THE
ROAD
AHEAD

Stability and Change in Quality Assurance

ONTARIO UNIVERSITIES
COUNCIL on QUALITY ASSURANCE

Contents

The Quality of Change

Paul Gooch, Chair

WHEN IT COMES to change, universities have a mixed reputation. Sometimes they are at the leading edge of the new; sometimes they're considered to be foot-dragging conservative institutions.

The change-resistance story is familiar, often told by those who find the collegial processes of the institution cumbersome and administratively inefficient. Universities, they argue, take a long time to make significant institutional changes. New programs and degrees have to be developed, debated, reviewed, and approved by layered levels of authority, from department through division through committees, through to senates – all before going on to external approvals. It takes many years to educate the teachers and researchers, so it's hard (say the critics) to renew the workforce.

When we're impatient with the pace of change, it's good to remember that this resistance to 'change-efficiency' is in fact built into some of the fundamental purposes of the university. As guardian of accumulated knowledge, the university should not change up what it preserves and teaches just for the sake of the new. As a place of critical reflection on beliefs and practices, it should locate itself at some distance from the swirls of current opinion. As a collegium of scholars, it should make its changes through deliberation rather than by the fiat of the powerful.

If you attend only to the inherent and fixed stability of the university, however, you will miss the larger story of a great deal of change over time. Most worthy of note, across my own career, is the place of students in the institution. Not just the great increase in numbers, or the percentage of Ontario's population in attendance, or the significant presence of international students. The change is in the amount of attention devoted to students and their experience, broadly conceived. Fifty years ago, students demanded their freedoms from a paternal institution; now they look to the institution to provide significant levels of care across many domains. It wouldn't be surprising if the growth in student services staff has been greater than in any other category.

Universities change significantly, too, in what they teach. A glance through the annual reports of the Quality Council will show the development of many interdisciplinary programs, and also a veritable mushrooming of professional master's degrees. Modifications to existing programs continue regularly in every university, often in response to reviews.

Program renewal and development is not the only kind of change. As with any institution, the university interacts with its social milieu. Universities are often a source of change for society: clearly, in areas like the medical and engineering research that brings social benefits, but also through the ideas generated by its members. At present the most potent of those ideas cluster around social justice. World events press issues of discrimination and injustice upon citizens, students and scholars alike. While the STEM disciplines are necessary for the research and development that will improve our lives in material ways, we must call upon the social and human sciences to help us understand the history and nature of injustice, the meaning of equity, access, and diversity in all its forms. While Artificial Intelligence has the power to improve society, power enables destruction as well. Technology alone cannot deliver the conditions for the pursuit and practice of a good life and a good society.

In a complex world – and ours is a world where complexity begets confusion and oversimplified confidence – it is easy to be caught up in the strong currents of change. It is easier to shout slogans than to disagree with respect. It is easier to use the accepted vocabulary than to work out its meaning in particular circumstances, to rest upon the 'virtue signalling' that my students are rightly suspicious of. How, then, to ensure that change is good change, not just any change that's in the air?

While there is no insurance to compensate for misjudgment or inattention, we are not at the mercy of chance: we can gain confidence in the quality of the changes that the university effects or endorses. The quality assurance policies and procedures for Ontario universities

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play a crucial role in the kinds of change that occur continuously across the system. The work of the Quality Council cannot alone guarantee beneficial social change, of course. All the agents in the higher education sector must play their parts: in recruitment and curriculum reform, in matching accessibility with affordability, in situating technical and professional competence in the context of a concern for democratic citizenship. But it is the role of quality assurance to ensure that the proper aims of a university education are well articulated, assessed, supported and achieved. A strong quality assurance system embraced by the universities becomes that firm ground on which change can be made to stand still for a moment, interrogated, approved and sent on its way.

It may seem paradoxical that the structures on the firm ground of quality assurance could themselves on occasion use a little change. But that's the nature of the business: quality assurance is self-reflective. After having met virtually over the many months of the pandemic, the Quality Council was able to hold a retreat this past year, affording us the occasion to think more broadly about how the fundamental principles in the Quality Assurance Framework are working in practice. The protocols in the Framework, and the guidelines for their use, can adapt to changing circumstances, and themselves change so that the program changes they scrutinize and approve are indeed good changes.

Thanks, Farewells and Welcomes
There is regular change, too, as members of the Council and its committees complete their terms and new members join. These inevitable changes are occasions for gratitude at the willingness of colleagues to participate in this important work. We thanked Dr. Erika Chamberlain from Western University, who completed her third term on the Council, and welcomed as new Council members in July 2022 Dr. Alice Hovorka of York University and Dr. Michael Khan of Trent University.

