

Reflecting on the Resilience
and Strengths of the
Quality Assurance System

ANNUAL REPORT 2024-2025



ONTARIO UNIVERSITIES
COUNCIL on QUALITY ASSURANCE



24/25



Contents

03

A Message from the
Chair of the Quality
Council

04

A Message from the
Executive Director

05

The Year in
Review

17

Appendix 1:
Program Data

20

Appendix 2:
Membership of the
Quality Council
and its Committees
in 2024-25

Continuity and Change in the Quality Council

A Message from the Chair of the Quality Council



IN THE SUMMER 2017, and only a day after I retired from Queen's University, Daniel Woolf, the Principal at Queen's at the time, called me to ask that I get in touch with Paul Gooch. I did so, and Paul invited me to meet him for lunch. We met soon thereafter, and not for the first time was I reminded of the economists' maxim that there's no such thing as a free lunch.

Paul Gooch was at the time (and until very recently) the Chair of the Ontario Universities' Council on Quality Assurance, henceforth the Quality Council. In this capacity, he asked me to consider taking on the role of Senior Director of the Council. Paul assured me that the appointment would be an interim one, and, after some initial hesitation, I agreed to serve in this capacity.

Not very long after my appointment, discussion of a review of the Quality Council began. I was involved in the very early stages of the review, but my successor, Ian Orchard, who took over from me as Senior Director in September 2018, was much more heavily involved, as were others, most notably Cindy Robinson, and, of course, Paul. The outcome of the review was essentially the structure of the Council today, one that is resilient and functions well, and rigorously, even in times of constraints.

In the spring of 2024, Paul again invited me to lunch. He had by now been the Council's Chair for nine years, and he felt it was time for a new Chair. In an earlier conversation, I had already made it clear that I was not interested in serving as Paul's replacement on an ongoing basis. I did though agree to serve for two years.

As it turns out, the Council is once again to undergo a review of what is now a much more mature Council. Notwithstanding its maturity, and not wishing to rest on its laurels, a review is appropriate, and this time the Council will be assessed by comparison with quality assurance standards in other countries besides Canada. In this context, the review will seek input from the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE).

I shall once again be involved only in the early stages of the review but my successor, Moira McPherson, who begins her term as Chair on July 1, 2026, is eminently

well qualified for the position. Moira, who will serve as Chair Designate from January 1, 2026, is currently the Co-Chair of the Campus Alberta Quality Council (CAQC), and has served as a member of CAQC since early 2023. She also served two terms on the Quality Council from 2010-2016. Moira's leadership, and the support of Chris Evans, Cindy Robinson and the other Council staff, will ensure an unequivocally positive evolution of the Quality Council over the years to come.

Before closing, I want to welcome the Council's newest member, Dr. Ashok Mathur of OCAD University. I also want to acknowledge the hard work of Dr. Malcolm Butler of St. Mary's University, Dr. Alice Hovorka of York University, Dr. Michael Khan of Trent University, and Dr. Susan McCahan of the University of Toronto, all of whom are concluding their terms as Quality Council members.

Finally, it is important that we remember the role played by those who serve on the Council's committees. In particular, we thank Dr. Serge Desmarais, Dr. Sarah McKinnon and Dr. Sharon Regan, all of whom have completed their terms on the Audit Committee, and we welcome two new members, Dr. Greg Finn of Brock University, and Dr. Mary Wilson of Wilfrid Laurier University. Last, but certainly not least, Dr. Kristy Holmes of Lakehead University is a new member of the Council's Appraisal Committee.

Alan Harrison

Chair, Ontario Universities
Council on Quality Assurance

Adapting with Integrity: Program Innovation and Accountability in Ontario's Universities

A Message from the Executive Director



POLITICS, ECONOMICS, TECHNOLOGY and societal norms are in a state of flux, globally and within Ontario. Far from being ivory towers insulating themselves from the fray, Ontario's universities are actively grappling with these challenges. A primary reason for doing so is their mandate to deliver excellent, relevant and high-quality educational opportunities to their students for the betterment of society. The information presented in this Annual Report demonstrates this engagement quite clearly.

The creation of new undergraduate and graduate programming is a staple of quality assurance activity in Ontario: as it should be. As the needs and expectations of society change, so too must the types of programs offered by universities. This year is no exception with nearly 50 new programs approved in areas such as health and wellness, technology (including artificial intelligence) and professional education. In addition, existing programs must evolve to remain vital and meaningful in changing times. The universities' response to this imperative is clearly seen in the over 600 major modifications to existing programs reported by Ontario institutions in this reporting year. It is also true that, in some cases, academic programs have a natural lifecycle and may close when that closure is deemed to be appropriate. In this reporting year, approximately 40 programs closed across the province. Often, the impetus for program change and evolution comes from the robust process of program self-assessment, which is at the core of the cyclical review protocol.

