



ONTARIO UNIVERSITIES
COUNCIL on QUALITY ASSURANCE

Omnibus Report on Quality Assurance Key Contact Meetings

2022 – 2023

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Omnibus Report on Quality Assurance Key Contact Meetings

2022 – 2023

Executive Summary

Exchange Forums and the annual meeting offer advantages to Key Contacts and the entire system by creating a platform for the exchange of system-wide emerging trends, as well as for the sharing of ideas to address and mutual support for the continual challenges experienced in quality assurance. Additionally, these meetings facilitate the sharing of innovative ideas and best practices in quality assurance, drawing insights from the observations of the Appraisal and Audit Committees and the Key Contacts themselves. Furthermore, they present a valuable opportunity for the Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance (the Quality Council), through its Secretariat, to obtain a comprehensive perspective for examining evolving themes and persistent challenges across the system. This input is vital for the Quality Council to comprehend, contemplate, and address the evolving needs of the sector.

The Quality Assurance Framework notes that the Secretariat will collate the findings of each of the annual meetings of the Key Contacts into an omnibus report that will be shared with all universities and posted on the Quality Council's website (Section 1.4). In addition to this annual Omnibus Report, the Secretariat posts notes and other materials from each Exchange Forum and from Key Contact Meeting sessions on a dedicated [Key Contact website](#). This website provides a space for Key Contacts to connect with one another, by commenting on posted material or by engaging in discussion forums. It is password protected and available to Key Contacts only, to facilitate open discussion.

Key Contacts are a valuable resource for the sector. Each brings a unique viewpoint, reflecting the diversity of Ontario's publicly assisted universities. The perspectives and advice shared in the Key Contact events throughout the year are not, therefore, universally applicable, since each Key Contact operates in a different context, and faces different challenges. However, taken as a whole, they reflect the Key Contacts' engagement and their commitment to supporting each other toward the goal of improved quality assurance practices sector-wide.

This year's report provides a summary of key findings from the following events:

- Key Contact Exchange Forums
 - Embracing Quality Assurance and the Cyclical Program Review Process Institution-wide (February 16, 2023)
 - Life Cycle of the External Review (April 26, 2023)
- Annual Key Contact Meeting (June 23, 2023)

Overview of key themes arising from the 2022-23 Key Contact Exchange Forums and 2023 Key Contact Meeting

- **Managing Workload**
 - *Workload and CPRs*, [page 3](#), [page 15](#)
 - *Workload and data kits*, [page 11](#)
 - *Workload and Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Indigenization (EDII)*, [page 17](#)
- **Communication**
 - *Communication and data packages*, [page 10](#)
 - *Communication and EDII*, [page 8](#), [page 16](#)
 - *Communication with external reviewers*, [page 6](#), [page 6](#)
 - *Communication and governance*, [page 15](#)
 - *“Buy-in” and communication across the institution*, [page 3](#), [page 4](#)
- **Data-based decision-making**
 - *Data for new program sustainability (market research)* [page 13](#), [page 18](#)
 - *Data packages, orientation and training*, [page 11](#)
 - *Data packages, facilitating effective use*, [page 12](#)
- **Meeting stakeholders’ needs and demands**
 - *Market analysis for new programs*, [page 13](#), [page 18](#)
 - *Sustainability of new programs*, [page 19](#)
 - *Innovative fully work-integrated learning program (York University)*, [page 19](#)
- **Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Indigenization**
 - *EDII in CPR process*, [page 8](#), [page 17](#), [page 18](#)
 - *Indigenization of Learning Outcomes*, [page 8](#), [page 16](#), [page 17](#), [page 17](#)
 - *Institution-wide Indigenization*, [page 16](#)
- **Elements of the QA process**
 - *External reviewers*, [page 5](#)
 - *Site Visits*, [page 7](#)
 - *Governance and internal processes*, [page 14](#), [page 16](#), [page 16](#)
 - *Supporting units/faculties with QA processes*, [page 4](#), [page 12](#), [page 18](#)
 - *Alignment with accreditation reviews*, [page 7](#)
 - *Assessing need and demand for new programs*, [page 13](#), [page 18](#)
 - *Work-integrated learning, assessment*, [page 20](#)

In addition to the details provided in the full report below, presentations and materials shared during the meetings are available to Key Contacts on the Key Contacts’ password protected [Discussion Forum website](#).