From the Appraisal Committee, Dr. Greg Finn of Brock University retired from his position as Chair after long service. At the same time, the Appraisal Committee bid farewell to three members: Dr. Phil Bates of the Royal Military College, Dr. Christine Gottardo of Lakehead University, and Dr. Peter Thompson of Carleton University. The Committee welcomed Dr. André Phillion of McMaster University, and Dr. Ian Roberge of York University.

The Audit Committee anticipated an increased workload, as the second round of cyclical audits begins. It added three new members: Dr. Alice Pitt of York University, Dr. Sharon Regan of Queen's University, and Dr. Kirsten Woodend of Trent University.

The Secretariat's work, exemplary in every way, merits my gratitude on behalf of all who have benefited from the careful and caring experience of the staff. Quality assurance in Ontario is very well served by Dr. Chris Evans as Executive Director and Cindy Robinson as Director, Operations; they have been happily supported by Dr. Jennifer Bethune, Senior Quality Assurance Officer, Samantha Fellin, Quality Assurance Officer, and Shevanthi Dissanayake, Coordinator. Both Jennifer and Samantha left the Secretariat at the end of the year to pursue other options. Change, it seems, keeps happening.

Paul Gooch

Navigating the Quality Assurance Landscape: The Second Cycle of Cyclical Audits

Chris Evans, Executive Director

"If the Framework defines the landscape for quality assurance in Ontario, the Quality Council acts as a reliable guide to navigating it."

AS THE INFORMATION presented in this Annual Report shows, the universities of Ontario continue to demonstrate their commitment to provide high quality education in support of our students and society more broadly. This is evident in the new programs that have been developed in fields of vital relevance to the wellbeing of the province and its people, and also in the on-going work of institutions to ensure existing programs retain their high quality and maintain their relevance.

Our province's universities continue to do this excellent work in the face of a number of far-reaching drivers for change. These include the incorporation of equity, diversity, inclusion and Indigeneity principles, the appearance of generative Artificial Intelligence in the post-secondary sphere, the move of government towards regulation of accessibility in the post-secondary sector and others. Each of these is having — and will continue to have — a profound impact on how quality assurance practice unfolds at the institutional level as well as across the university sector.

This last point is where the work of the Quality Council adds particular value to our universities. It is uniquely placed to view the entire university sector as a whole. This notion is captured in the Quality Assurance Framework, which notes that responsibilities of the Quality Council are to ensure the quality of degree programs and "the integrity of the universities' quality assurance processes." As institutions work to develop approaches to incorporating EDII, AI and accessibility in their quality assurance practices, the Quality Council is — through the medium of the Quality Assurance Framework and its protocols — able to support the universities in this endeavor. If the Framework defines the landscape for quality assurance in Ontario, the Quality Council acts as a reliable guide to navigating it.

But for the Quality Council to be an effective guide to the quality assurance landscape, it must actively maintain its awareness of the "lay of the land". One of the key tools the Quality Council has for keeping current about "the lay of the land" is the Cyclical Audit. As noted elsewhere in this Annual Report, a major event of the past year was the launch of the second cycle of cyclical audits after a pause connected to the review and revision of the Quality Assurance Framework.

With its overarching focus on supporting continuous improvement of quality assurance processes and practices, the Cyclical Audit is an opportunity to observe the entire system, institution by institution. This helps identify any systemic weaknesses to be avoided and rectified, as well as systemic strengths that might be deployed as best practices across the entire sector. Sticking with my earlier analogy, the Cyclical Audit facilitates the identification of the smooth pathways as well as the rough terrain in our collective quality assurance landscape. It then provides the Quality Council with the capacity to warn against the latter and encourage use of the former.

The newly launched second round of Cyclical Audits will extend, institution by institution, until 2030. The evolution of quality assurance practice across the sector that it will demonstrate will be invaluable to defining the future of quality assurance in the province and — ultimately – invaluable in supporting the quality of the education offered to the university students of Ontario.

Chris Evans

THE

YEAR

IN

REVIEW

Continuous Improvement: A System Built for Change

Ontario's system for the quality assurance of academic programs in its publicly-assisted universities is designed for continuous improvement. This means that the system allows for – and encourages – reflection, self-assessment, and, when applicable, change in response to the shifting landscape of higher education in Ontario.

There are many different mechanisms through which universities pursue continuous improvement. One key driver of this is built into Ontario's quality assurance system, with the requirement that each academic program undergo a Cyclical Program Review every eight years. This process is described in more detail below. In addition to this cyclical review, universities work to continually evaluate and improve their academic offerings, consulting with key stakeholders to understand challenges and opportunities,

and then acting on these to refine existing programs (see the section below on Major Modifications) and develop new ones (see the section on New Program Approvals, below). Continuous improvement also includes the work universities do to improve the processes and procedures that support those program changes. Quality Assurance Key Contacts in universities—academic leadership and quality assurance staff—meet regularly to share how their processes are evolving (see the section on Building Community on page 16). Through these mechanisms, provided by the Quality Assurance Framework (QAF), all stakeholders can be assured that Ontario's publicly assisted universities have a solid quality assurance foundation in place as they respond to students' and society's changing needs.