All of these quality assurance processes – new program development and review and modification of existing programs – are governed by a robust set of standards and requirements described in the Quality Assurance Framework. The expectations of the Framework are articulated at the local level through each institution's Institutional Quality Assurance Processes (IQAP). The institutional quality assurance audits currently underway – and described in more detail in this report – are designed to ensure the approaches used for quality assurance at each university are also reflected

upon and modified, if needed. The virtue of the cyclical audit – which compares the stated processes of quality assurance as described in the IQAPs to the actual practice of quality assurance observed in a selection of real quality assurance activities – is that it provides the opportunity for the Quality Council to observe the entire quality assurance system in action and to offer advice on course correction when necessary.

At the heart of all this activity is the Quality Assurance Framework that all Ontario universities have agreed to abide by. In the same spirit of transparency and continuous improvement that universities adhere to, the Framework is also subject to review every eight years. The second review of the Framework is just getting underway at the time of writing this Annual Report. For this second review of the Framework, the Quality Council has decided to engage with the International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education. This decision reflects a maturation in the quality assurance system in Ontario such that the time has come for the Framework and the Quality Council to be assessed by comparison with quality assurance standards in other countries besides Canada.

To close, I'd like to paraphrase a statement made recently by Prof. Nasser H. Paydar, President of the Council for Higher Education Accreditation. Quality assurance is the promise behind every degree that it meets an accepted standard of quality, that students receive an excellent education and that society as a whole can trust institutions to deliver on their educational mandate with transparency and integrity. These are values that our system in Ontario adheres to and they are more important than ever at this moment in time.

Chris Evans

Executive Director, Ontario Universities
Council on Quality Assurance

2024-2025

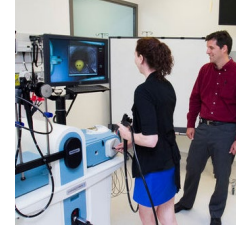
The Year in Review





In the 2024–2025 academic year, Ontario universities continued to navigate a rapidly evolving higher education landscape, shaped by ongoing financial uncertainty and the growing influence of generative artificial intelligence. Amid these factors, universities maintain robust internal quality assurance processes that are essential for sustaining high academic standards and accountability. When combined with the external oversight provided by the Quality Council and its Committees, these processes form a rigorous, multi-layered quality assurance system. This coordinated approach not only assures the quality of academic programs but also drives continuous improvement, ensuring programs remain relevant, effective, and responsive to evolving needs. This is vital to ensure society’s ongoing trust in university education, especially in turbulent times.





Over the past year, institutions continued to develop new programs to meet the changing academic and societal landscape. Trends in new program approvals demonstrated a strong focus on meeting emerging labor market needs and advancing interdisciplinary expertise. Across institutions, there was a clear emphasis on technology-driven fields—such as cybersecurity, data science, business analytics, biomedical engineering, artificial intelligence, and mechatronics—indicating an effort to prepare graduates for industries shaped by digital transformation and automation. Alongside these, programs in engineering management, climate risk assessment, and analytics demonstrate a priority on equipping students with applied decision-making and leadership skills for complex, evolving environments. A parallel trend was the expansion of new programs in health and of specialized pathways in health, social impact, and cultural studies, highlighting universities' commitment to societal well-being and equity. Graduate diplomas and degrees in nursing, global surgery, food policy, clinical trials, primary healthcare, and kinesiology illustrated a concerted effort to strengthen healthcare systems and address societal needs.

Cyclical Program Reviews continued as an opportunity for academic programs to assess their current state and seek expert review in the spirit of continuous improvement; and universities continued to use major modifications to revitalize and reimagine existing academic programs within the changing landscape of Ontario's society and economy.

The Cyclical Audits continued with three carried out in the past year: the University of Windsor, the Royal Military College of Canada, and Nipissing University. The audits recognize the strengths that exist with universities' approaches to quality assurance and are identified through the audit reports to be shared across the sector. The audits also recognize areas to be strengthened to further solidify institutional practices and maintain the resilience of the collegial quality assurance system.

All of these components – new program development, cyclical program reviews, major modifications and cyclical audits – work together to provide a robust and transparent quality assurance system within Ontario universities.

New Program Approvals

In 2024-25, the Quality Council's Appraisal Committee carefully reviewed and approved 48 proposals for new programs. To support the timely review and approval of new programs to ensure Ontario's students remain at the forefront of emerging disciplines and fields of study, the Quality Council and Appraisal Committee meet frequently (each met 11 times in 2024-25).

The new program approvals over the past year seem to reflect a strategy to align new offerings with Ontario's evolving labour market and global trends. With 48 new programs approved, this year reflects a moderate increase from the previous two years, which each saw 43 approvals. This upward shift signals renewed institutional momentum in the face of ongoing economic constraints. Although the total number of programs approved does not surpass the peak of 2021–2022, which saw 63 approvals, it significantly exceeds the pandemic-era low of 2020–2021, when only 36 programs were approved. A full list of the new program approvals can be found in [Appendix 1](#).





**Preparing Graduates for a Changing World:
Trends in New Program Approvals**

Universities are investing in broad-access undergraduate programs while maintaining steady growth in professional Master’s offerings – programs that are designed to meet evolving workforce demands through applied, career-oriented education. In contrast, the restrained expansion at the doctoral and graduate diploma levels may reflect resource limitations or a strategic focus on programs with quicker implementation timelines and broader appeal.