2022-23 Key Contact Exchange Forums

Key Contact Exchange Forum 1 – Embracing Quality Assurance and the Cyclical Program Review Process Institution-wide, February 16, 2023

Participants: 49 Key Contacts representing all 23 universities

Key Themes

Workload

The Cyclical Program Review (CPR) process can be time-consuming and resource-intensive, which can create stress and tension for programs undergoing CPRs. Key Contacts shared the following approaches to assist with reducing the burden:

- Granting faculty course release (the equivalent of one course) to assist in the creation of the Self-study has been considered at one university. While some institutions are open to the idea of course release, or already have such a mechanism in place, one institution noted that they have been resisting the idea as it could be interpreted to mean that one individual is responsible for all the work, when the Self-study and CPR process more broadly is meant to be a collaborative effort. Another institution has historically resisted course release on the basis of lack of funds.
- Bringing in an emeriti professor / recently retired faculty to help with the writing of the Self-study is an approach used by at least one university.
- Recognizing that QA staff can only “sell” the merits of quality assurance so far. Calling on individuals from other units that recently underwent a CPR can help orient and share experiences with less experienced faculty whose programs are coming up for review can significantly help to bridge the gap.
- Another institution provides programs with a financial grant to hire an individual consultant to conduct research and write the CPR document, to bring in additional administrative support for the CPR process, or to offer course release to an existing faculty member to do this work. The funds are not released to the program until the Self-study is delivered.
- An additional suggestion was to explore the creation of a “Service Committee” as an alternative source of CPR support (versus offering course release, etc.).
- There was a further suggestion that representatives from programs coming up for a CPR could participate as an Internal Reviewer in another unit’s CPR in the year prior to help “train” them for their own CPR.

Communication

Key Contacts noted that, in general, the origins of the Quality Council and “ownership” and the Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) are not well understood by faculty, Deans, and even some senior administrators. Many individuals doing quality assurance work across the sector are not aware that the Quality Council – and the QAF – originated with the Ontario Council of Academic

Vice-Presidents (OCAV); that is to say, the quality assurance system in Ontario was designed by the universities for the universities. Clear and ongoing communication around this point can help shift the perception of quality assurance from something imposed on universities to a collectively agreed-upon responsibility and priority.

The following additional suggestions on how to improve QA-related communications were noted:

- There was discussion regarding how to open up lines of communication about QA processes across campus. For example, CPR launch letters can be used to prime faculty as to the expectations for the CPR process. It was noted that it is crucial that faculty and staff understand why these processes are in place, and the important role they play in it.
- One institution noted that the CPR process has begun to be “demystified” at their campus now that each academic unit has been through the cycle once, and that the culture surrounding CPRs on campus has taken on a more positive tone now that faculty and staff better understand the process and its purpose.

Approaches to supporting the process

- One breakout group suggested that streamlining the CPR process is very important. Updated, effective and concise templates and short video instructions were provided as examples of how the CPR process could be streamlined.
- A few Key Contacts indicated the importance of keeping up the momentum and keeping faculty engaged throughout the CPR process, not just at the outset. This can be accomplished by:
 - Consistent and frequent engagement between the QA office and the units undergoing review, preferably with one-point person for the unit to interact with from start to finish.
 - Holding mentorship discussions between outgoing and incoming department/unit heads can help maintain momentum for continual improvement between CPRs.
 - Ensuring in-coming Deans are briefed on the status of all active CPRs within their Faculties.
 - Ensuring a CPR ends with as much recognition and on as positive a note as the launch of the process, which can be very helpful in units seeing the value in the whole process, not just the self-study.
- One institution recruits internal reviewers from academic units with an upcoming CPR. This provides members from units with upcoming CPRs with the opportunity to learn about the CPR process firsthand before embarking on their own CPR.

Some related observations from the first and second cycle of audits:

- At one audit, the audit team commended the university’s practice of ensuring that all review documents go through the Dean and at least one Associate Dean before being

moved to the university's senate subcommittee. Auditors also commended the university for vesting considerable authority in its senate subcommittee to ensure accountability and a focus on continuous improvement across the university.

- Auditors in another university noted that undergraduate students are given the opportunity to participate in the drafting of self-studies in some Faculties, which helps ease the burden of the heavy workload. At one institution, this was facilitated through the creation of a for-credit course, which was particularly commended by the auditors.
- In a different audit, the audit team noted two best practices related to Deans' engagement and the effect this had on "buy-in" with respect to quality assurance. The first best practice concerned engagement of Faculty Deans in the process. The Deans play an important collective role under the terms of the IQAP, as part of an academic planning committee. This committee authorizes in-principle approval of new programs, an important strategic decision. Particularly notable, however, is the role Deans play in the management of the deliberations related to the quality assurance process that are distributed across various University committees. At this university, Deans chair these committees and rotate the responsibility for specific committees among each other. This provides a signal throughout the institution that quality assurance practice is important. Further, it enables the Deans, individually and as a group, to maintain an active watch on the state of quality assurance within the institution.

Additional resources: These are available via the following links:

- Notes and shared resources from the February 16, 2023 Key Contact Exchange Forum available here: [February 16, 2023 Key Contact Exchange Forum – QA Key Contact Forums \(oucqqa.ca\)](https://oucqqa.ca/forums)

Key Contact Exchange Forum 2 – Life Cycle of the External Review, April 26, 2023

Participants: 36 Key Contacts representing all 23 universities

Key Themes

Supports

Key Contacts shared their respective processes governing the external review of Cyclical Program Reviews at their institutions. Participants noted that differences in size and organizational structure amongst universities has a significant impact on support available for QA processes, including the external review aspect for both CPRs and New Program Proposals. For example, one Key Contact noted that their institution does not currently have dedicated administrative support for the development of QA processes, whereas another Key Contact noted that at their institution, there are eight staff members with varying degrees of dedicated QA-related responsibilities.

