ONTARIO UNIVERSITIES
COUNCIL on QUALITY ASSURANCE

SUMMARY OF AUDITORS' REPORT ON THE SCOPE OF ONTARIO TECH UNIVERSITY'S RESPONSE TO THE QUALITY ASSURANCE AUDIT

AUGUST 2021

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AUDITORS' REPORT ON THE INSTITUTIONAL ONE-YEAR FOLLOW-UP RESPONSE ON THE QUALITY ASSURANCE AUDIT OF ONTARIO TECH UNIVERSITY

SUMMARY

The Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance undertook an Audit of Quality Assurance at Ontario Tech University in 2020. As with all such audits, the purpose was to assess the extent to which Ontario Tech 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 Ontario Tech University contained 11 Recommendations and six Suggestions. Under the Quality Assurance Framework, universities must satisfy audit 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, and thus compliance is not mandatory.

The Quality Assurance Framework requires that each institution submit a one-year follow-up response to the Quality Council. Ontario Tech University submitted its One-year Response on June 8, 2021. Auditors have concluded that Ontario Tech University's One-year Response satisfactorily addresses the Audit Report's 11 recommendations.

Recommendation 1: Revise the IQAP to indicate that distinct internal responses to external reviews are required from both the academic unit and the relevant Dean in New Program Proposals and Cyclical Program Reviews (QAF 2.2.8, 4.2.4f and 4.2.4g).

Recommendation 2: Develop a sign-off procedure to ensure the preparation and completeness of self-studies for Cyclical Program Reviews, of New Program Proposals, and the report from the Review Committee for Cyclical Program Reviews and New Program Proposals.

Recommendation 3: Ensure that students and staff are explicitly engaged in specific ways in the process of New Program Proposals and Cyclical Program Reviews.

Recommendation 4: The University must either amend its current practice to align with the IQAP and involve students in all aspects of the Assessment Team work (including the selection of reviewers and preparing a response to the reviewers' reports) OR amend the IQAP to indicate that students are involved only in the preparation of the self-study phase of the Cyclical Program Review.

Recommendation 5: Create a process for ensuring the completeness of external reviewer reports that do not cover all of the evaluation criteria in the IQAP.

Recommendation 6: Ensure that the Dean and Faculty curriculum committee propose to the Provost the names of potential external reviewers.

Recommendation 7: Revise the IQAP and institutional practice to indicate clearly a formal monitoring process for new programs.

Recommendation 8: Ensure that Cyclical Program Reviews take place every eight years, as required by the IQAP.

Recommendation 9: Revise the IQAP and institutional practice to indicate that after their approval, Final Assessment Reports and the Implementation Plans must be distributed to the programs where the Cyclical Program Reviews originated.

Recommendation 10: Revise the IQAP to ensure that any action items that remain in progress from Cyclical Program Review FARs and IPs are formally monitored if not completed by the 18-month Report.

Recommendation 11: Revise the IQAP to include a clear process for the development and review of joint programs.

Ontario Tech University's One-year Response, submitted on June 8, 2021, indicates that it has satisfactorily addressed the concerns outlined in the Audit Report's 11 Recommendations. The timelines by which the One-year Response was made and the institution's careful consideration of the Audit Team's Recommendations and Suggestions are evidence that Ontario Tech University takes quality assurance seriously.

OntarioTech
UNIVERSITY

June 8, 2021

Cindy Robinson
Director, Operations
Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance
180 Dundas Street West, Suite 1800
Toronto, ON M5G 1Z8

Dear Ms. Robinson,

On behalf of Ontario Tech University, I am pleased to submit our one-year follow up report in response to the Quality Assurance Audit. I would once again like to thank the audit team for their thoughtful recommendations and suggestions that have helped us to enhance our commitment to Quality Assurance and Enhancement at Ontario Tech. The enclosed report outlines how the university has addressed the audit recommendations and suggestions.

The work that the university undertook to update our IQAP in June, 2020 has put us on a positive path forward with respect to our quality assurance initiatives. We are currently in the process of making further enhancements to align with the changes made to the QAF that were not previously part of our revised IQAP. We anticipate that these additional changes will be sent to the Quality Council in the Fall.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the report. If you require any further documentation or information, please feel free to contact Nichole Molinaro at nichole.molinaro@ontariotechu.ca.