As seen in past years, technology and innovation-oriented programs continue to be areas of significant growth with approvals for programs in Artificial Intelligence (Trent), Cybersecurity (Carleton, Ontario Tech and Toronto Metropolitan), and Mechatronics (Carleton, Guelph and York). These programs seem to reflect a sustained investment in the STEM-related fields.

A broader institutional recognition of the societal need for new programs in the area of health and wellness was also seen over the past year with new nursing degree programs being created by Carleton and Ontario Tech. McMaster received approval for a new graduate diploma in Global Surgery and York for a graduate diploma in Primary Healthcare Nurse Practitioner. Finally, a BSc in Paramedicine at Wilfrid Laurier was also approved.



Kinesiology and Sport Management emerged as another area of growth in 2024–2025. This cluster includes Brock University’s Master of Science in Kinesiology (MSc), Master of Sport Management (MSM), and Master of Arts in Sport Management (MA), as well as the University of Toronto’s Master of Sport Sciences (MSS) and Master of Kinesiology (MKin). The development of such programs reflects a growing institutional and societal interest in the intersections of health, performance, and management. The dual emphasis on both the scientific and managerial dimensions of sport and physical education suggests a strategic response to rising demand for evidence-based approaches to physical health and athletic performance, as well as the expansion of career pathways in sport administration, fitness entrepreneurship, and rehabilitation sciences.

The approval of programs like Multidisciplinary Studies (Honours BA) and Educational Studies (PhD) at Wilfrid Laurier University, as well as the Major in Analytics and Decision Sciences (BA) at Western University and the University of Ottawa for its new BA Honours program in Leadership, Ecology and Equity, reflects a trend of cross-disciplinary education tailored to diverse learner profiles.

Taken together, the 2024–2025 program approvals reflect an ongoing commitment to meeting provincial economic demands and responding to growing social interest in specific academic fields. The expansion of programs in technology, health and professional education signals a forward-looking approach to addressing the needs of emerging cyber and technological sectors and preparing well-equipped professionals for a rapidly evolving workforce.

For details on all the new programs approved by the Quality Council in 2024-25, please visit our website, [here](#), where you will find program descriptions submitted by the universities.

Ensuring Quality in New Program Approvals: Appraisal Committee Report and a Look Forward

Message from the Chair of the Appraisal Committee

I AM PLEASED to report that our Committee continues to review new program submissions under the 2021 QAF requirements. The Appraisal Committee benefits from the members' diverse disciplinary backgrounds and their extensive expertise in program development and quality assurance. This past year, we welcomed a new member with a background in Visual Arts to the Appraisal Committee, which I believe may be the first time the Appraisal Committee has included someone with this background. It is important to emphasize that our role is not to serve as disciplinary specialists, but rather to evaluate the sufficiency of the External Reviewers' Report, the quality and feasibility of the recommendations for program enhancement, and the adequacy of the internal responses to them. Nevertheless, the Committee benefits from having a range of diverse perspectives when considering the universities' new program submissions. The Committee also pays particular attention to the methods proposed for assessing teaching and learning within each program's structure, recognizing these as essential to ensuring meaningful and ongoing program improvement.

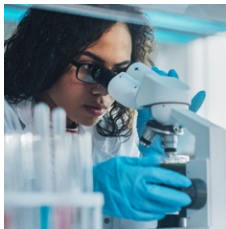
To further strengthen this area, a dedicated working group focused specifically on teaching and learning was established, with members drawn from the Appraisal Committee, the Audit Committee and the Secretariat. This group is in the process of reviewing and refining the guidance related to teaching and learning expectations, as well as reviewing new examples of good practice. These resources will support both institutions and reviewers in ensuring that teaching and learning assessment is rigorous, transparent, and aligned with the QAF's commitment to continual program renewal and improvement.

The Appraisal Committee met virtually for all meetings except for two in-person meetings in November and April to review procedures and discuss

important trends in new programs and quality assurance. These in-person sessions provide valuable opportunities to ensure consistency among reviewers, to discuss emerging trends across program submissions, and to identify areas where additional clarity in the guidelines or expectations may be required. Such exchanges enrich the Committee's collective understanding and contribute to the fairness and reliability of the appraisal process. Of note, at our April meeting the Appraisal Committee spent considerable time reflecting on issues related to the Protocol for New Program Approvals. Such considerations will be helpful given the review of the Quality Assurance Framework next year. Lastly, the Committee participated in the Key Contact Annual Meeting on June 6, 2025, contributing to a session focused on new program approvals.

This year, all new program proposals were submitted using the revised 2021 QAF. Of note, the number of proposals reviewed this year was up from the previous two years (see Appendix 1, Table 1) with the increase reflecting a greater number of undergraduate proposals. The variety of new program submissions (see Appendix 1, Table 2) highlights the continued ingenuity of Ontario universities in meeting the demand of students for high-quality programs that will prepare them for future careers. New programs approved in the last year focus on cutting-edge trends in different sectors reflecting a changing world, with new programs in cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, big data, and the environment. As is typical, a number of new professional and accredited programs were approved. As always, I am continually impressed by the creativity and resourcefulness of new program development in Ontario universities, as they rise to the challenge of operating in a rapidly changing world.