Process for Nominating and Selecting External Reviewers

- While practices vary across institutions, the Director Operations cautioned universities against the practice of having units make initial contact with potential external reviewers in order to determine interest/availability. This practice could provide an opportunity (or the perception of an opportunity) for the violation of external reviewers' arm's length status.
 - Subsequent to the Key Contact meeting, the Secretariat confirmed with the Quality Council that this practice should be avoided. Key Contacts were therefore encouraged to find other ways to gauge external reviewers' availability and interest, for example, through the Dean's or Provost's office. Please note that the Quality Council's guidance on [Choosing Arm's Length Reviewers \(QAF 2.2.1 and 5.2.1\)](#) has been revised to include this advice.
- Regarding the process for selecting external reviewers, a Key Contact noted that at their institution, units and faculty are asked to submit six external reviewer nominations for a program's CPR review through the use of a template. CVs are provided, along with cover letters detailing any possible conflicts of interest, any prior experience a nominee may have with the administration of university programming, etc. The unit can also choose to rank the CVs, and provide a rationale for these rankings, provide suggested pairings of external reviewers based on their background and expertise, etc. An online tool is then used to make the final decision.
- One breakout group added that there has been a lot of recent interest in raising honoraria amounts for external reviewers, as these amounts have remained stagnant for many years. The Director Operations noted that rates for honoraria paid to external reviewers were set by Ontario Council of Academic Vice-Presidents (OCAV) some time ago. Key Contacts were encouraged to bring this issue to their Provosts for discussion.
- It was also noted that there are increasing challenges in securing external reviewers, with review / workload fatigue, insufficient honoraria and reluctance to participate in an in-person visit being some of the reasons cited.

Orienting External Reviewers

- Various universities noted that they have defined processes for orienting their external reviewers in advance of the site visit, including:
 - An orientation session for external reviewers as part of the site visit;
 - Holding an orientation meeting in advance of the site visit proper, including for those conducting desk reviews, to make sure that reviewers are suitably prepared.
 - One university used to enlist the assistance of an internal delegate to help facilitate external reviews by providing a more arm's-length overview of the institution to reviewers, and fielding questions about culture, regulations, etc.; however, it proved difficult to find professors who had two days to dedicate to this. This delegate role has since been eliminated at the university, but may return to future reviews in some

capacity, as the university's Senate Committee on Program Evaluation is currently reviewing the process.

Virtual Site Visits

- Many universities continue to primarily rely on virtual site visits for their CPRs, especially smaller institutions in more remote locations.
- One university noted that they have had great success with this method, and had been using virtual reviews even before the pandemic.
- In one breakout group, half of the institutions had moved toward in person site visits, while the other half continued to rely on the virtual format. Proponents of the virtual format noted that it is much easier to find external reviewers, especially out-of-province ones. One Key Contact noted that virtual reviews have significantly cut down on travel costs and often take up less of the reviewer's time.
- It was also noted that while certain programs with lab space, etc. may prefer an in-person format for their external review, many programs and reviewers are fine with virtual tours of more "basic" classroom space.
- It was noted by one breakout group that, generally speaking, reviewers seem to prefer virtual reviews, while the universities themselves often prefer in person.

External Reviewer Reports

- At one institution, both the Provost and the unit are provided with the draft external report as soon as it is submitted, to ensure they find everything to be clear and actionable. If not, the QA office asks the external reviewers to edit the report / recommendations for clarity.
- Another university's internal reviewer clearly outlines report expectations in the orientation meeting, in order to ensure that the recommendations eventually provided by the external reviewers are clearly articulated in the report.
- One breakout group added that there was no noticeable drop in the quality of external reviewer reports as a result of virtual site visits, although some reviewers struggle to submit the report in a timely manner.

Aligning Cyclical Program Reviews (CPRs) with Accreditation Processes

- It was noted that some universities choose to align their CPR processes with accreditations, while at others, the two processes remain quite separate.
- One university reaches out to programs well in advance of their CPRs to see what their preference is. If the preference is for a combined review/accreditation, the QA office works to align the program's CPR and accreditation schedules, and uses as many of the same documents and templates for both processes as possible.
- One university noted that conducting CPRs with units that also undergo accreditation is often easier, as they are more familiar with and accepting of these kinds of processes.

