the development and assessment of Program-level and Course-level learning outcomes	QA Office	Completed	QA Office personnel to maintain the tool
Provide assistance to all programs with the review/update of the program-specific learning outcomes in the context of the planned Teaching and Learning Center	Director of the Teaching and Learning Center	September 2022	Teaching and Learning Centre

RECOMMENDATION 3: Ensure the entire process for selecting the external reviewers (nominating, selecting, and appointing) is initiated earlier in the CPR process.

In order to address this recommendation, Algoma University has completed the following measures:

- Ask Self Study Committees to submit section 3 of the self study at their February meeting with the CAO
- Make appropriate changes to Sections 3.6.4 and 3.6.5 (now 3.6.6) of IQAP to include this change

Action item	Person/unit responsible	Timeline	Resources needed
Ask Self Study Committees to submit section 3 of the self-study report to the CAO at the same	Quality Assurance Committee CAO	Completed	None

time they share the entire self study with the Faculty Chair so that the CAO may share with the Quality Assurance Committee who will proceed with selecting the external reviewers and setting the date for the site visit by the external reviewers			
Make appropriate changes to Sections 3.6.4 and 3.6.5 (now 3.6.6) of IQAP to include this change	Quality Assurance Committee/Senate	Ongoing	Additional QA Office Personnel

RECOMMENDATION 4: Ensure that all Final Assessment Reports and Implementation Plans are submitted to the Quality Council, as per Section 4.2.6 a) of the Quality Assurance Framework.

In order to address this recommendation, Algoma University has completed the following measures:

- Members of the Quality Assurance Committee are now involved in all Quality Assurance processes (including cyclical program reviews) from start to finish and can better track the progress of various steps
- The Acting Academic Dean provides a monthly summary update on all relevant processes to the Committee for its information
- The Quality Assurance Office will develop an associated checklist for better tracking
- The Office of the CAO will submit these documents in a timely and consistent manner

Action item	Person/unit responsible	Timeline	Resources needed
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Members of the Quality Assurance Committee are now involved in all Quality Assurance processes (including cyclical program reviews) from start to finish and can better track the progress of various steps	Chair of QualCom	Implemented	None
Regular updates to the Quality Assurance Committee by the Academic Dean on the progress of all cyclical program review processes	Academic Dean	Implemented	None
Develop an associated checklist for better tracking	QA Office	Completed	None
Office of the CAO will submit these documents in a timely and consistent manner	Academic Dean	Implemented	None

RECOMMENDATION 5: Revise the relevant sections in the IQAP to clarify the responsibilities with regard to the creation of the Final Assessment Report and Implementation Plan.

In order to address this recommendation, Algoma University has completed the following measures:

- Evaluate current processes

- Research best practices at Algoma University and other institutions
- The Quality Assurance Office has consulted with all relevant stakeholders and the Quality Assurance Committee will add the agreed-upon measure/change to the IQAP

Action item	Person/unit responsible	Timeline	Resources needed
Evaluate current processes	Academic Dean	Completed	None
Establish best practices	Academic Dean	Completed	None
Revise the relevant section of IQAP: 3.6.11.5	Quality Assurance Committee/Senate	Completed	Additional QA Office Personnel

Suggestions

Algoma University should:

SUGGESTION 1: Consider involving all members of the Self-Study Committee, including students, at each key stage of the Cyclical Program Review.

To address this suggestion, Algoma University will:

- Ensure at least one student participant is from first or second year
- Allow new students to participate in all post-self study submission processes
- Increase the number of students on the self-study committee

Action item	Person/unit responsible	Timeline	Resources needed
Ensure at least one student participant is from first or second year	QA Office and Self Study Committee Chair	Ongoing	None
Allow new students	QA Office and Self	Ongoing	None

to participate in all post-self study submission processes	Study Committee Chair		
Change the composition of the Self Study Committee as outlined in 3.6.2 of the IQAP. change from: from “2 upper year students” change to: “2 upper year students and at least one student from first or second year”	QA Office	Completed	Updated IQAP
Make appropriate changes to the IQAP guidelines in 3.6.11.1	Quality Assurance Committee/Senate	Completed	Additional QA Office Personnel

SUGGESTION 2: Consider revising the relevant sections in the IQAP to set a realistic and binding timeline with regard to the creation of the Final Assessment Report and Implementation Plan.