Pam Bryden
Wilfrid Laurier University



The aim of Brock’s Faculty of Applied Health Sciences was to formalize two degree pathways at the Department level that had been long-standing streams in a Faculty-based Masters program. Because the curriculum and learning outcomes of these streams were already well established and subject to regular review with a goal of continuous improvement, a review process that negated the need for a separate external review was an extremely good fit for the re-branding of these streams as new Department-based programs. The Expedited Approval Process of the IQAP achieved our goals efficiently, while maintaining meaningful oversight of our teaching and learning assessments and program objectives.”

Brian Power, Vice-Provost and Associate Vice-President, Academic

Employing Aspects of the Quality Assurance Framework Process – Expedited Approvals

A new element incorporated in the 2021 Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) is related to the use of the Protocol for Expedited Approval for new standalone degree programs arising from a long-standing field in a master’s or doctoral program that has undergone at least two Cyclical Program Reviews and has had at least two graduating cohorts. This evolution in the Protocol for Expedited Approval provides universities with a nimbler approach to new program development for a specific scope of new programs and can allow for more timely approval because an external review is not required.

This past year the Appraisal Committee saw the first submissions of this type with two proposals from Brock University. Through the use of its new program proposal template, the University provided a comprehensive outline of each new program and addressed how the specialization would be realized as a standalone program including an in-depth description of the assessment of teaching and learning. By providing this level of information, the Appraisal Committee could conduct a thorough review and feel confident that a rigorous approach was taken by the University to develop the programs in the absence of external review. These proposals illustrate how universities are finding innovative ways to meet the demands for changing programs while still adhering to the requirements of the Framework.





Cyclical Program Reviews and Continuous Improvement

Cyclical Program Reviews – the Role of Self-study to Enhance Continuous Improvement

Cyclical Program Reviews are a cornerstone of quality assurance in post-secondary education and play a critical role in the continuous improvement of academic programs. As required by the Quality Assurance Framework, academic programs are expected to undergo a Cyclical Program Review at least once every eight years. This structured process provides academic units with the opportunity for rigorous self-assessment, informed by stakeholder input and aligned with institutional and sector-wide expectations, combined with expert, external perspective in order to identify recommendations for continuous program improvement.

At the core of the review is the self-study—a reflective, evidence-based document that captures the current state of a program, highlights achievements, identifies challenges, and proposes forward-looking enhancements. The self-study document provides the background information to allow an external review team to provide an arm's-length evaluation, and develop recommendations that inform decision-making at both the unit and institutional levels, leading to targeted, sustainable improvements.

Self-study templates across Ontario institutions reveal characteristics that can be considered in addition to the requirements of the Quality Assurance Framework. These include:

- A clear snapshot of the program and its evolution.
- A balanced account of accomplishments and areas for growth.
- A reflective and self-critical lens.
- Broad stakeholder engagement across faculty, students, staff, and alumni.
- An evidence-based approach grounded in data and outcomes.
- A clear, action-oriented framework for change.

Audit findings to date underscore the centrality of the effective use of data in shaping the narrative of the self-study and as a tool to allow universities to look forward at the potential of the program. It is evident that institutions continue to refine self-study templates to streamline the process, enhance usability, and ensure that data are effectively leveraged to illustrate key aspects of program quality. Using both the characteristics above and the requirements of the Framework, the self-study is not merely a compliance exercise, but also a process that can allow the unit to think about the potential directions of the program and seek expert external advice on those directions.

With an honest and reflective self-study, external reviewers can develop a strong foundational understanding of the program that can be used to guide their discussions during the program review site visit, with the ultimate goal of developing useful and realistic recommendations on how the program can move forward. Following the external review, the unit has both its own reflections and ideas in the self-study, along with the external reviewer's report, all of which are then synthesized into the Final Assessment Report and Implementation Plan. The Final Assessment Report and Implementation Plan should then be used together by units as strategic tools for institutional accountability and academic renewal.

When executed effectively, the cyclical review process drives continuous improvement, enhances transparency, and supports informed decisions—contributing to the overall credibility and excellence of the post-secondary system.