Embedding Equity, Diversity, Inclusivity and Indigenization (EDII) Into CPR Processes

- Many universities have not yet formalized the embedding of EDII into their QA processes, but several are having ongoing discussions on the topic, especially with regard to their CPR processes (e.g., selecting external reviewers).
- It was noted by one breakout group that it is important for these discussions to be held in tactful ways, and to lead to meaningful change and diversity.
- Many universities are slowly incorporating language and protocols regarding EDII into their processes, including:
 - One Key Contact noted that some of their university's program review templates now include EDII considerations, but that external reviewer report templates have not yet been updated with an EDII lens.
 - Another Key Contact added that they are reluctant to add EDII language to their IQAP at this stage, as they are still in the process of revising their templates and QA processes, and want to retain some flexibility for additional changes/updates in future.
 - One university has embedded EDII considerations into its new program development template, and also expects EDII considerations as part of any program changes; however, it has not yet embedded EDII into its CPR processes.
 - One university has begun to embed EDII considerations into its CPR templates, which has allowed for greater education across the institution, and has prompted larger EDII discussions that go beyond QA.
 - One university already has EDII concerns front-of-mind for its new program proposals, and has reflected EDII considerations in its PLOs. There is also an EDI Committee working to engage authentically in these processes across multiple departments.
 - One university tries to include a 30-minute meeting with representatives from its EDI Office and Office of Indigenous Initiatives as part of its site visits in order to highlight EDII considerations as being a pillar of QA at the institution. While these meetings have not yet been formally embedded into the CPR process, they likely will be in the future.
- Many universities would like to see processes in place to achieve a greater diversity of external reviewers; a couple of universities have already begun to embed these considerations into their nomination templates.

For additional details, Key Contacts are encouraged to consult the PDF'd Jamboards linked below.

Some related observations from the first and second cycle of audits:

- Auditors noted that at one university, Deans are encouraged to draft their responses to the external reviewers' recommendations with context and with consideration of where the response will go and who will read it. This approach engages the Deans with the program leaders and leads to meaningful commentary on next steps.
- Several audits found that the Vice Provost Academic meets with external reviewers prior to the site visit to provide a detailed explanation of reviewers' template as well as expectations for the report.
- One audit commended a university's clear template for determining the suitability and arms' length status of potential external reviewers. This template included fields for a description of expertise, potential conflicts of interest, and research areas.

Additional resources: These are available via the following links:

- Notes and Jamboards from the April 26, 2023 Key Contact Exchange Forum: [April 26, 2023 Key Contact Exchange Forum – QA Key Contact Forums \(oucqa.ca\)](#) (password protected)

Related Quality Council Guidance:

- [Choosing Arm's Length Reviewers \(QAF 2.2.1 and 5.2.1\) — Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance \(oucqa.ca\)](#)
- [Virtual Quality Assurance Site Visits \(QAF 2.2.1 and 5.2.1\) — Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance \(oucqa.ca\)](#)
- [Guidance on Site Visit Format for External Reviewers \(Sections 2.2.1 and 5.2.1\) — Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance \(oucqa.ca\)](#)
- [Internal Members of the Review Committee: Role and Responsibilities \(QAF 2.2.1 and 5.2.1\) — Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance \(oucqa.ca\)](#)
- [Guidance for External Reviewers of Existing Programs \(QAF 5.2.1\) — Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance \(oucqa.ca\)](#)

QA Key Contact Annual Meeting, June 23, 2023

Participants: 48 in-person and 25 virtual participants attended the day, representing all 23 universities

While the topics of the presentations and workshops were varied, several threads emerged as key unifying themes. Across several sessions, presenters and participants noted the importance of data-based decision making, analysis, and strategy, and shared techniques for enhancing the use of data across the elements of the quality assurance process. While some of this discussion focused on “data packages” for the Cyclical Program Review and other institutional data, one session focused on streamlining the work of its quality assurance subcommittee, in terms of

organizing and disseminating documents and feedback related to curriculum proposals. A number of sessions focused on innovation and sustainability, highlighting a variety of approaches to meeting the needs of students and other stakeholders, particularly in a context where universities face a continued and intensified focus on demonstrating the need and demand for a program from a labour market perspective. Finally, the day highlighted issues related to EDII, and in particular, several universities' efforts to integrate Indigenous ways of knowing and Indigenous approaches to quality assurance with Western approaches to quality assurance.

The Meeting was held in a hybrid format, to accommodate those for whom travel and meeting in-person was not feasible.

Overall, nearly all QA Key Contacts who attended reported that the meeting was very helpful and provided an excellent opportunity to connect and share ideas, regardless of whether they attended in-person or remotely. While in-person attendees shared ideas at table discussions, remote attendees met with each other for breakout discussions on Zoom.

Additional information for these sessions is available to QA Key Contacts here: [Key Contact Meeting Resources](#)

Plenary 1 – Supporting Continuous Improvement with Data

This plenary session was facilitated by Glenn Craney, Chief Strategy Officer, Toronto Metropolitan University and Daniella Mallinck, Director, Academic Programs, Planning & Quality Assurance, University of Toronto. The panelists discussed key approaches to some common challenges in the use of institutional data in quality assurance processes, focusing on three broad themes: communication and relationship building, the tension between customization of data and standardization of data, and strategies for fostering the effective use of data in the Cyclical Program Review (CPR) process and beyond. After the panel discussion, Key Contacts discussed strategies from their own universities in their breakout groups. Key themes from the panel and the subsequent discussions are outlined below.