The Quality Council itself is also engaged in continuous improvement. It is reviewed every eight years, along with its key policy document, the QAF. A key outcome of its last review, in 2018, was a revised version of the QAF, which was released in 2021. An important feature of the revised QAF is that it can be amended between cycles, allowing the Council to engage in the kind of continuous improvement that is expected of universities.

As in the case of the universities, consultation with stakeholders informs continuous improvement of the Quality Council and the QAF. An example of this is the Council's decision, in 2023, to amend the QAF to allow universities the option of pursuing a virtual site visit for the review of any existing program; prior to this change, the QAF required an in-person site visit for most graduate programs, including all doctoral programs. The decision to amend the QAF was made after extensive consultation with university stakeholders as well as representatives from quality assurance systems across the country, about the use of virtual site visits in external reviews of existing programs. Additionally, data was gathered from commentary made by external reviewers who had participated in virtual site visits about the quality and rigor of the visits themselves. These consultations found that, thanks to increased familiarity with video-conferencing tools, virtual site visits provide the same degree of rigor as in-person visits, while allowing for greater participation by students and staff and access to a wider pool of prospective reviewers, and significant cost savings for universities.

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New Program Approvals

Students and the world they live in deserve and demand a university sector that is nimble enough to allow them to respond to the challenges they face. With important research agendas studying today's key issues, scholars committed to the practices of teaching and learning, and offices dedicated to institutional and labor market analysis, universities are equipped to identify promising areas for the development of new and innovative academic programs that are relevant to today's world.

While a new program begins with the germ of a great idea, the development of a new program proposal follows a rigorous process laid out in each university's institutional policy that is informed by the QAF. This ensures that as innovative ideas for new programs unfold, the agreed-upon criteria for quality academic programming is also kept at the forefront of the process. For example, in developing a new program proposal, universities must show how the program aligns with the university's mission, how the curriculum will allow students to achieve the province-wide Degree Level Expectations, and how the program plans to evaluate whether the program is successful, overall. Some universities have chosen to add additional criteria to address equity, diversity, and inclusion, academic integrity, and other key areas of focus. Additionally, the process for developing a new program will typically involve extensive consultation with institutional partners, industry, where applicable, and students.

The review process for new program proposals follows international standards, which place external peer review at the centre of the process. The Protocol for New Program Proposals details the evaluation criteria that external reviewers consider in reviewing a proposal. The Appraisal Committee's review provides an additional level of oversight, by examining both the university's process and the proposal itself.

In 2022–23, the Quality Council's Appraisal Committee carefully reviewed and approved 43 proposals for new programs. To help ensure that new programs can launch quickly so that Ontario's students are at the forefront of new disciplines and areas of study, the Quality Council and Appraisal Committee meet frequently (each met 11 times in 2022–23). Universities can expect a response from the Appraisal Committee within 45 days of a complete submission. A full list of the new program approvals can be found in Appendix 1.

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2022–23 New Program Approvals: Meeting the Needs of Students and Society

The programs developed by universities and approved by the Quality Council reflect institutional goals to meet student demand and the needs of industry, employers, and society as a whole.

This year, many universities proposed new graduate programs, many of which serve specific populations. For example, the Quality Council approved two new master's programs for Algoma University: an MSc in Biology and a Master of Computer Science. These are the first graduate programs approved for Algoma, and will add important options for students in Ontario's north. Similarly, the Quality Council approved a new master's program for Laurentian University, the Maîtrise interdisciplinaire en études relationnelles. As with Algoma's new master's programs, this program adds new opportunities for students in Ontario's north. As well, it will serve Franco-Ontarian students and francophone students from outside of the province. A number of graduate programs were also approved which target working professionals seeking to expand their expertise into high-demand

fields. Examples include the Master of Future Cities program at the University of Waterloo and the Master of Engineering Practice program at Carleton University.

Universities continue to meet the needs of employers in the engineering- and technology-related fields by adding programs to train graduates for today's technology-intensive workforce. For example, the Quality Council approved a PhD in Chemical Engineering and a BEng in Mechatronics Engineering program at Lakehead University, as well as a BEng in Mechatronics Engineering at Toronto Metropolitan University. As a reflection of today's information-driven industries, the University of Windsor added a Bachelor of Information Technology. And an example of a program which responds to the integration of technology into many other spheres is York University's new Master of Business Administration in Leading Technology-Enabled Organizations.

Ontario's universities are also responding to the realities of climate change—and the increasing emphasis placed on climate by industry and government—by developing programs that focus on sustainability, climate change, and other ecological concerns. Examples include a Graduate Diploma in Climate Risk Assessment and Opportunity from Western

University, a Business and Sustainability Graduate Diploma, also from Western University, and a Master of Wildlife Biology, from the University of Guelph.