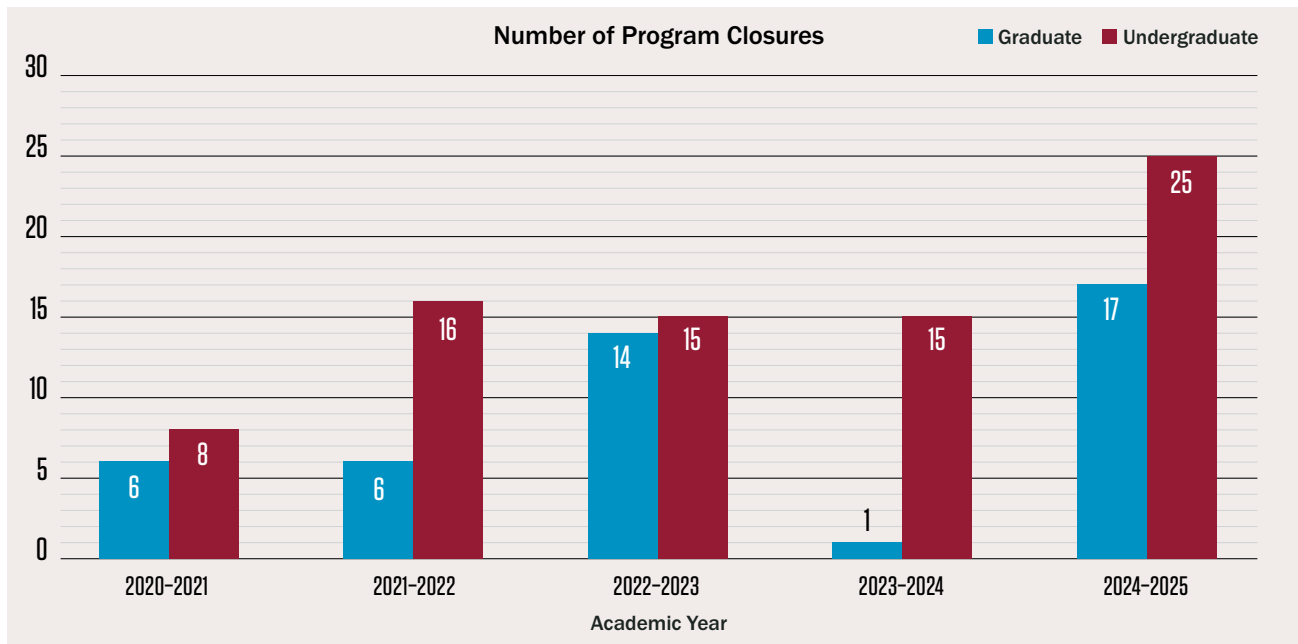


Figure 1

Major Modifications

The Protocol for Major Modifications provides universities with the opportunity to revitalize program curriculum and adapt to changes in the higher education landscape, when the changes are considered less than what would be the threshold for a new program. Each university is responsible for managing its own process for major modifications, ensuring the process fits its unique mandate, culture, and needs. While the specifics may vary, all institutions follow a formal, collegial process with an annual report on major modifications submitted to the Quality Council.

In 2024-2025, universities reported 637 major modifications. Just over 400 of those modifications were applied to undergraduate programs while the remaining modifications were applied to graduate level programs. Approximately 18 percent of the modifications reported involved adding a minor or specialization, honours, option, concentration, or stream indicating how universities are adapting current programs to hone students’ knowledge in specific areas that may be emerging. Six percent of the modifications related to adding a work-integrated learning component, demonstrating the importance of opportunities for students to apply

the knowledge and skills they develop in a program in a supported, supervised professional setting. Universities also continue to refine mode of delivery of programs to best support students’ learning and access, which was reflected in five percent of the reported modifications.

There was a notable increase in program closures reported by universities this past year. Program closures demonstrate the health of a quality assurance system, as program closures may reflect a response to evolution of a discipline, for example. Figure 1 illustrates the last five years’ data on program closures. As seen in the Cyclical Audits and in discussions of the Key Contacts, universities continue to consider how best to evaluate program health moving forward.

Building Resilience: The Role of Audits in Sustaining Quality Assurance

Message from the Chair of the Audit Committee

IT IS MY PLEASURE to present the Chair's Report summarizing the activities and accomplishments of the Audit Committee for the 2024–2025 academic year. This year has been marked by robust engagement with institutional audits, strategic planning for future audit cycles, and collaborative efforts to refine the Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) and audit processes.

Committee Activities and Engagements

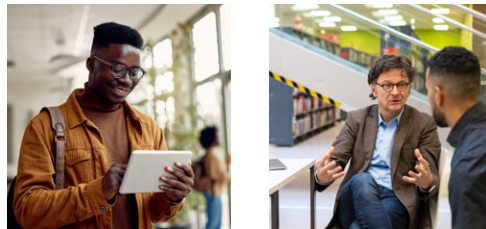
The Audit Committee met regularly throughout the year, both virtually and in-person, to review audit reports, discuss policy updates, and provide strategic guidance. Briefly, and in chronological order, the Committee welcomed the new Chair of the Quality Council and reviewed the Carleton University Audit Report in September 2024. In October 2024, a full-day in-person session focused on audit processes, trends in findings across cycles, and reflections from lead writers of audit reports. Topics of discussion included the structure of quality assurance offices, monitoring processes following CPRs, and the role of FARs and IPs. A working group was formed to develop a survey on institutional quality assurance support structures, and feedback from institutions was reviewed to improve audit documentation and guidance. In December 2024, the Committee reviewed Phase 1 Follow-up Reports for Brock University and the University of Ottawa, noting progress and recommending further evaluation during their Phase 2 audits. From February to April 2025, the Committee monitored audits in progress, including those at the University of Windsor, the Royal Military College, and Nipissing University. An early draft of the Institutional Quality Assurance Processes (IQAP) from Université de l'Ontario français was reviewed, and Dr. Bettina West was appointed to the Audit Executive Committee. In June 2025, the Committee approved the Audit Report for the University of Windsor. The Audit Executive Committee discussed

future audit cycles and improvements to documentation processes.