Theme 1: Effective Communication and Relationship Building

Institutional Relationships:

- The University of Toronto's QA office collaborates with the Institutional Planning Analyst. Regular communication is essential to address data-related challenges.
- During breakout groups, Key Contacts noted that close contact and frequent communication with Institutional Planning offices was essential. While communication and collaboration are often strong, workloads are not always well understood.
- Monthly touchpoints with staff in Deans' offices help build relationships and bridge data literacy gaps.
- Identifying repeated patterns in questions/issues aids in streamlining communication.

Annual Workshops:

- Panelists explained the benefits of hosting workshops to address common questions. Based on conversations and ongoing communication, it is possible to predict key queries and provide clear explanations.
- During breakout groups, several other institutions noted that they hold workshops and orientation sessions, often with representation from the Institutional Planning offices. Some institutions use interactive websites rather than workshops to help programs understand their data packages.

Sharing Information About Data

- At the University of Toronto, a data descriptions website provides additional information about individual data elements; however, it is underused.
- Attempts are made to triage questions effectively to avoid overwhelming data analysts.
- Other Key Contacts suggested providing data methodologies to help users understand the data, or making extensive use of footnotes.
- Another university uses prompting questions in self-study templates to help users understand how they might interpret data.

People-centric Approach:

- Organic conversations among team members, especially when physically co-located, enhance communication.
- The planning office acts as data wholesalers, adhering to standardized practices while tailoring explanations where possible.
- Approximately 80% of queries can be answered with standardized responses, leaving time for addressing the remaining 20%.

QA Package for Programs:

- An annual QA package delivered to programs helps them learn how to interact with data and fosters trust in the data. Examining data only once per cycle can lead to surprises and challenges in interpretation.

Theme 2: Customization vs. Standardization

Customization

- Customization may be necessary/possible for department or program specific needs; however, data specialists may not always know the specific questions being asked. Communication around specific queries is very important.

- When considering customized data elements, the program's needs must be considered in the context of broader institutional priorities.
- One Key Contact noted that the use of "Power BI" admission/registration databases allows customization by unit/major and real-time data comparison.

Benefits of Standardization:

- Familiarity with standardized data packages helps socialize institutional priorities, and QA data can also often be used for measuring Key Performance Indicators.
- Equipping faculty to use data meaningfully involves creating narratives beyond raw tables; more or different data is not always the best way to help programs use data effectively.

Theme 3: Effective Practices in Data Use for QA Processes

Familiarity Over Time:

- Encouraging faculty and staff to consistently encounter key data points over time fosters familiarity.
- Incorporating data elements into unit-level planning discussions, allows for contextual understanding and opportunities for deeper understanding.
- Key Contacts in breakout groups suggested holding briefings with programs before data is released, regularly engaging in discussions around data quality, trends, and areas for improvement, and allowing programs time to review their data before embarking on discussions about it with program leadership.

Showcase Engaging Examples:

- The panelists suggested identifying exemplary instances where individuals engage effectively with data and highlighting data-driven decisions that led to positive outcomes, illustrating how data informs strategic choices.

User Stories for Data Elements:

- The panelists also suggested highlighting "user stories" around specific data elements, providing context and enhancing relatability.

Avoid Data as Wallpaper:

- While essential, standardized reports should not be treated as mere wallpaper. Provide rationale for their use.
- The value of data should be emphasized by explaining why certain data points matter and linking them to institutional goals, student success, or resource allocation.

Data Wish-lists

In breakout groups, Key Contacts discussed “wish list” items related to data as well as barriers to effective use of data in quality assurance processes. Some key takeaways are below:

- Data about post-graduation activities and alumni data is left to programs/departments and is challenging to track via exit surveys.
- Key Contacts would like to see the creation of user-friendly tools, such as dashboards and visualizations, as well as more education on using data beyond the CPR process.
- Collaboration on an agreed-upon set of expected data points across the sector was also raised.
- Key Contacts noted that better methods for gathering information about student experience was required.
- More training and support is required in order for programs to use data in a reflective and meaningful way.

Some related observations from the first and second cycle of audits:

- One university was commended in its audit for providing a clear cover page explaining the various data elements provided in the data package, and for grouping data into intuitive categories, making it easier to interpret in the context of the CPR.
- At one Audit, the university was commended for its collaboration with the Alumni Office to obtain information on students’ post-graduation activities.
- Several universities were commended by auditors for providing data on an ongoing or annual basis.

Additional resources: These are available via the following links:

- *Recording and Breakout Group Padlet available here:* [2023 Key Contact Meeting – June 23, 2023 – QA Key Contact Forums \(oucqa.ca\)](#)

Session 1a: Assessing Student Demand for New Programs

Istvan Imre, Associate Vice-President Academic, and Brittany Paat, Quality Assurance Officer, from Algoma University led a workshop focused on understanding and assessing student demand for new programs emphasizing the balance between community demand, student interests, experience, and innovation. Key themes from the session are outlined below.