Sincerely,

Lori A. Livingston, PhD
Provost and Vice-President, Academic
Ontario Tech University

c.c.:   Centre for Institutional Quality Enhancement

RECOMMENDATION 1: Revise the IQAP to indicate that distinct internal responses to external reviews are required from both the academic unit and the relevant Dean in New Program Proposals and Cyclical Program Reviews (QAF 2.2.8, 4.2.4f and 4.2.4g).

INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSE: This update was made to our IQAP ratified by the Quality Council in June 2020.

The following has been added to the **Cyclical Program Review** procedures to delineate the requirement for two reports:

9.1.1. The Program Chair, in consultation with the IAT, will prepare and send to the Dean a response to the report that will include a summary of the program strengths, opportunities for improvement and a response to the recommendations put forward by the reviewers. A template for the response will be provided through CIQE.

9.1.2. Using the Program Chair's response report as a guideline, the Dean, working with the Office of the Provost, will prepare a plan of action for implementation that will include a separate response to the recommendations, a detailed description of the proposed action, timeline for acting on and monitoring the implementation of the recommendations, persons/area responsible for acting on the recommendations.

The following has been added to the **New Program** procedures to delineate the requirement for two reports:

5.3.5.2. The program committee will send to the Dean a response to the external reviewer(s)' report that will include a list of changes that can be made to the proposal based on the reviewer(s)' recommendations.

5.3.5.3. Using the program committee's report as a guideline, the Dean will prepare a response. 5.3.5.4. The program committee, working with the Dean, will amend the proposal and append to it a final list of changes made based on the recommendations and the program committee's and Dean's responses to the external report.

These changes have been well received particularly for program reviews. Further, we have developed internal guidelines to assist Deans and Program Chairs in their respective roles in this revised process. This has further enhanced the collaboration and communication in the Faculty as they work through the implementation of the action plans. We continue to assess how this process is working on an annual basis and are committed to updating the process to make further enhancements as we implement these changes.

RECOMMENDATION 2: Develop a sign-off procedure to ensure the preparation and completeness of self-studies for Cyclical Program Reviews, of New Program Proposals, and the report from the Review Committee for Cyclical Program Reviews and New Program Proposals.

INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSE: A signature line for the Dean has been added to the cover page for the proposal templates associated with these processes. The signature indicates that the Dean has reviewed the proposal for completeness in line with the evaluation criteria. An Academic Resource Committee (ARC) has been created that includes the Provost, Deputy Provost, a Faculty Dean, the Registrar, AVP

Planning and Director of the Center for Institutional Quality Enhancement. This committee produces a report that reviews CPR and New program proposals for completeness before going through the governance process at the institution. This committee has greatly enhanced the quality of reports for CPRs and new programs. We are looking at ways to use our project management software Monday.com to further enhance these processes in the future.

RECOMMENDATION 3: **Ensure that students and staff are explicitly engaged in specific ways in the process of New Program Proposals and Cyclical Program Reviews.**

INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSE: At minimum, our IQAP currently states that self study reports and new program proposals must go to Faculty Council for consultation before being finalized and sent to external review. Students and staff are required on the internal assessment team for a CPR and external reviewers also meet with students and staff during the site visit for program reviews. We also ensure that external reviewers are able to meet with representatives of Student Life during the site visits to get a fulsome picture of the supports available to students and comment on any areas where enhancements may need to be made.

RECOMMENDATION 4: **The University must either amend its current practice to align with the IQAP and involve students in all aspects of the Assessment Team work (including the selection of reviewers and preparing a response to the reviewers' reports) OR amend the IQAP to indicate that students are involved only in the preparation of the self-study phase of the Cyclical Program Review.**

INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSE: Students are only involved in the preparation of the self study report as well as meeting with external reviewers during the site visit. As a result, students are invited to the overview meeting for the program review as well as the comprehensive workshops we deliver on Program Learning Outcomes and mapping that are done as the first stage of working on the self study. An update to our IQAP to make this clear will be part of the revisions going to our Academic Council in Fall 2021 as part of the full suite of updates we will be making to align with the updated QAF. As a result of the audit we created a best practice document on involving students. It is available on our website [here](). We continue to look at innovative ways to involve students in cyclical program reviews and recognize the work they are doing as part of the Assessment Teams.

RECOMMENDATION 5: **Create a process for ensuring the completeness of external reviewer reports that do not cover all of the evaluation criteria in the IQAP.**

INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSE: Our IQAP ratified by the Quality Council in June 2020 now includes the following provision:

5.3.4   External Reviewers' Report

5.3.4.1 The reviewer(s) will submit to the Dean, using a template provided, a report that appraises the standards and quality of the proposed program and addresses the Evaluation Criteria. Reviewers will be invited to acknowledge any clearly innovative aspects of the proposed program together with recommendations. Normally, the report will be prepared within 30 days of the site visit.