Finally, Ontario's healthcare system continues to evolve to meet today's competing priorities, and universities have developed new programs to meet these changing needs. For example, this year, the Quality Council approved a master's degree in Interdisciplinary Aging Studies at Trent University which addresses the challenges and opportunities of an aging population. A PhD in Applied Behaviour Analysis at Brock University will support clinical training for treatments for mental health, addictions, and other issues. A new graduate diploma in Community and Public Health at McMaster University will allow working professionals to gain expertise in the field of public and community health, and a new MSc in Health Sciences at Wilfrid Laurier University, with streams in Community, Public, and Population Health and Molecular and Medical Science, will allow students to develop laboratory and research skills in this area.

For details on all the new programs approved by the Quality Council in 2022–23, please visit our website, here, where you will find program descriptions submitted by the universities.

Appraising New Programs in a Time of Transition

Message from the Chair of the Appraisal Committee

Over 2022–23, the Appraisal Committee met virtually as the sector continued to adjust to a post-lockdown world. With virtual meetings, the Appraisal Committee members' review and assessment of new program submissions proved to be both efficient and effective in reaching recommendations for approval to the Quality Council. As institutional IQAPs were in various stages of re-ratification, in response to the revised 2021 QAF, the new program proposal briefs reviewed by the Appraisal Committee reflected this reality. As a result, submissions reviewed varied from institution to institution reflecting the evaluation criteria within the original, 2010 QAF, the revised 2021 QAF, or a hybrid between the two as institutions continued to evolve their internal policies and procedures through a re-ratified IQAP reflecting the revised QAF.

The number of proposals reviewed this year was down from the previous year (See Appendix 1, Table 1) with the majority of the decrease reflecting fewer new undergraduate program proposals submitted. However, the diversity of new programs reviewed and approved at all levels (See Appendix 1, Table 2) is evidence that Ontario universities continue to develop new academic programs that will meet evolving societal needs and that address new areas of student interest, faculty expertise and research within the sector.

While members of the Appraisal Committee may have disciplinary expertise they do not serve in this capacity as an appraiser of a new program. The evaluation of the disciplinary aspect of any new program falls to the external reviewers, selected by the program proponents, in evaluating the proposal against the QAF criteria and the resulting feedback, recommendations and suggestions for program improvement contained in their report.

The role of the Appraisal Committee therefore focuses on the sufficiency of the External Reviewers' Report, the recommendations and suggestions for program improvement, the adequacy of required internal responses to the recommendations and the proposed methods for the assessment of teaching and learning given the program's structure, objectives, learning outcomes and assessment methods.

Finally, as I complete my term as Chair and member of the Appraisal Committee, I want to say that the quality and consistency of the hundreds of submissions reviewed in my time on the Committee reflect an evolving quality assurance process that is second to none, nationally or internationally.

Greg Finn, Brock University

Major Modifications: Dynamic Changes Across the Sector

While new program offerings represent new directions, universities also respond to the changing landscape of higher education by making major changes to existing programs.

These changes typically represent a change of one third or more to the program, although the degree of change is, in many cases, determined qualitatively. Other examples of a major modification can include a change in the mode of delivery of the program (e.g., from in-person to online), the introduction of a new field in a graduate program, the establishment of a new college-university pathway, and a change in the learning outcomes of the program. In 2022–23, universities made changes to a total of 437 programs, with some programs undergoing more than one change.

The process for major modifications falls within the purview of the university, and each university has designed a process that meets its needs and aligns with its mandate and culture; however, in all cases, there is a formalized collegial process. Universities report their major modifications to the Quality Council annually.

Universities also respond to change by closing programs. Program closures are a sign of a dynamic and healthy quality assurance environment and may reflect changes in the discipline, students' interests, or organizational changes within a university (for example, as disciplines evolve, one program might absorb another, leading to the closure of one of the programs). Universities must formalize their process for program closures in their Institutional Quality Assurance Processes (IQAPs), and they must be reported to the Quality Council along with an explanation of the measures taken to ensure that any students affected by a program's closure have been considered. Over the course of 2022–23, 37 programs were closed.

437

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Cyclical Program Reviews

Many of the changes existing programs pursue as part of continuous improvement are identified through the Cyclical Program Review process. Resting largely with the universities themselves, this process is the foundation of the quality assurance system in Ontario. The QAF stipulates that each program must be reviewed on a cycle of no more than eight years.

The core of the cyclical review is each program's process of data-gathering and analytic self-reflection on the strengths, weaknesses and opportunities of the program. The self-study becomes the basis for the external review of the program by arm's-length disciplinary experts who develop a report that includes recommended actions to strengthen the program. The institution then has an opportunity to respond to the reviewers' recommendations, in a Final Assessment Report, and develop an implementation plan, outlining how the reviewers' recommendations will be implemented.