The Audit Executive Committee played a key role in supporting new members and onboarding, developing a flowchart to guide universities in assembling the packages of program documentation submitted for audit, clarifying documentation requirements for selected quality assurance activities, and planning for the next cycle of audits. The Committee also reviewed action items from the October in-person meeting and coordinated implementation timelines.

The Committee participated in the Key Contact Annual Meeting on June 6, 2025, contributing to a session focused on Cycle 2 audits. Feedback from institutions was reviewed to improve audit documentation and guidance. A working group was formed to explore how universities can use audit outcomes for continuous improvement.

Douglas McDougall,
University of Toronto



Maintenance of the Quality Assurance System

The Second Cycle of Audits

The Audit Protocol provides universities with a structured opportunity to evaluate and strengthen quality assurance policies and practices. Led by the Quality Council's Audit Committee, the Cyclical Audit and the resulting audit reports highlight strengths, identify areas for improvement, and offer observations on the continuous improvement of institutional practices.

The Cycle 2 audits continued in 2024-2025 with the University of Windsor, the Royal Military College of Canada and Nipissing University. Through each of these Cyclical Audits, commendable practices were identified. An example of one such practice arose at Nipissing University where the Institutional Planning and Analysis Office has developed a living data dashboard that provides academic units with up-to-date and accurate data for quality assurance processes, as well as data-informed decision-making for continuous improvement. In an effort of sharing good practice, Key Contacts are reminded to review the [2023-2024 Key Contact Annual Report](#), which includes a summary of the presentation provided by Nipissing University last year describing the data dashboard.

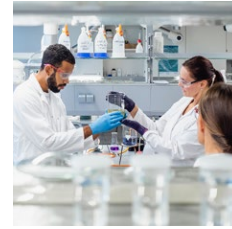
In support of new program proposal development, the University of Windsor was commended for its New Program Steering Committee (NPSC) which includes the Associate Vice-President Academic (Chair), and representatives from the University Secretariat, the Registrar's Office, the Center for Teaching and Learning, and Student Accounts. The NPSC provides structured support for groups developing a new program proposal and offers substantive, meaningful feedback to the group making the proposal. The NPSC can also identify difficulties the proposal may face going forward. The NPSC brings a holistic view to the table and minimizes siloed thinking to help identify potential issues (academic, administrative, financial, or procedural) early in the process, reducing the risk of setbacks later. This

type of collaboration early on in the process adds resilience to quality assurance by embedding collaboration, early intervention, cross-functional insight, and structured support into the program development process.

In terms of general trends in the audit findings to date, there continues to be limited formal monitoring processes in place for both new programs and Cyclical Program Reviews. Monitoring of new programs is required by the Quality Assurance Framework to carefully evaluate the program's success in realizing its objectives, requirements and outcomes, as originally proposed and approved, as well as any changes that have occurred in the interim. Through the monitoring of a new program, there is also the opportunity to identify aspects of the program that may not be working as designed and may inform the self-study during the program's first cyclical review. Monitoring of actions resulting from the Cyclical Program Review is also an essential step to ensure there is follow-up and accountability within the program to continue moving the program forward. Universities are required to have formal processes for both of these monitoring aspects, with the monitoring of actions resulting from a CPR to be posted on institutional websites.

Universities are also continuing to consider how best to track quality assurance decisions and processes. It is evident through the audits that even with the unique structures of quality assurance across institutions, document management and tracking of the documentation continues to be a work in progress. Universities continue to seek a balance between tracking essential steps for transparency in the quality assurance processes and meeting the requirements of a cyclical audit without it becoming too burdensome.

Lastly, a handful of findings from the audits this past year have focused on universities efforts to refine their approaches to Cyclical Program Reviews. Given the importance of the cyclical review process, findings related to addressing all of the evaluation criteria, developing strategies for the division of responsibilities in preparing the self-study and considering ways to incorporate the



student perspective were identified, as were opportunities to introduce efficiencies by identifying steps the universities have introduced that are over and above those required by the QAF.

Two universities, Brock University and the University of Ottawa, also completed the one-year follow-up report in response to their Phase 1 Audit Reports in 2022-2023. It is evident through both of these reports that the universities are taking important and comprehensive steps to respond to the audit findings and to further develop their quality assurance processes.

As required in the 2021 QAF, the Audit Reports and one-year follow up reports can be found on our website, [here](#).