Using data to assess student demand:

Traditional Data Sources:

- Direct feedback from students through surveys and focus groups provides insights into their preferences, needs, and expectations.

- Faculty input contributes valuable ideas and suggestions regarding program development, aligning curriculum with academic standards and industry requirements.
- Engaging with businesses and employers helps institutions understand workforce demands, ensuring that programs align with real-world needs and enhance graduates' employability.
- Data from recruitment efforts and the Ontario Universities' Application Centre (OUAC) further inform program offerings and enrollment trends, while alumni feedback shapes program enhancements based on career outcomes and relevance.
- Analyzing employment trends and job opportunities guides program development, enabling institutions to adapt to changing workforce needs.

Approaches to Assess Student Demand:

- Market analysis, including examination of market dynamics, competitor programs, and emerging fields, informs program design and identifies gaps. Leveraging external expertise from third-party market analysis companies provides data-driven recommendations.
- Engaging stakeholders, including students, faculty, and employers, during the consultation process ensures alignment with diverse perspectives. Clear definition of demand for new programs and articulation of program goals and outcomes enhance understanding.
- Combining modern analytics with traditional key performance indicators allows for a holistic assessment of program effectiveness by analyzing program enrollment alongside workforce data to identify areas for growth and improvement.

Limitations:

- Despite the importance of data-driven decision-making, institutions must consider the limitations of a focus on data to assess student demand. Data without strategy and training can be harmful; a thoughtful approach to interpreting data is therefore required.
- Furthermore, the panelists noted that student demand is not synonymous with program quality -- both quality and demand must be assessed to ensure a program's health.

Additional resources – these are available via the following links:

- *Recording, presentation slides and Breakout Group Padlet available here:* [2023 Key Contact Meeting – June 23, 2023 – QA Key Contact Forums \(oucqa.ca\)](https://oucqa.ca/2023-Key-Contact-Meeting-June-23-2023-QA-Key-Contact-Forums)

Session 1b: Smart Systems for More Efficient and Meaningful Curriculum Review

Sean Kheraj, Vice-Provost Academic and Stéphanie Walsh-Matthews, Director, Curriculum Quality Assurance, at Toronto Metropolitan University delivered an interactive session that provided an overview of the University's new, streamlined process for the internal review and

approval of curriculum proposals. The new system was designed to increase engagement, meaningful discussion, and transparency while reducing workload and bureaucracy. Key themes are noted below.

Streamlining Internal Practices:

- Stephanie Walsh Matthews, Director of Quality Assurance at TMU noted that her experiences on the Quality Council's Appraisal Committee informed some of the efforts to develop a streamlined internal practice for TMU's Senate sub-committee's review of quality assurance material.
- TMU's initiative focuses on efficiency, accountability, transparency, and collegiality in curriculum review processes. The goal is to build continuous program review into all forms of curriculum renewal.
- A structured approach using Google Drive assigns specific tasks to committee members, allowing efficient meetings with rigorous discussions.

Distribution of Tasks:

- The panelists outlined the enhanced process for sub-committee members' review of curriculum modifications/proposals, which places an emphasis on fairness in workload distribution and flexibility for temporary relief.
- Revised templates for committee members' review encourages a focus on policy adherence rather than personal opinion.
- These templates align with institutional curriculum review processes and generate data for decision-making.
- At TMU, the internal review of curriculum proposals occurs before external review, ensuring readiness for Senate approval.
- The review templates serve as an educational component to help familiarize faculty with the institution's standards and procedures.

Culture of Continuous Review:

- TMU's new system for linking documentation and processes across cycles helps avoid disjointed reviews.
- The process streamlines bureaucratic elements to allow for purposeful engagement rather than rushing through the review process.

Additional resources – These are available via the following links:

- [Smart Systems for Curriculum Review: ASCOR-Shareable](#)
- *Recording, presentation slides, and Breakout Group Padlet available here:* [2023 Key Contact Meeting – June 23, 2023 – QA Key Contact Forums \(oucqa.ca\)](#)

Some related observations from the first and second cycle of audits:

- In several audits, universities were commended for the effective training provided to new members of quality assurance sub-committees. One university in particular was commended for using a “buddy system” to pair a newer sub-committee member with a member with more experience.
- Relatedly, auditors recognized several universities for considering turnover and succession in planning the membership of their quality assurance subcommittees effectively to ensure that turnover is steady and that there are always experienced members to help guide novices.

Plenary 2: Embedding Indigenization into QA

Panelists included Lana Ray, Indigenous Research Chair in Decolonial Futures; Director, Anishinaabe Kendaasiwin Institute (AKI) and Associate Professor, Lakehead University, Donna Rogers, Former Vice President Academic and Research, Algoma University, Dominic Beaudry, Associate Vice-President, Academic and Indigenous Programs, Laurentian University, and Caroline Langill, Provost, OCAD U. The panelists provided an overview of key strategies for ensuring that quality assurance processes incorporate Indigenous knowledge and worldviews. A Q and A session followed the panelists’ presentation.

Key takeaways from the panelists’ presentation and the breakout groups’ discussions are outlined below.