While the details of institutional and collegial oversight of the cyclical program review in each university are different, the bulk of this process rests with the universities, which reflects the tiered nature of Ontario's quality assurance system. The Quality Council's role is to ensure each university's process is robust, rigorous, and aligned with the QAF. This is accomplished through the Council's review of the Final Assessment Report (FAR).

This year, in the spirit of continuous improvement, the Council carefully considered and revised its own process for reviewing FARs. Reflecting on the maturity of the system and the purpose of its oversight of this process, the Quality Council's revised approach to the review of FARs is more focused. It orients the Quality Council's review more directly toward an evaluation of the university's process with the goal of producing more consistent feedback to universities, so that they can better understand how to improve their processes. The feedback provided by the Quality Council can also help universities prepare for their cyclical audit.
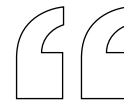
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Audits: New Processes for Continuous Improvement

Message from the Chair of the Audit Committee

The QAF mandates that each university is subject to audit every eight years. This key function of the Quality Council bridges the QAF with the quality assurance work taking place within a university. This is accomplished by examining how each university's quality assurance practices align with its own Institutional Quality Assurance Processes (IQAP), the local expression of the QAF, and, ultimately, the QAF. Because of the close relationship between the audit and each university's IQAP, the Audit Committee is responsible for reviewing and making recommendations for the ratification of each university's IQAP.

The IQAP review was a major focus for the Audit Committee in 2022–2023. As noted earlier, the QAF was revised in 2021. Since then, universities have been engaged in the task of revising their IQAPs to bring them into alignment with the requirements of the revised QAF. Many universities also took the opportunity to substantially restructure their IQAPs, often to reflect developing views of the role quality assurance plays in the university's academic landscape and how quality assurance intersects with other key priorities, including equity, diversity, inclusion, and Indigeneity.

A highlight of the year was the start of Cycle 2 of the Quality Council's audits of Ontario universities. In winter 2023, audit teams conducted site visits at the University of Ottawa and Brock University. The audit teams completed their reports, which were then approved by the Quality Council. These reports are posted on the Council's website here. Western University, Carleton University, and Queen's University also have audits underway, with site visits planned for Fall 2023 and Winter 2024. The full audit schedule is available here. More details about the audit process are provided below.

We were happy to successfully review all of the IQAPs and recommend them for ratification by the Quality Council, including those of our newest universities: l'Université de Hearst and the Northern Ontario School of Medicine University. Both of these universities were required to have IQAPs ratified by the Quality Council as conditions of their provisional membership in the Council of Ontario Universities. The development of the IQAP was a productive and positive experience for both institutions. We are pleased to support these two new members as they develop the processes and policies that will help them continue to ensure their academic programs are of high quality and that they are meeting the needs of their students and communities.

Douglas McDougall, University of Toronto

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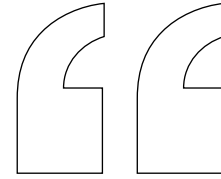
"The Executive team of the Quality Council provided expert and timely guidance as NOSM University developed and prepared to implement its first Institutional Quality Assurance Process and related protocols. As Canada's first independent medical university, NOSM University looks forward with confidence at continuous innovation of its academic programs to benefit our students. Our IQAP, along with the resources provided by the Quality Council, will structure how the institution engages in activities of continuous quality improvement to remain at the cutting edge of medical and health education to achieve our special mission, which is to educate health-care providers to meet the unique needs of the people in northern, rural, remote Indigenous and Francophone communities."

Céline Larivière, PhD
Provost and Vice President Academic
NOSM University

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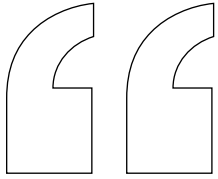
"Université de Hearst obtained its independent university status in 2022. Well-designed tools and the support of the Quality Assurance Council enabled the effective development of our first Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP). By following the Quality Assurance Framework, we were able to have our IQAP ratified in just a few months. This was despite the fact that our institution, by virtue of its size, location and Francophonie, had different needs from the majority of universities. The Quality Council was flexible and understanding, while ensuring that our IQAP complied with the Framework. We are now ready to expand our range of programs for the Francophone community over the next few years."

Sophie Dallaire, Transition Manager and Luc Bussières, President, l'Université de Hearst

New Processes and a New Focus in the Second Cycle of Audits

The revised QAF introduced several changes to the Audit Protocol, including a clearer focus on the purpose and objectives of the audit. The first two audits of the Second Cycle provide an opportunity to reflect on how these changes have shaped how the audits unfold, how the various stakeholders engage with the audit, and ultimately, what the audits' outcomes are.