At Queen's, the Audit Report created momentum to strengthen our quality assurance processes. The Vice-Provost, Teaching and Learning and the Vice-Provost and Dean, School of Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs met with each Dean to discuss the findings and their implications. We also developed an implementation plan to address the report's recommendations and suggestions, helping to guide actions across our office and the Faculties. The audit directly shaped revisions to our cyclical program reviews, such as streamlining the Self-Study process and introducing measures for units significantly delayed in their reviews. It also prompted changes to our new program proposal process, shifting from a lengthier pre-approval review to a single meeting where proposals receive early feedback. Each of these changes was communicated as a direct response to the audit, helping demonstrate the value of quality assurance to the broader university community.

Dr. Gavan Watson, Vice-Provost,
Teaching and Learning

Clearer Boundaries on Thresholds of Change

Following discussions between the Audit Committee and Key Contacts during an Exchange Forum in 2023-2024, a working group was established. The goals of the Working Group included suggesting revisions to the Quality Assurance Framework's Guidance related to thresholds of change, including the boundaries of minor modifications and major modifications, and identifying alternative ways of sharing information amongst the Key Contacts. The Working Group met several times in 2024-2025 and proposed revisions to the Guidance to the Audit Committee in early 2025. The revisions were subsequently recommended for approval to the Quality Council, approved by the Quality Council and circulated to Key Contacts shortly after. The Working Group also developed a tip sheet for universities' use that includes things to consider when assessing the threshold of change. This tip sheet can be found on the [OUCQA website](#).

2025 Retreat of the Quality Council

In May 2025, members of the Quality Council participated in a focused retreat to discuss topics including the outcomes of the Final Assessment Report and Implementation Plan pilot project and the upcoming review of the Quality Assurance Framework. The pilot project emerged from the Quality Council's 2023 retreat, and was aimed at strengthening the Council's focus on providing formative feedback during its review of Final Assessment Reports and Implementation Plans. By emphasizing formative feedback, the Council can help universities improve their processes and identify potential issues, giving Key Contacts time to address them before a cyclical audit. Council members had a lively and fruitful discussion on both topics, including the feedback gathered from Key Contacts. Following the retreat, a finalized approach to the pilot project was communicated to Key Contacts as well as the initial steps for the upcoming review of the Framework.



Upcoming Review of the Quality Assurance Framework

Principle 6 of the Quality Assurance Framework mandates a periodic independent review at least once every eight years. The second such review will take place in 2025-26. The Quality Council has selected the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) to facilitate this review. The Council is looking forward to the opportunity of an external assessment on the Quality Assurance Framework and the way the Quality Council and its committees carry out their work.

Building Community

Key Contacts

The Quality Council and Key Contacts are actively strengthening the quality assurance community through ongoing collaboration. They foster connection and knowledge-sharing via institutional quality assurance orientations, dynamic Key Contact Exchange Forums, and the annual gathering of Key Contacts. Themes and topics for the Key Contact Exchange Forums and Annual Meeting typically come from areas identified by the sector as well as findings from the Cyclical Audits. This year there were two virtual Key Contact Exchange Forums, focused on Accreditation Reviews and Cyclical Program Reviews, and comparative approaches in developing and submitting Final Assessment Reports (FARs) and Implementation Plans (IPs).

The Annual Meeting included a full day of hybrid meetings on June 6, 2025, connecting Key Contacts on relevant topics including: engaging students as partners in quality assurance activities, quality assurance initiatives and approaches in an era of financial constraints, determining the viability and sustainability of proposed new programs as well as experiences with Cycle 2 audits, and experiences of the Appraisal Committee with new program submissions.

The findings of the Exchange Forums and Annual Meeting can be found in this year's [Key Contacts' Annual Report](#).

Learning Outcomes Symposium

The 2024 Learning Outcomes Symposium was held October 30, 2024 at the Chelsea Hotel, downtown Toronto. The Symposium featured the overarching theme “A Path to System Transformation”, and invited attendees to rethink the development and assessment of learning outcomes in the context of large-scale forces for system change including anti-racism, reconciliation, technological advances and lifelong learning. The Symposium offered two plenary panels, 15 concurrent sessions and a closing keynote speaker.

Looking ahead to Fall 2026, the Quality Assurance Secretariat continues to play a key role in the planning and realization of the Learning Outcomes Symposium. The symposium gathers scholars and practitioners from fields focused on the development and assessment of learning outcomes to exchange research, share best practices, and discuss innovative ideas.

The Program Planning Committee for the Symposium consists of representatives from universities, colleges, Indigenous Institutes, and partner agencies including the Indigenous Advanced Education & Skills Council, the Ontario Council on Articulation and Transfer, the Postsecondary Education Quality Assessment Board, the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario, and the Ontario College Quality Assurance Service. The Committee is excited to announce the Call for Proposals for the 2026 Learning Outcomes Symposium, which will be released in Fall 2025. Readers are encouraged to remain up to date on all Symposium details on our website [here](#).

