



ONTARIO UNIVERSITIES
COUNCIL on QUALITY ASSURANCE

**SUMMARY OF THE PRINCIPAL
FINDINGS OF THE QUALITY
ASSURANCE AUDIT OF
LAURENTIAN UNIVERSITY**

SEPTEMBER 2018

Summary of the Principal Findings of the Quality Assurance Audit of Laurentian University

September 2018

Laurentian University is one of three universities to be audited in the sixth year of the first cycle of quality assurance audits under the Quality Assurance Framework (QAF). The primary objective of a quality assurance audit is to determine if the institution has complied with the parameters of its Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP), as ratified by the Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance (the Quality Council), in the practices it follows with respect to new programs proposals, cyclical program reviews and major modifications to existing programs. The audits are conducted by three members of the Quality Council Audit Panel, supported by Quality Council staff. Appropriate steps are always to ensure that the selected auditors are at arm's length from the institution being audited.

As appropriate, an audit report includes

- causes for concern, when the auditors identify potential structural weaknesses in quality assurance practices;
- recommendations, when the auditors identify failures to comply with the IQAP or misalignments between the IQAP and the Quality Assurance Framework;
- suggestions, when the auditors identify opportunities for the institution to strengthen its quality assurance practices.

The audit itself, which included a review of Laurentian University's IQAP (ratified by the Quality Council in 2011), focused on a sample of nine programs by the auditors, specifically:

New Programs:

- Forensic Identification, BFI
- Indigenous Relations, MIR

Cyclical Program Reviews:

- Chemistry/Biochemistry, BSc
- Études françaises, BA
- History, MA
- Music, BA
- Rural and Northern Health, PhD

Major Modifications:

- Specialization in Data Analytics, BSc
- Spécialisation en psychologie et majeure en études interdisciplinaires (Université de Hearst), BA spéc.

A desk audit of documents for each program preceded a three-day site visit, which took place from November 15 to 17, 2017. During the site visit, auditors met with faculty, staff, and

students associated with the programs selected for audit, as well as with senior academic administrators. Following the site visit, the auditors prepared the audit report, which identifies one Cause for Concern, and makes nine recommendations and five suggestions.

The Cause for Concern requires the University to ensure program-level learning outcomes are established for all programs at Laurentian. Through a variety of means, the auditors determined that program-level learning outcomes are not yet the critical foundation of quality assurance at the University that they need to be. Instead, the focus of attention has been predominantly course-level learning outcomes. For this reason, the University must enhance the processes associated with developing, documenting and assessing program-level learning outcomes for all existing programs.

The first two recommendations in the report address the overall quality assurance processes at Laurentian. The next four are concerned specifically with aspects of the process for cyclical program reviews at the University. These recommendations are followed by two that relate to processes for both new program proposals and cyclical program reviews. The final recommendation addresses issues regarding the process for major modifications to existing programs. The recommendations are:

1. Implement a better tracking tool in order to retain complete and accurate documentation for each step of all quality assurance.
2. Ensure that there are explicit sign-off protocols indicating that the self-study and New Program Proposal are complete and address all of the elements, including all evaluation criteria, required by the University's IQAP.
3. Ensure that the Schedule of Reviews includes all programs listed under the University's jurisdiction, regardless of where the program is actually offered.
4. Ensure that every program offered by Laurentian University is reviewed at least once every eight years and that the Schedule of Reviews is consistent with this requirement. Should there be any deviation from this Schedule of Reviews, the reasons must be clearly documented and recorded for reference.
5. Ensure that faculty, staff and students are engaged in preparing the CPR self-study and record the extent of their involvement and contributions in the Introduction of the self-study.
6. Ensure that the processes for distributing the Final Assessment Report (FAR) and the Implementation Plan (IP) within the University community (administrators, faculty, staff and students) are followed in all respects. (QAF 4.2.6 a)
7. Ensure that there are separate internal responses to external reviews from the academic unit *and* the relevant Dean in New Program Proposals and cyclical program reviews. (QAF 2.2.8 and 4.2.4 f)
8. Implement a process for dealing with external reports that do not meet the requirements of the IQAP.

9. Amend the IQAP (Appendix B, page 25-26) to clarify the processes for, and the distinctions between, New Program Approvals and major modifications. The clarification should include the distinction between the two processes as well as detailed steps for introducing or phasing out major modifications and monitoring and follow-up mechanisms.

There are five suggestions, which are listed below. The first two are concerned with overall quality assurance process, and the remaining three address the cyclical program review process.

1. Develop a policy for how new programs, cyclical program reviews and major modifications offered at all affiliated and federated partner institutions and colleges are listed and advertised in University and college publications and/or posted on websites.
2. Revise the IQAP in order to include more detail about the nomination and review process of potential external reviewers for cyclical program reviews and New Program Proposals, with particular emphasis on clearer exposition of arm's length status requirements.
3. Provide more detail in the section of the self-study on "Participation of faculty, staff and students in the self-study" (Appendix D, page 35) by describing the roles of all those involved, and ask that the self-study document clearly the comprehensive nature of faculty, student and staff involvement.
4. Provide orientation sessions for internal reviewers (faculty and students) participating in the External Review Committee in order to apprise them of their roles and responsibilities in the cyclical program review process and within the broader context of quality assurance practice at the University.
5. Design a workshop or seminars on program learning outcomes and their connections to evaluation criteria for the Cyclical Program Review Committee (CPRC) and the wider University community.

In addition the report identified a number of aspects of Laurentian's quality assurance processes that are examples of best practice. Specifically, the auditors were impressed with the extensive consultation that occurred during the various stages of the quality assurance processes, not only within Laurentian but also with all relevant stakeholders, and with the workings of CELP/CFLP and ACAPLAN/COPA, notably the dedication of the groups' members, and the methods they employed to review packages of materials.

In summary, Laurentian University shows strong evidence of valuing the quality assurance process, and is already working on improving current practices. The auditors are confident that this will be done earnestly. The recommendations and suggestions proposed in this report are aimed at assisting in that effort.