The Institutional Self-study

One of the primary objectives of the Cyclical Audit is to learn from past practice, in the context of the present and the future. To help position the audit in this way for universities and for the Audit Committee, the revised QAF introduced a new element, the Institutional self-study. This document is designed to help universities identify opportunities and challenges in their own quality assurance processes and practices and to reflect on how they have evolved over time. While the Institutional self-study does reference the university's previous audit, its focus is on current challenges and plans for improvement.

With the first audits of the second cycle underway, it has become clear this new exercise in self-reflection provides valuable context for auditors, allowing them to better understand the culture of quality assurance at a university. The Institutional self-study also orients the institution to the larger, overarching questions that structure the audit's purpose and provides an impetus for internal consultation as the audit gets underway. Finally, the Institutional self-study provides an opportunity for the university to identify areas where the Audit Committee's advice is requested. This sets the stage for the Cyclical Audit to be understood as a dialogue about the university's future direction in quality assurance.

Audit Reports for Continuous Improvement

Another area where the Audit Committee has shifted its focus is in the Audit Report. The Audit Report may include the following types of feedback for the university: Best Practices, Commendations, Recommendations, Suggestions, and Causes for Concern. Of these, universities are required to act on Recommendations and Causes for Concern. As noted previously, while the audit is necessarily an examination of past practice, it is also rooted in the university's current context and its vision for the future. To support this goal, the audit team carefully considers its feedback to the university to ensure that, where possible, it reflects the university's current, documented practices and, where applicable, plans for the future. This ensures that any issues noted in the audit report—or actions proposed as solutions —are relevant to the university's goals and take into account the challenges and limitations the university may be facing.

While the audits of both Brock University and the University of Ottawa both revealed strong institutional practices around quality assurance, the audit teams also had feedback for each of these universities. In both cases, the Audit Reports carefully locate the audit in the university's current context, and, where possible, ground each piece of feedback (that is, each Recommendation, Suggestion, Cause for Concern, and Best Practice) within that context. Consideration is also given to the university's goals and challenges, as noted in the universities' Institutional self-studies and throughout the site visit.

While the introduction of the Institutional self-study and the increased focus on a forward-looking audit have shifted its perspective, the purpose of the cyclical audit—to provide accountability to post-secondary education's primary stakeholders—remains unchanged.

Looking Ahead

Emphasizing the Council's Independence

The Quality Council's independence from both the universities and the provincial government has always been key to its mandate, and indeed, its legitimacy. As described in the QAF, "the universities have vested in the Quality Council final authority for decisions concerning all aspects of quality assurance." In 2022–23, the Council engaged in conversations with the Secretariat of the Council of Ontario Universities (COU) about how the Quality Council should further emphasize its arm's length status from COU itself. As a result of these conversations, COU will take further steps to highlight the independence of the Quality Council and that it holds final authority for decisions concerning all aspects of quality assurance of the academic programs offered by member institutions of the COU.

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Indigeneity (DEII) and Quality Assurance

The 2021 QAF provides the option for universities to incorporate special mandates and missions, including DEII, into their IQAPs. Many universities have used this opportunity to reflect on their commitment to DEII, and have added DEII-related elements to evaluation criteria, consultation requirements and other aspects of their IQAPs. These moves formalize a shift across the sector toward understanding the role that quality assurance has to play in meeting objectives related to diversity, equity, inclusion and Indigeneity. Universities are continuing to work on strengthening the connections between DEII and quality assurance, and quality assurance staff have been enthusiastic about sharing their progress in this area at Key Contact exchange forums and the annual Key Contact Meeting.

One of the Quality Council's most important functions is pedagogical: by helping universities, students, and other stakeholders understand the importance of quality assurance, the Council makes its own oversight role effective. The Council also connects people who want to learn about quality assurance in Ontario, whether that is members of the general public who access our X (previously Twitter) and LinkedIn accounts, or quality assurance staff in universities, discussing challenges and opportunities that arise in their work.

The Quality Council facilitates knowledge exchange within the quality assurance community by hosting online exchange forums and a full-day Key Contact Meeting. At these meetings, quality assurance Key Contacts discuss developing trends in the sector and share experiences and best practices, with an eye to improving the outcomes of the quality assurance processes in place at their universities. Additionally, the Quality Assurance Secretariat hosts a discussion forum and resource website for the quality assurance community, which serves as a space for more informal connection across the sector.