Appendix 1: Program Data

TABLE 1 NEW PROGRAMS APPROVED, BY DEGREE TYPE

	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
2023 - 2024	16	19	4	4	43
2024 - 2025	22	19	3	4	48

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

TABLE 2 LIST OF NEW PROGRAMS APPROVED, 2024-25, BY UNIVERSITY

University and Program	Degree
ALGOMA UNIVERSITY	
Master of Global Business and Economy	MGBE
Master of Science in Business Analytics	MSc
Master of Science in Computer Science	MScCOSC
BROCK UNIVERSITY	
Master of Arts in Sport Management	MA
Master of Sport Management	MSM
Master of Professional Education	MPEd
Master of Arts in Health and Physical Education	MA
Master of Science in Kinesiology	MSc

Continued on next page

TABLE 2 LIST OF NEW PROGRAMS APPROVED, 2024–25, BY UNIVERSITY (CONTINUED)

University and Program	Degree
CARLETON UNIVERSITY	
Bachelor of Accounting	BAcc
Bachelor of Cybersecurity	BCyber
Bachelor of Data Science	BDS
Bachelor of Arts, General Studies	BA
Clinical Trials and Regulatory Affairs	MSc
Nursing	BScN
Mechatronics	BEng
McMASTER UNIVERSITY	
Global Surgery: Surgical Care Systems and Health Equity	GDip (Type 3)
ONTARIO TECH UNIVERSITY	
Sociology, Technology and Innovation	BA
Cybersecurity	PhD
Master of Social Media Communication on Online Creators	MSMC
Educational Psychology	BA Honours
Bachelor of Science in Nursing (Hons) Second Entry	BScN
TORONTO METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY	
Master of Cybersecurity	MC
TRENT UNIVERSITY	
Accounting and Economics	BA Honours
Master of Arts Management	MAMgt
Artificial Intelligence	BA Honours and BSc Honours
UNIVERSITY OF GUELPH	
Bachelor of Engineering in Mechatronics Engineering	BEng
Master of Engineering Management	MEM
Master of Animal Biosciences	MABS
UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA	
Leadership, Ecology and Equity - Saint Paul University	BA Honours
Graduate Diploma in Food Policy and Regulatory Affairs	GDip (Type 3)
Master of Translation / Master of Translation (Co-Op Option)	MTr

TABLE 2 LIST OF NEW PROGRAMS APPROVED, 2024–25, BY UNIVERSITY (CONTINUED)

University and Program	Degree
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO	
Master of Sport Sciences	MSS
Master of Kinesiology	MKin
Major in Film Studies	HBA
Major in Climate Change Studies	HBA
UNIVERSITY OF WATERLOO	
Biomedical Engineering	MASc and PhD
UNIVERSITY OF WINDSOR	
Graduate Diploma in University Teaching	GDip (Type 2)
WESTERN UNIVERSITY	
Master of Climate Risk Assessment and Opportunity	MCR
Major in Black Studies	BA
Major in Analytics and Decision Sciences	BA
WILFRID LAURIER UNIVERSITY	
Educational Studies	PhD
Multidisciplinary Studies	Honours BA
Paramedicine	BSc
Bachelor of Engineering in Software Engineering	BEng Honours
YORK UNIVERSITY	
Primary Healthcare Nurse Practitioner	GDip (Type 3)
Bachelor of Engineering in Mechatronics	BEng

Appendix 2: Membership of the Quality Council and its Committees in 2024-25

Members of the Quality Council, 2024-25

Dr. Alan Harrison, Chair

Dr. Malcolm Butler, Member / Out-of-Province Quality Assurance Expert

Dr. Alice Hovorka, Member / Undergraduate Dean Representative, York University

Ms. Shirley Hoy, Citizen Member

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

Dr. Ashok Mathur, Member / Graduate Dean Representative, Ontario College of Art and Design University

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

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

Ms. Brittany Paat, Member / University Representative, Algoma University

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

Dr. Pamela Bryden, 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, 2024-25

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

Dr. Maureen Connolly, Faculty of Applied Health Sciences, Brock University

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

Dr. Kristy Holmes, Department of Visual Arts, Lakehead University

Dr. Andre Phillion, Materials Science and Engineering, McMaster University

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

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

Dr. Kamran Siddiqui, Department of Mechanical and Materials Engineering, Western University

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

Members of the Audit Committee, 2024-25

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

Dr. Johanne B nard, 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. Greg Finn, Department of Earth Sciences, Brock University

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

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

Dr. Catherine Nolan, Faculty of Music,
Western University

Dr. Alice Pitt, Faculty of Education, York
University

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

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

Dr. Mary Wilson, Faculty of Education,
Wilfrid Laurier University

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

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

Members of the Audit Executive Committee, 2024-25

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. Sarah McKinnon (Member-at-large),
Department of Art History, Ontario
College of Art and Design 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, 2024-25

Dr. Christopher Evans, Executive
Director

Cindy Robinson, Director Operations

Shevanthi Dissanayake, Coordinator

Alexander Kostin, Senior Quality
Assurance Officer (Appraisals)

Brittany McFarlane, Senior Quality
Assurance Officer (Audits)

Ontario Universities Council
on Quality Assurance

www.oucqa.ca



ONTARIO UNIVERSITIES
COUNCIL on QUALITY ASSURANCE