5.4.3.2 <u>The Office of the Provost, through the Resource Committee, will review the report to ensure it meets the requirements stated in Article 5.3.4. Upon submission of the report, if additional</u>

details or clarification are needed from the reviewers, CIQE will reach out to the reviewers to request this in a revised report.

RECOMMENDATION 6: Ensure that the Dean and Faculty curriculum committee propose to the Provost the names of potential external reviewers.

INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSE: The IQAP as ratified in June 2020 now notes the following:

"the Dean, in consultation with the Faculty curriculum committee, will recommend to the Provost the names of at least 5 individuals who may serve as reviewers of the Program."

RECOMMENDATION 7: Revise the IQAP and institutional practice to indicate clearly a formal monitoring process for new programs.

INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSE: Our IQAP was revised in June 2020 to include Section 8 as outlined below. We have our first set of one-year follow up reports being examined by the resource committee in June 2021. We believe this will further strengthen our programs by providing an avenue for the outcomes of new programs to be assessed and ongoing improvements to be made in advance of the 8 year cycle.

8. Subsequent Monitoring and Review of Academic Programs

8.1. At the time of first intake into the Program, CIQE, working with the Office of Institutional Research and Analysis, will prepare an initial report that will review new course requirements and enrolment data. This report will be reviewed by the Office of the Provost, through the Resource Committee, to assess any issues that may arise and determine if alternate plans are required to ensure the overall success of the Program.

8.2. One year after the launch of the Program, CIQE, working with the Academic Unit, will prepare a report that will review enrolment and admissions data, learning outcomes, and other key metrics to assess New Program effectiveness. This report will be reviewed by the Office of the Provost, through the Resource Committee, to assess any issues and determine if alternate plans are required to ensure the overall success of the Program.

8.3. Should any recommendations arise from the one-year report, additional monitoring and review may be required at the request of the Office of the Provost or the Resource Committee. An 18- month report monitoring report, if required, will analyze key curricular and student data (e.g. student evaluations, GPA, retention data, etc.) as well as address the recommendations. Pending review, further documentation may be required for ongoing monitoring.

8.4. New Programs will then be reviewed and refined on an ongoing basis in accordance with the Institutional Quality Assurance Policy. Specifically, approved Programs will be entered into the schedule of academic program reviews and the first review will take place no more than eight years after the start of the Program, and every eight years hence, in accordance with the University's Cyclical Program Review Procedures.

RECOMMENDATION 8: Ensure that Cyclical Program Reviews take place every eight years, as required by the IQAP.

INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSE: Adherence to the 8 year timeline is important to the institution. While extenuating circumstances sometimes arise we are committed to ensuring that programs meet these timelines. As part of this commitment, to help with the tracking of all components of the review process we are now using the project management software Monday.com. The use of this software is intended to better monitor all timelines associated with program reviews to keep all components on track.

RECOMMENDATION 9: Revise the IQAP and institutional practice to indicate that after their approval, Final Assessment Reports and the Implementation Plans must be distributed to the programs where the Cyclical Program Reviews originated.

INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSE: This step has been added to our project management software Monday.com to ensure that the final approved version of the FAR and IP is distributed back to the originating program.

RECOMMENDATION 10: Revise the IQAP to ensure that any action items that remain in progress from Cyclical Program Review FARs and IPs are formally monitored if not completed by the 18-month Report.

INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSE: Our IQAP as ratified by the Quality Council in June 2020 now specifies the following:

11.2. If outstanding items remain from the implementation plan at the time of the eighteen-month report, the Resource Committee will review these outstanding items with the Dean. The Committee may recommend further monitoring of these items on a case-by-case basis.

Using our internal tracking system Monday.com we send a report annually to all Deans on all outstanding action items.

RECOMMENDATION 11: Revise the IQAP to include a clear process for the development and review of joint programs.

INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSE: Our IQAP as ratified by the Quality Council in June 2020 now includes a section that provides further guidance on joint programs. This section is provided below:

FOR NEW PROGRAMS:

7. Development of Joint or Collaborative Programs

7.1. Joint Programs, and other Programs offered in collaboration with other post-secondary institutions, will ensure that the required quality assurance requirements of both institutions are met.

7.2. When he program will be held jointly with an institution that does not have an IQAP that has been ratified by the Quality Council, the Ontario Tech IQAP Policy and associated Procedures will apply with Ontario Tech as the leading institution.