The Quality Assurance Secretariat also plays a key role in hosting the biennial Learning Outcomes Symposium. This event, planned in conjunction with representatives from universities, colleges, Indigenous Institutes, and partner agencies including the Post-Secondary Quality Assurance Board, the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario, and the Ontario College Quality Assurance Service, brings together scholars and practitioners working in fields related to the development and assessment of learning outcomes to share research, best practices, and innovative ideas. The most recent event was held in October, 2022 and focused on the intersection of equity, diversity, inclusion, and Indigeneity and the development and assessment of learning outcomes. More details about the 2022 event are available on our website here.
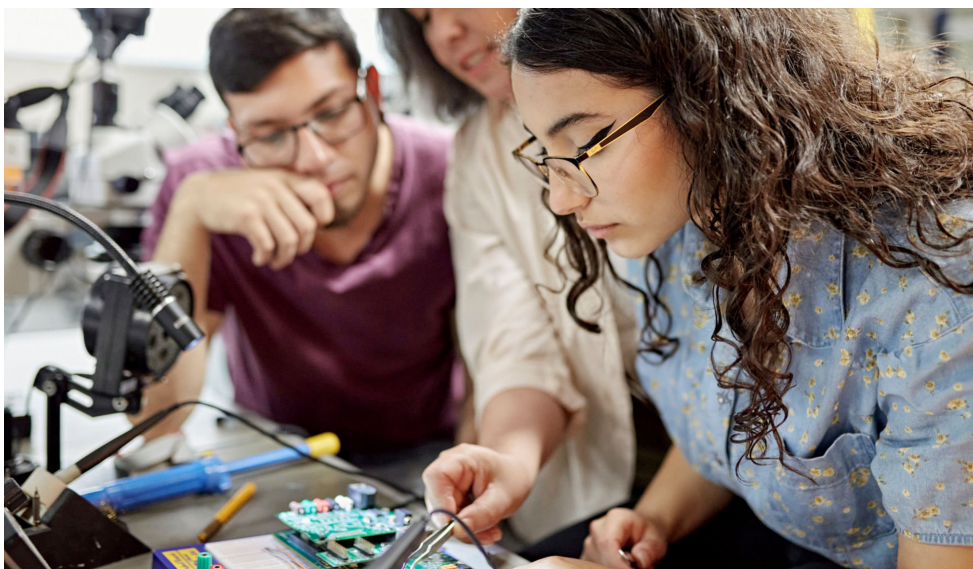
Appendix 1:
Program Data

New Programs Approved, by Degree Type

The number of new undergraduate, master's, doctoral, and graduate diploma programs approved each year has fluctuated. Overall, 2022–23 saw a relatively large number of master's and doctoral programs approved, despite fewer overall approvals as compared with 2021–22. Note also that 37 programs closed over the course of 2022–23.

TABLE 1

	Undergraduate	Master's	Doctoral	Graduate Diplomas (GDip)	Total: New Programs
2018 – 2019	10	22	10	11	**53**
2019 – 2020	17	15	10	9	**51**
2020 – 2021	17	9	4	6	**36**
2021 – 2022	22	27	6	8	**63**
2022 – 2023	10	20	8	5	**43**

Brief descriptions of <u>all approved programs</u> can be found on the Quality Council's website.

List of New Programs Approved, 2022–23, by University

A wide variety of programs were approved over the course of 2022-23. Please see <u>page 9</u> for a description of some of the trends in new program approvals.

TABLE 2

University and Program	Degree
ALGOMA UNIVERSITY	
Master of Science in Biology	MSc
Master of Computer Science	MCS
BROCK UNIVERSITY	
Integrated Engineering	BEng
Educational Studies	BA
Applied Behaviour Analysis	PhD
Medical Sciences (Pass)	BSc
CARLETON UNIVERSITY	
Social Statistics and Data Analysis	GDip (Type 2 and Type 3)
Engineering Practice	MEng
Teaching English as an Additional Language	MA
Master of Finance	MFin
Human Rights and Social Justice	MA
LAKEHEAD UNIVERSITY	
Mechatronics Engineering	BEng
Chemical Engineering	PhD
LAURENTIAN UNIVERSITY	
MA Interdisciplinaire en études relationnelles	MA

List of New Programs Approved, 2022–23, by University
(continued)

TABLE 2

University and Program	Degree
McMASTER UNIVERSITY	
Integrated Rehabilitation and Humanities	BHSc
Community and Public Health	GDip (Type 3)
Biomedical Innovation	BMI
TORONTO METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY	
Mechatronics Engineering	BEng and Co-op
Master of Interior Design and Post-Professional Master of Interior Design	MID and Post-Professional MID
TRENT UNIVERSITY	
Interdisciplinary Aging Studies	MA
UNIVERSITY OF GUELPH	
Master of Wildlife Biology	MWB
UNIVERSITY OF WATERLOO	
Entrepreneurship and Organization	PhD
Master of Future Cities	MFC
UNIVERSITY OF WINDSOR	
Bachelor of Information Technology	BIT
WESTERN UNIVERSITY	
Business and Sustainability	GDip (Type 2)
Climate Risk Assessment and Opportunity	GDip (Type 3)
Drug Safety and Pharmacovigilance	MSc
Global Health Systems	MHSc
WILFRID LAURIER UNIVERSITY	
Music	PhD
Health Sciences	MSc
Collaboration, Curation, and Creative Performance	MMus
YORK UNIVERSITY	
Master of Business Administration in Leading Technology-Enabled Organizations	MBAt
Data Science	BA, BSc
Accounting Analytics	GDip (Type 3)
Master of Health Industry Administration	MHIA
Global Health	MA, PhD
Global Metals and Minerals Management	GDip (Type 3)