In order to address this suggestion, Algoma University will:

- Follow the policy changes that result from recommendation. We have added these items to the list of items to be revised in the IQAP.
- Evaluate/revise the timeline related to the creation of the Implementation Plan and the Final Assessment Report
- Section 3.6.10 to include separate sections for the internal responses to Reviewers’ report; Report on Program Quality; APPCOM prioritized recommendations; Implementation Plan; and Final Assessment Report. Each section will clearly define responsibilities and timelines for each required action

Action item	Person/unit responsible	Timeline	Resources needed
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Evaluate/revise the timeline related to the creation of the Implementation Plan and the Final Assessment Report	Quality Assurance Committee/Senate	Completed	Additional QA Office Personnel
Section 3.6.10 to include separate sections for the internal responses to Reviewers' report; Report on Program Quality; APPCOM prioritized recommendations; Implementation Plan; and Final Assessment Report. Each section will clearly define responsibilities and timelines for each required action	Quality Assurance Committee/Senate QA Office	Completed	Additional QA Office Personnel

SUGGESTION 3: Consider ensuring that the Implementation Plan and subsequent monitoring reports be provided to incoming Chairs and Deans, with appropriate orientation added regarding this aspect of their role, to ensure continuity of action.

To address this suggestion, Algoma University has completed the following measures:

- Provide Implementation Plans, monitoring reports and related orientation to incoming Departmental Chairs
- Provide Implementation Plans, monitoring reports and related orientation to incoming Academic Deans

Action item	Person/unit responsible	Timeline	Resources needed
Provide Implementation Plans, monitoring	Previous Departmental Chair and Quality	Ongoing	Additional QA Office Personnel

reports and related orientation to incoming Departmental Chairs	Assurance Office, Academic Dean		
Provide Implementation Plans, monitoring reports and related orientation to incoming Academic Deans	Previous Academic Dean or Quality Assurance Office	Ongoing	Additional QA Office Personnel

SUGGESTION 4: Consider the implementation of a system to collect data from alumni.

Thank you for this suggestion. We are planning to be working on this suggestion with our Alumni Office, to improve existing processes and introduce new ones, as required.

Action item	Person/unit responsible	Timeline	Resources needed
Consider the implementation of a system to collect data from alumni	Director of Institutional Advancement and Director of Institutional Research	December 2021	We are in the nascent stage of reviewing various SIS solutions to replace the current system. As part of the enterprise resource planning, it is important that we have a solution that can efficiently and effectively track and monitor alumni.

SUGGESTION 5: Consider how the new quality assurance initiatives coming out of the Quality Assurance Office can be supported appropriately.

In order to address this suggestion, Algoma University will:

- Ensure proper and timely support for the Quality Assurance Office

Action item	Person/unit responsible	Timeline	Resources needed
Ensure proper and timely support for the Quality Assurance Office	VPAR and Academic Dean	2021-2022 budget year	Additional QA Office Personnel

SUGGESTION 6: Consider reviewing the roles, responsibilities, and planned interactions of the various committees (QualCom, AppCom, Curriculum Committee) associated with Quality Assurance, to determine whether they are functioning effectively.

In order to address this suggestion, Algoma University will:

- Update IQAP to expressly outline Quality Assurance responsibilities of each Senate Committee
- Provide training workshops for the members of all three committees at the beginning of each academic year
- The CAO or designate is a member of QualCom, AppCom and CurCom and provides a continual line of communication between the three committees. In this role, the CAO or designate will provide updates on the status of all quality assurance processes for all three committees and better ensure that all parties have a better understanding of their role and participation in all quality assurance processes on campus.
- Update IQAP to expressly outline Quality Assurance responsibilities of each Senate Committee

Action item	Person/unit responsible	Timeline	Resources needed
Update IQAP to expressly outline Quality Assurance responsibilities of each Senate Committee	QA Office	May 2021	Additional QA Office Personnel
Provide training workshops for the members of all three committees at the beginning of each academic year	QA Office	July 2021	Additional QA Office Personnel

SUGGESTION 7: Consider how the quality assurance processes can be envisioned as an opportunity for continuous improvement of the program.