7.3. In cases where the program is held jointly with an institution that does have an IQAP ratified by the Quality Council, the Office of the Provost, through CIQE, will collaborate with the partner institution to

develop a process and associated templates that will address all requirements of each institution's IQAP. Specifically, the collaboration will address:

a) The selection of external reviewers
b) Templates to be used for a single proposal brief and required reports from the external reviewers, program team, and Dean(s)
c) The location(s) of the site-visit(s), timing for Program development, and approval pathway
d) The development of a joint committee to develop the Program
e) The process for monitoring and reviewing the Program after approval
f) The lead institution for the purposes of submission to the Quality Council and the Ministry

FOR PROGRAM REVIEWS:
12. Review of Joint or Collaborative Programs
12.1   Joint programs, and other programs offered in collaboration with other post-secondary institutions, will ensure that the required quality assurance requirements of both institutions are met.
12.2   When the program is held jointly with an institution that does not have an IQAP that has been ratified by the Quality Council, the Ontario Tech IQAP Policy and associated Procedures will apply with Ontario Tech as the leading institution.
12.3   In cases where the program is held jointly with an institution that does have an IQAP ratified by the Quality Council, the Office of the Provost, through CIQE, will collaborate with the partner institution to develop a process and associated templates that will address all requirements of each institution's IQAP. Specifically, the collaboration will address:
  a)   The selection of external reviewers
  b)   Templates to be used for a single self-study and required reports from the external reviewers, program team, and Dean(s)
  c)   The location(s) or the site visit(s), timing for program review, and subsequent reporting
  d)   The development of a joint committee to review the program
  e)   The process for monitoring and reporting on the implementation of recommendations after the review
  f)   The lead institution for the purposes of submission to the Quality Council

SUGGESTION 1: Consider clarifying on all relevant sections of the University's website that CIQE and the QA Process report to the Provost.

INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSE: Our IQAP clearly states that Quality Assurance is under the purview of the Provost. The Provost also Chairs the Academic Resource Committee which sees all documentation associated with new programs and program reviews to approve all items before they go to committees. To further clarify this we have added a direct link to CIQE from the Provost site. The "About Us" section of the website for the Center for Institutional Quality Enhancement has also been updated to note that Quality Assurance is under the umbrella of the Provost Office.

SUGGESTION 2: Consider having someone other than a Dean as the Chair of Undergraduate Studies Committee and Graduate Studies Committee.

INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSE: This suggestion will be examined when the terms of reference for these committees are next reviewed by our Academic Council's Governance and Nominations Committee.

SUGGESTION 3: Consider expanding the tracking software to allow program and faculty administrators to know where a proposal is in the process.

INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSE: This year we opened up our curriculum tracking system to be public. Anyone inside or outside the university can look at where proposals are in the approval process.

SUGGESTION 4: Consider ways in which Cyclical Program Reviews and accreditation reviews might be more closely aligned and ensure that the evaluation criteria are appropriately addressed.

INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSE: This is done on a case-by-case basis, however the default is that both are separate processes. Program reviews are viewed as an opportunity to critically examine the program for improvements, whereas accreditation is more about highlighting the positive aspects of the program.

SUGGESTION 5: Reinforce the idea of how the quality assurance processes can be envisioned as an opportunity for continuous improvement of programs across the institution

INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSE: The creation of the Academic Resource Committee to monitor new programs and program reviews has assisted in elevating the importance of continuous improvement at the institution. Having a one-year monitoring of programs will provide an avenue to ensure academic rigour and make further improvements as new programs are launched. Our implementation of Curriculog to increase transparency across the institution on program changes as well as the comprehensive workshops we deliver to academic planning specialists within each Faculty on the curriculum change process embeds an expert within the Faculty structure to act as a resource and ambassador for good curriculum design. The Program Learning Outcome workshops we deliver to programs one year in advance of their scheduled cyclical program review have also been well received and provide an opportunity for faculty to examine the continued relevancy and scaffolding of learning in the programs to ensure student success. We continue to look for ways to further promote continuous improvements. Further enhancements to monitor program review outcomes as well new programs to align with the overall strategic planning process of the university and financial resource allocation decisions are planned for the near future.

SUGGESTION 6: Consider adding the date of the last review to the list of programs on the Cyclical Program Review Schedule to ensure that program reviews do not exceed the IQAP's eight-year review requirement.

INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSE: This has been updated on our website. The chart is [available here](#).