Appendix 2:
Membership of the Quality Council and its Committees in 2022–23

Members of the Quality Council, 2022–23

Dr. Paul Gooch (Chair), President Emeritus, Victoria University within the University of Toronto

Dr. Neil Besner, Member / Out-of-Province Quality Assurance Expert

Dr. Erika Chamberlain, Member / University Representative, Western University

Dr. Alice Hovorka, Undergraduate Dean Representative, York University

Ms. Shirley Hoy, Citizen Member

Dr. Michael Khan, Member / OCAV Representative, Trent University

Dr. Susan McCahan, Member / OCAV Representative, University of Toronto

Dr. Andrew McWilliams, Member / University Representative, Toronto Metropolitan University

Dr. Patrice Smith, Member / Graduate Dean Representative, Carleton University

Dr. Christopher Evans, Executive Director *(ex-officio)*

Dr. Gregory Finn, Chair of the Appraisal Committee *(ex-officio)*

Dr. Douglas McDougall, Chair of the Audit Committee *(ex-officio)*

The Quality Council's Appraisal and Audit Committees

Members of the Quality Council's Appraisal Committee review proposals for new undergraduate and graduate programs from Ontario's publicly assisted universities, and make recommendations regarding their approval to the Quality Council.

Members of the Quality Council's Audit Committee conduct Cyclical Audits, review audit reports prepared by the audit teams and make recommendations to the Quality Council. The Audit Report describes whether a university has, since its last review, acted in compliance with the provisions of its Institutional Quality Assurance Processes (IQAP).

Members of the Appraisal Committee, 2022–23

Dr. Gregory Finn (Chair), Department of Earth Sciences, Brock University

Dr. Phil Bates, Vice-Principal Academic, Royal Military College (until December 2022)

Dr. Pamela Bryden (Vice-Chair), Kinesiology and Physical Education, Wilfrid Laurier University

Dr. Carolyn Eyles, School of Interdisciplinary Science, McMaster University

Dr. Brian Frank, Electrical and Computer Engineering, Queen's University

Dr. Christine Gottardo, Department of Chemistry, Lakehead University (until December 2022)

Dr. André Phillion, Materials Science and Engineering, McMaster University (as of January 2023)

Dr. Ian Roberge, School of Public Policy and Administration, York University

Dr. Mark Schmuckler, Department of Psychology, University of Toronto

Dr. Peter Thompson, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, Carleton University

Dr. Christopher Evans, Executive Director *(ex-officio)*

Members of the Audit Committee, 2022–23

Dr. Douglas McDougall (Chair), Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto

Dr. Johanne Bénard, Department of French Studies, Queen's University

Dr. Serge Desmarais, Department of Psychology, University of Guelph

Dr. Roelof Eikelboom, Department of Psychology, Wilfrid Laurier University

Dr. Michel Laurier (Vice-Chair), Faculty of Education, University of Ottawa

Dr. Eleanor Maticka-Tyndale, Department of Sociology, Anthropology and Criminology, University of Windsor

Dr. Sarah McKinnon, Department of Art History, Ontario College of Art and Design University

Dr. Alice Pitt, Faculty of Education, York University

Dr. Sharon Regan, Department of Biology, Queen's University

Dr. Bruce Tucker, Faculty of History, University of Windsor

Dr. Bettina West, Ted Rogers School of Management, Toronto Metropolitan University

Dr. Alan Weedon, Department of Chemistry, Western University

Dr. Kirsten Woodend, Fleming School of Nursing, Trent University

Dr. Christopher Evans, Executive Director *(ex-officio)*

Members of the Audit Executive Committee, 2022–23

Dr. Douglas McDougall (Chair), Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto

Dr. Michel Laurier, (Vice-Chair) Faculty of Education, University of Ottawa

Dr. Alan Weedon (Member-at-large), Department of Chemistry, Western University

The Quality Assurance Secretariat

The Quality Assurance Secretariat supports the ongoing business of the Quality Council and its Committees by providing timely information, advice and support. Among other responsibilities, the Secretariat prepares agendas and materials for all meetings and appraisals, takes minutes of meetings, and communicates decisions of the Appraisal Committee and the Quality Council to the appropriate institutions. The Secretariat also supports the Audit process, and provides general quality assurance and appraisal-related advice to Ontario universities.

Members of the Secretariat, 2022–23

Dr. Christopher Evans, Executive Director

Cindy Robinson, Director Operations

Jennifer Bethune, Senior Quality Assurance Officer

Sam Fellin, Quality Assurance Officer

Shevanthi Dissanayake, Coordinator

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