To address this suggestion, Algoma University has completed the following measures:

- Incorporated questions about the departmental academic plans and implementation plans in the application process for new faculty hire requests by departments
- Regular updates from the Quality Assurance Committee to the Algoma University Senate

To further address this suggestion, Algoma University will:

- Include questions in the Annual Report of Activities Template that will require departments to provide yearly updates on the implementation success of their quality improvement plans
- APPCOM will request from each Departmental Chair and Director an annual plan that is directly aligned with and builds upon the implementation plan in their last CPR to be submitted annually

Action item	Person/unit responsible	Timeline	Resources needed
Incorporated questions about the departmental academic plans and implementation plans in the application process for new faculty hire requests by departments	Chair of APPCOM	Completed	None
Regular updates from the Quality Assurance	Chair of QualCom or Academic Dean	Ongoing	None

Committee to the Algoma University Senate			
Include questions in the Departmental Plan Template that will require departments to provide yearly updates on the implementation success of their quality improvement plans	QA Office	Ongoing	Additional QA Office Personnel
APPCOM will request from each departmental chair and director an annual plan that is directly aligned with and builds upon the implementation plan in their last CPR to be submitted annually	Chair of APPCOM	September 2021	None

SUGGESTION 8: Consider revising the templates to make sure that all of the information that is needed is provided.

In order to address this suggestion, Algoma University has completed the following measures:

- Review and update all relevant templates

Action item	Person/unit	Timeline	Resources needed
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	responsible		
Review and update all relevant templates	QA Office and the Academic Dean	Completed	None

SUGGESTION 9: Consider implementing a procedure for curriculum mapping.

To address this suggestion, Algoma University has completed the following measures:

- The explanation of curriculum mapping is already part of the self-study workshop that we do with all departments and programs that are gearing up for a self-study process. We will add more detail and interactive elements to this presentation to make the training of faculty more effective in this regard.

To further address this suggestion, Algoma University will:

- Conduct a university-wide curriculum mapping exercise, which will map course-level, program-level and university-wide learning outcomes (once the Teaching and Learning Centre is in place). Once complete, this will provide a robust scaffold and data for many purposes, including CPRs.

Action item	Person/unit responsible	Timeline	Resources needed
Make the curriculum mapping element of the self-study workshop more effective	QA Office	May 2021	Additional QA personnel
Conduct a university-wide curriculum mapping exercise, which will map course-level, program-level and university-wide learning outcomes	Director of Teaching and Learning Centre	May 2022	Teaching and Learning Centre staff

Appendix 1. Status of Cyclical Program Review processes at Algoma University as of June 29, 2021

Item	Year review commenced	Review Status	(Anticipated) Date Final Assessment Report and Implementation Plan Posted to Website
Business Administration	2014-2015	Process finished; all reporting requirements followed and completed.	Done
Economics	2014-2015	Process finished; all reporting requirements followed and completed.	Done
Psychology	2015-2016	Process finished; all reporting requirements followed and completed.	Done
English	2016-2017	Process finished; all reporting requirements followed and completed.	Done
Sociology	2016-2017	Process finished; all reporting requirements followed and completed.	Done
Music	2016-2017	Process finished; all reporting requirements followed and completed.	Done
Community Economic and Social Development	2016-2017	Process finished; all reporting requirements followed and completed.	Done
Political Science	2017-2018	Process finished; all reporting requirements followed and completed.	Done
Law and Justice	2017-2018	Process finished; all reporting requirements followed and completed.	Done
Anishinaabemowin	2018-2019	FAR submitted to APPCOM	October 2021
History	2018-2019	Process finished; all reporting requirements followed and completed.	Done
Social Work	2018-2019	Process finished; all reporting requirements followed and completed.	Done
Computer Science	2019-2020	Virtual visit performed on June 7-8, 2021	Fall 2021
Biology	2019-2020	Designate of CAO to write draft CAO's response	Fall 2021
Visual Arts	2020-2021	On track	2022
ECON	2021-2022	On track	2023

BBA	2021-2022	On track	2023
ENVS	2021-2022	On track	2023