SUMMARY OF THE PRINCIPAL FINDINGS OF THE QUALITY ASSURANCE AUDIT OF
THE UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

SEPTEMBER 2017

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Quality Assurance Audit of the University of Toronto

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The University of Toronto is one of three universities to be audited in the fifth year of the first cycle of quality assurance audits under the Quality Assurance Framework (QAF). The primary objective of the audit is to determine whether or not the institution has complied with the parameters of its Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP) for cyclical program reviews and the development of new programs, as ratified by the Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance (the Quality Council). Three arm's-length members of the Quality Council Audit Panel conducted the audit, with assistance throughout the process from Quality Council staff.

The audit itself included a review of two new programs, five cyclical program reviews, one expedited approval and two major modifications. The programs audited fell under both Toronto's original UTQAP (April 2011) and its later revised version (September 2012). The site visit, based on the documents provided, took place on February 6-8, 2017. At the site visit, the auditors met with a significant number of senior administrators, as well as those faculty members, staff and students involved in the quality assurance process, and also the departmental representatives of the programs being audited.

The audit team was impressed at the hospitality and high level of organization of the site visit itinerary, and would like to express their thanks to all of those involved in preparing for the audit. It is very clear that the University of Toronto has embraced quality assurance to maintain the high standards of their programs, and there is active engagement by people at every level of the institution.

The audit focused on the following programs:

Cyclical Program Reviews

- Biomedical Communication, MScBMC – University of Toronto Mississauga (UTM) and St. George Campus
- Journalism, HBA: Specialist – UTSC joint with Centennial College
- Linguistics, HBA: Specialist, Major, Minor – St. George Campus, and MA and PhD – Tri-campus
- Pharmacy, BScPhm – St. George Campus
- Physics, HBSc: Specialist, Major, Minor, -- St. George Campus and MSc and PhD – Tri-campus

New Programs

- Environmental Studies, HBA: Major– University of Toronto Scarborough (UTSC)
- Financial Risk Management, MFRM – St. George Campus

Expedited Approval

- Musculoskeletal Science, Collaborative program – St. George Campus

Major Modifications

- Environmental Geosciences, HBSc: Specialist – UTM
- Quantitative Analysis, HBSc: Specialist and Specialist Co-op – UTSC

The audit report makes 11 recommendations. Of these, three relate to areas for general improvement in the overall work of quality assurance; two pertain to both New Program Proposals and Cyclical Program Reviews; five focus on the Cyclical Program Reviews alone; and one applies directly to New Program Proposals. Together, they are designed to improve the tracking and retention of documentation, the completeness of the processes, the transparency of all processes, the full engagement of faculty, students and staff in these activities, and the communication of quality assurance activity in the University.

The six suggestions that follow these recommendations point to areas in the quality assurance processes that may be enhanced, clarified, or made more self-evident. Suggestions, such as those regarding the selection process for Commissioning Officers or nomination processes for external reviewers, are presented to improve or clarify some existing processes so that they may be followed easily and consistently. Suggestion 1 asks the University to consider removing some non-essential portions of the UTQAP to streamline this core document. Suggestions 4 and 5 can help to encourage and demonstrate the full involvement of all those in units involved with New Program Proposals or the development of self-studies in Cyclical Program Reviews. Taken as a group, these suggestions are designed to build on the current strong commitment to quality assurance.

The desk audit and the information gained through the site visit demonstrated a significant dedication to the often complex and demanding work of developing quality programs, providing an excellent student learning experience, and maintaining the engagement of faculty, staff, and students in a large-scale educational environment. Even those concerned with the demanding labour involved in producing self-studies for Cyclical Program Reviews stated that the work was useful in self-assessment, and in creating a path forward for the programs and the departments. The auditors' meeting with the students was also very positive. Most of the students had been directly involved in at least one of the quality assurance processes, and all were eager to know about the larger implications of having a systematic approach to the evaluation and improvement of the quality of programs and of students' learning experience. They were a lively group who

asked very relevant questions and were open in setting out their experiences with their programs.

It is also important to note the auditors' meeting with the members of the Committee on Academic Policy and Programs. The Committee, consisting of faculty, students, and staff representing a variety of ranks, disciplines, and Faculties, talked extensively of the evolution and improvement of the practices for reviewing the materials it received. In addition, they talked very positively of the ways in which the work of this Committee broadened their understanding of the variety of programs offered across the University.

During the site visit, the auditors heard consistent praise for the senior team managing the quality assurance process. The dedication and hard work of the Vice-President and Provost, the Vice-Provost, Academic Programs, and the Director, Academic Programs, Planning and Quality Assurance, were appreciated by all. The auditors repeatedly heard very positive comments from those interviewed commending the support given by these individuals. It is clear that senior administrators have provided important leadership in the development of quality assurance at the University of Toronto.

Recommendations

The University of Toronto must:

Recommendation 1: Retain complete and accurate documentation for each stage of all quality assurance processes.

Recommendation 2: Ensure that all the required criteria are addressed in each self-study and New Program Proposal.

Recommendation 3: Formalize sign-off protocols to document verification of completeness of self-studies, New Program Proposals, and external appraisals and review reports.

Recommendation 4: Modify the UTQAP to make explicit how the progress on Implementation Plans for Cyclical Program Reviews is monitored and how new programs are monitored as they are put in place, as per QAF 4.2.6 c) and QAF 2.4.3.

Recommendation 5: Revise the UTQAP to indicate that distinct internal responses to external reviews are required from both the academic unit and the relevant Dean in New Program Proposals and Cyclical Program Reviews. (QAF 2.2.8. and 4.2.4 f)

Recommendation 6: Ensure that every program is reviewed at least once every eight years.

Recommendation 7: Ensure that when multiple programs are reviewed at once, the quality of each academic program must be addressed explicitly as set out in the evaluation criteria.

Recommendation 8: Revise the UTQAP to ensure that institutional peers (in this case the Committee on Academic Policy and Programs) review and assess the self-studies, the reviewers' reports, and the responses to them so as to satisfy QAF 4.2.5 a.

Recommendation 9: Move the writing and review of the Final Assessment Report and Implementation Plan for Cyclical Program Reviews to an earlier stage in the quality assurance process.

Recommendation 10: Revise the UTQAP to specify the processes for distributing the Final Assessment Report and the Implementation Plan within the University. (QAF 4.2.6. a)

Recommendation 11: Amend the UTQAP 2.4.5 related to external appraisal reports for new programs to include specific reference to the evaluation criteria, consistent with QAF 2.1.

Suggestions

The University of Toronto should:

Suggestion 1: Consider removing the section in the UTQAP about the Quality Council and its Appraisal Committee (much of 2.5 and 2.6).

Suggestion 2: Identify the selection process for and the responsibilities of the Commissioning Officer in reviews of interdivisional and interinstitutional programs.

Suggestion 3: Consider including in the UTQAP more detail surrounding the nomination process of external reviewers for Cyclical Program Reviews and New Program Proposals. (QAF 4.2.4)

Suggestion 4: Consider implementing a process for dealing with external reports that do not meet the requirements of the UTQAP.

Suggestion 5: Consider developing a protocol to involve academic units in responses to the Quality Council's Appraisal Committee concerning New Program Proposals and ensure that this involvement is documented.

Suggestion 6: Ensure that the section of the self-study on "Participation in the self-study process" be more detailed in describing the roles of all those involved in the construction of the self-study to document clearly the full involvement of faculty, students, and staff.