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

OCTOBER 2018

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The University of Guelph 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 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 three new programs, four cyclical program reviews, one expedited approval and one major modification. The programs audited fell under both Guelph's original 2011 IQAP and its later revised version (2015). The site visit, based on the documents provided, took place on February 12-14, 2018. 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 Guelph 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

- Chemistry (MSc/PhD), Joint with Waterloo
- Classical Studies (BA)
- Doctor of Veterinary Medicine (DVM)
- Family Relations and Applied Nutrition (MAN/MSc)

New Program Approvals

- Bioinformatics (PhD)
- Management (MA)
- Neuroscience (BSc)

Expedited Approval

- Tourism Studies (GDip Type 1)

Major Modification

- Plant Agriculture, MSc/PhD

The University of Guelph has made a number of significant changes to their quality assurance processes in the past 18-months and as a result some of the processes do not, as yet, align with the IQAP. The recommendations and suggestions listed below are based on the desk audit programs and as a result are often based on processes that are now in evolution.

The audit report makes 12 recommendations. Three concern areas for general improvement in the overall work of quality assurance; four recommendations focus on the Cyclical Program Reviews alone; two apply specifically to the use of accreditation processes as a substitution for CPR processes; one pertains to both New Program Proposals and Cyclical Program Reviews 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, improve the alignment between the practice, the IQAP and the QAF.

The 10 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 the ones related to reports, tracking, timelines and templates, are presented to improve or clarify some existing processes so that they may be followed easily and consistently. Suggestions 5 and 10 are to encourage the full engagement of faculty, students and staff in these activities, and the communication of quality assurance activity in the University. Suggestions 2 and 4 encourage the University to complete changes that have already been started. 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. The auditors' meeting with the students was very positive. 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 Senate Committee on Quality Assurance. The Committee, consisting of faculty, students, and staff representing a variety of ranks, disciplines, and Faculties, described the processing

of quality assurance steps with an emphasis on CPR processing. This included a discussion of how the handling of the FARs and the IPs is evolving.

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 Associate Vice-President (Academic), Assistant Vice-President (Graduate Studies), and the Director of Academic Programs and Policy, 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 Guelph.

Recommendations

The University of Guelph must:

RECOMMENDATION 1: Ensure that all steps of the relevant quality assurance process are fully documented.

RECOMMENDATION 2: Ensure that every program is reviewed at least once every eight years.

RECOMMENDATION 3: Revise the IQAP to align the responsibilities and activities of institutional quality assurance authorities with the actual university practices.

RECOMMENDATION 4: Revise the description of the Internal Review Subcommittee (IRS) to match practice.

RECOMMENDATION 5: Revise the description of the FAR in the IQAP to be consistent with the requirements of the QAF (4.2.5 b) and align Quality Assurance practices with this description.

RECOMMENDATION 6: Introduce an Implementation Plan that aligns with the requirements of the Quality Assurance Framework as part of its Cyclical Program Review process.

RECOMMENDATION 7: If CPRs and New Program Proposal reviews are combined, the University must ensure that each is evaluated separately and with full attention to all of the relevant evaluation criteria and process steps in each case.

RECOMMENDATION 8: Ensure that there is an approval process and documentation for the replacement of any steps or elements of the IQAP with those specified by an accreditation process.

RECOMMENDATION 9: Ensure each step or element of the IQAP replaced with one specified by an accreditation process is fully consistent with the comparable QAF step or element.

RECOMMENDATION 10: Revise the IQAP language of the evaluation criteria for the self-study for a Cyclical Program Review to align with Section 4.3 of the Quality Assurance Framework.

RECOMMENDATION 11: Augment the IQAP to articulate the manner in which new program implementation will be monitored.

RECOMMENDATION 12: Program level learning outcomes must be defined for all graduate programs.

Suggestions

The University of Guelph should:

SUGGESTION 1: Carefully consider how it is going to reconcile the demands, procedures and outcomes of a unit review versus a program review as part of its quality assurance processes.

SUGGESTION 2: Include quality assurance processes in the development and review of joint programs.

SUGGESTION 3: Continue to improve the accessibility and impact of University level data for use in quality assurance activities.

SUGGESTION 4: Enhance the specification of the role of SCQA in the QA process.

SUGGESTION 5: Put a protocol in place for dealing with Reviewers' Reports and Assessment Reports that are incomplete and/or do not satisfactorily address all of the evaluation criteria for a review.

SUGGESTION 6: Develop a sign-off / tracking system that is shared with relevant stakeholders.

SUGGESTION 7: Encourage the university to develop a set of timelines or timeline guidelines to support quality assurance.

SUGGESTION 8: Develop a comprehensive suite of templates for all components of the quality assurance activities that align with the QAF.

SUGGESTION 9: Create a new Quality Assurance website as a central repository for all QA material.

SUGGESTION 10: Consider adding a flow chart to the IQAP description of the CPR process.