Understanding Indigenous Knowledge and Worldview:

- Panelists emphasized the importance of ensuring that all staff understand Indigenous knowledge and worldview to effectively integrate them into strategic plans, operations, and academic plans.
- This includes educating faculty and support staff about Indigenous worldviews, including reviewing Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs) and Degree Level Expectations (DLEs) to ensure inclusivity.
- Strategic directions related to Indigenization are also often connected with strategic goals related to sustainability, access, and innovation in teaching and learning.
- The panelists from Algoma University reminded the group that Anishnaabe people have always had their own quality assurance process, and that synergies between the two processes exist.

Governance:

- The panelists highlighted the key role of governance in Indigenization, including Indigenous Advisory Councils and similar advisory bodies, which are represented at Senate.

- At OCAD U, the Indigenous Education Council has an external and internal co-chair, and functions as both an advisory and a decision-making body.

QA Processes:

- The CPR process for Indigenous programs has been an important source of feedback and development.
 - The speaker from OCAD U noted that the committee should be composed of Indigenous reviewers/faculty members; reviews of Indigenous programs have operated as a circle and resulted in a more directive implementation plan than other programs.
- OCAD U has revised its DLEs to incorporate indigenous knowledge and worldviews -- this ensures Indigeneity will be threaded through curriculum development and renewal.
- The panelists from Algoma University described a framework for indigenizing quality assurance across all sectors of the university, including academic programs, governance, human resources, and procurement.
 - The framework encompasses standards related to celebration and sharing of Indigenous knowledge, honor and respect for Indigenous authorities, place and purpose in Indigenous education, and relationships with the land.
 - The development and implementation of the framework highlighted the importance of starting with Indigenous voices and ensuring that the project is community-led.

In breakout groups, Key Contacts reflected on following themes related to the panel presentation. Key takeaways from this discussion are summarized below, but more details are available on the session padlets.

Intersections of Quality Assurance Processes and Indigenization:

- Integrate indigeneity at all levels, including within manuals, review guides, and templates. Key contacts suggested that to effectively implement these measures, there is a need for provincial frameworks and directives, with a crucial requirement for broad consultation with relevant stakeholders to ensure inclusivity.
- In some institutions, the incorporation of evaluation criteria for indigenization in the IQAPs and academic change templates is underway.
- Key Contacts suggested that it might be helpful to make these considerations a mandatory requirement at the program level, ensuring they are explicit and integral to the programs, and not solely limited to institutional initiatives but also extending to directives from the Quality Council.

Opportunities and Challenges in Implementing Indigenous Quality Assurance

- Several universities have taken a proactive approach to Indigenous engagement by appointing Vice-Provosts with a specific focus on advocating for indigeneity in the implementation of IQAPs.
- Defining “quality” and “success” within the context of indigenization remains a key consideration.
- Key Contacts highlighted the importance of inviting Indigenous perspectives into the process, but with a simultaneous emphasis on not burdening Indigenous individuals with all the labor. The suggestion is to involve settler scholars in undertaking some tasks to ensure a more equitable distribution of responsibilities in the indigenization efforts. Student voices should also be prioritized.
- Key Contacts also noted that many institutions deal with significant challenges related to Indigenous representation, with Indigenous scholars and individuals being both underrepresented and overburdened with work.
- A notable obstacle is the insufficient buy-in from units not yet integrating Indigenous perspectives into their curriculum. The need for a foundational rather than an "add-on" approach to Indigenization was underscored.
- Resource limitations at many institutions pose another obstacle.
- Key Contacts expressed a hope that the Quality Council could play a role in coordinating indigenization efforts across the sector.

Additional resources – These are available via the following links:

- *Recording, presentation slides, and Breakout Group Padlet available here: [2023 Key Contact Meeting – June 23, 2023 – QA Key Contact Forums \(oucqa.ca\)](#)*

Session 2 a: Program Resources and Sustainability in the Context of New Program Proposals and CPRs

Sally Heath, Manager, Academic Program Development and Review, from Wilfrid Laurier University presented an overview of the institution’s current practices for helping units and other stakeholders understand the relationship between resource allocations and the development of new program proposals. The process is designed to ensure that units develop programs with sustainability in mind. An emphasis on data-driven decision making ensures that decisions about resource allocation are robust and transparent. Key themes are noted below.

Data Tools for Program Development

- OUAC data on applications, offers, and confirmations from other institutions are analyzed to understand market demand and student preferences. Lightcast is also used to provide enrolment and program completion data. Laurier also used Education

Advisory Board market insight and program feasibility studies to assess labour market outlook.

- Students are engaged through surveys and focus groups to gather feedback on new program ideas, ensuring alignment with their needs and interests
- Future labor market outlook for jobs related to proposed programming is evaluated to ensure relevance and demand.
- Job availability, average salaries, and concentration areas are assessed based on identified skills to inform program development and alignment with industry needs.

Robust Budgeting Process:

- The University undertakes a comprehensive examination of all drivers of costs and revenues related to program development.
- The budgeting process is inclusive, and involves the proposal authors, deans, and staff.
- New programs are resourced according to the budget as the program progresses and reaches enrollment targets.

Internal Monitoring Processes:

- Monitoring reports for new programs are written at the 2-3 year mark for all programs, with new undergraduate programs providing a second report at the 4-year mark.
- The University's goal is to approach the Monitoring Report as a friendly and non-threatening approach, with appreciative inquiry questions that focus on enrolment numbers, successes, challenges, initiatives, and student feedback.

Related observation from the first cycle of audits

- At one audit, the audit team noted as a best practice the collaborative nature of the university's monitoring process for the implementation of an Indigenous-centric program. In this particular case, the university's Indigenous advisory group, the Dean of the Faculty and other key players, including faculty and staff were involved with the monitoring process.

Additional resources – These are available via the following links:

- *Recording, presentation slides, and Breakout Group Padlet available here: [2023 Key Contact Meeting – June 23, 2023 – QA Key Contact Forums \(oucqa.ca\)](#)*

Session 2b – Innovative New Programs and the QAF

In this session, Jane Goodyer, Dean, and Richard Hornsey, Associate Dean, Lassonde School of Engineering at York University provided an overview of the development of a highly work-integrated new program from a quality assurance perspective. Key takeaways from the session are noted below.

Pushing the Boundaries of Work Integrated Learning

- The Digital Technologies program is a fully work-integrated program that is a combination of work and higher-level learning, developed in partnership with employers and universities.
- Students are employed and paid a salary through the duration of the program enabling work and learning to occur in a seamless environment through a blend of in-class, online and in the workplace experiences.
- Typically, students spend twenty per cent of their time in classes on campus with direct access to research faculty and resources. The rest of their time is spent in the workplace where academic learning is continually applied and integrated as they gain experience.

Operating Model

- In this four-year degree program, learners work full-time with the same employer.
- The program is delivered in a “block” model where learners attend an intensive 5 days on campus every 6-7 weeks and continues through fall, winter, and summer terms.
- The program follows a team-based approach to student learning with a variety of key roles beyond the traditional instructor / teaching assistant model.
 - A faculty member course instructor is responsible for designing and/or delivering a course and providing academic oversight of students' achievement of course learning outcomes.
 - A Learning Coordinator, also a faculty member, facilitates alignment of students' workplace learning with course learning outcomes and works with a Professional Skills Coach (university staff) to oversee workplace learning evidence collection in an e-portfolio, advises course instructors on e-portfolio elements and allocation of workplace learning evidence for credits.
 - The Professional Skills Coach (university staff) acts as a liaison between the academic program and the workplace learning, collaborating with the employer and acting as a resource for the student.
 - The Personal Workplace Coach (an industry employee) oversees the student in the workplace and participates in the student's assessment through the ePortfolio system.

Assessment

- Assessment in the program relies on clearly defined learning outcomes. These form the basis for suitable learning opportunities in the workplace. While course directors are responsible for assessing student learning, employers are expected to offer opportunities for students to achieve specified outcomes through assigned work.
- Students hold the responsibility of documenting their achievement of these outcomes, with personal tutors providing substantial support to keep them on track.

- The collaboration with employers necessitates innovative course delivery models, with specific courses spanning the full academic year.

Additional resources – These are available via the following links:

- *Recording, presentation slides, and Breakout Group Padlet available here: [2023 Key Contact Meeting – June 23, 2023 – QA Key Contact Forums \(oucqqa.ca\)](https://oucqqa.ca/2023-Key-Contact-Meeting-June-23-2023-QA-Key-Contact-Forums)*

What's next?

The Quality Council will continue to hold virtual Exchange Forums throughout the year, in addition to the annual QA Key Contact meeting. In the coming years, the focus of the Exchange Forums will shift in part to showcasing Best Practice Case Studies – brief presentations from Key Contacts about practices that have been identified by the Quality Council or its Committees as Best Practices. These will be in addition to discussions about key issues, as they arise, and time to connect with your colleagues.

Thank you

Many thanks to the members of the QA Key Contact Exchange Forum Program Planning Committee and the QA Key Contact Meeting Program Planning Committee, as well as to David Wagschal, the volunteer moderator of the Key Contact Discussion Forums.

Program Planning Committee for the Key Contact Exchange Forums

Rubaiyat Arjumand, Teaching and Learning Coordinator, Queen's University

Penny Kollar, IQAP Administrator, University of Windsor

Christina Noja, Manager, Office of the Vice-Provost and Associate Vice President, Carleton University

Martee Storms, Executive Assistant to the Provost and Vice-President Academic and Research, Nipissing University

Program Planning Committee for the Key Contact Annual Meeting

Jovan Groen, Director of Academic Quality and Enhancement, Western University

Sally Heath, Manager, Academic Program Development and Review, Wilfrid Laurier University

Brittany Paat, Academic Support Officer, Algoma University

Alyssa Voigt, Manager, Curriculum and Academic QA, University of Guelph