

**ONTARIO UNIVERSITIES COUNCIL ON
QUALITY ASSURANCE**

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**Pre-Audit Orientation and Briefing
University of Windsor: Session 2**

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**ONTARIO UNIVERSITIES
COUNCIL on QUALITY ASSURANCE**



Outline of Presentation

- The Quality Council and its Committees
- Key elements of the Quality Assurance Framework
- The Audit Process
- Roles and Responsibilities
- Questions / discussion



Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance (Quality Council)

- The [Quality Council](#) is the provincial body responsible for:
 - Assuring the quality of all programs leading to degrees and graduate diplomas; and
 - Overseeing the cyclical audit of each university's quality assurance processes



Quality Council, continued

- First created in 2010
- Is at arm's length from both universities and government
- Two committees of Quality Council:
 - **Appraisal Committee**: reviews all new program proposals, expedited approval proposals (no external review), reports on new programs and occasionally, proposals for major modifications to existing programs; and
 - **Audit Committee**: conducts quality assurance audits, reviews audit reports and institutional follow-up reports resulting from audits of each university on an eight year cycle



Quality Council, continued

- **Receives:**
 - Recommendations from Appraisal and Audit Committees
 - QC can (and does) request Committee to reconsider a recommendation
 - Reports on outcome of reviews of existing programs (Final Assessment Reports and Implementation Plans)
 - Annual Reports on Major Modifications to existing programs
 - QA-related requests from universities
 - Other QA-related business



Quality Assurance Framework

- The [Framework](#) is the guiding document for all quality assurance activities for Ontario's 24 publicly assisted universities (now including the Royal Military College of Canada, Université de Hearst, Northern Ontario School of Medicine University, and Université de l'Ontario français)
- Includes:
 - New and continuing undergraduate degree and graduate degree and diploma programs
 - Programs offered in partnership/affiliated with other universities/colleges at all locations (including international) and in all modes of delivery
 - Programs offered at full cost recovery fees
- Excludes:
 - Undergraduate certificate or diploma programs or micro-credentials, although the University must state how these are quality assured internally



Quality Assurance Framework, continued

- First approved in April 2010
- Reviewed in 2018; revised version approved in February 2021
- Each university must have a QC ratified Institutional Quality Assurance Processes (IQAP), which must minimally meet QAF standards
- Every IQAP includes protocols for:
 - New program approvals
 - Expedited approvals
 - Major modifications to existing programs
 - Cyclical review of existing programs
- All IQAPs were initially ratified by Quality Council in 2011 and are currently being revised to align with revisions to QAF
- IQAPs are revised periodically by universities and re-ratified by Quality Council



Cyclical Audit: Purpose

- Assesses degree to which your internally-defined processes/procedures and practices align with / satisfy the internationally-defined QA requirements set out in the QAF
 - Opportunity for institutional self-reflection (via Institutional Self-study)
 - External accountability to PSE stakeholders:
 - Universities (individually and collectively, as a system)
 - Students (and their parents)
 - Government
 - Employers
 - Public



The Audit Committee

- Normally 12 - 15 members
- Three-year term, renewable
- Nominated by Provosts, appointed by QC
- Faculty members with administrative experience, especially in graduate and undergraduate areas, but not current Administrators
- Typically, an auditor will participate in one audit per year
- Typically, three auditors per team
- <https://oucqa.ca/the-quality-council/audit-panel-committee/>



Cyclical Audit Overview

- Areas for particular focus / in-depth consideration may be included, normally when:
 - Areas of best practice have been observed
 - Areas needing improvement have been identified
- Areas of particular focus identified through / by:
 - Previous audit
 - Quality Council
 - The university



The Audit Process: Cycle 2





The Audit Process, continued

- Eight-year cycle (just beginning second [Cycle of Audits](#))
- Two to three universities audited each year
- Primary purpose:
 - Accountability to students, faculty, and the broader community
 - Compliance with IQAP (practice against policy)
 - Audit of 7-8 programs representing different QA practices (new program approvals, cyclical program review process, on-going quality assurance processes etc.)
 - Documentation related to QA processes followed by 7-8 programs desk-audited for evidence that IQAP requirements were followed
 - Questions raised during desk audit form basis of site visit
 - Examples of best practice
- Does not attempt to re-examine program quality



Roles and Responsibilities

- **Audit Team**
 - **Whole team**
 - Select programs for audit
 - Participate in site visit
 - **Auditors**
 - Review material submitted for audit
 - Develop specific questions for site visit
 - Ask majority of questions during site visit
 - Write Audit Report
 - Review follow-up report(s), as required
 - **QA Secretariat**
 - Chair site visit meetings / take notes throughout visit
 - Guide University / auditors throughout process



Audit Site Visit

- University of Windsor's site visit will take place in late fall 2024 (date TBC)
- Normally three days, in person
- Purpose: gain full understanding of how institution applies its IQAP in practice
- Audit Team meets with:
 - Provost, President and senior QA team
 - Senate QA Committees
 - Deans
 - Students
 - Program representatives – Deans and other senior admin do not attend these meetings
 - Academic support services (library, Teaching & Learning Centres, etc.)
 - Etc.
- Seek answers to questions raised in Desk Audit of material submitted pre-audit



Participants in Site Visit Meetings

- Meetings with Program reps:
 - Helpful to include more than representative from the program in each meeting
 - Include past Chair/equivalent, especially if there has been turnover since the QA process in question was initiated
 - Include staff people, i.e., program coordinator or equivalent, where possible
 - No Deans/Senior admin
- Meetings with students:
 - Include students who have already had some experience with QA, i.e., student representatives on Senate/relevant committees.



Sample Site Visit Questions

To Senior Administrators:

The QAF aims to assist universities to create a culture of quality and continuous improvement, and for this to be a positive and constructive process. What is your experience here? Are members of the community embracing quality assurance in that way?

How do you handle external reviewers' reports that do not address all of the evaluation criteria in the IQAP? For example, if there is a lack of commentary on the appropriateness of the program learning outcomes and/or other evaluation criteria?



Sample Site Visit Questions, continued

To representatives from programs:

*Can you tell us a little about how this proposal was started?
Who initiated the new program and what processes were used to develop it?*

*Did you use a template to develop the program proposal?
What support was given to you as you developed this proposal?*

Can you tell us about the process used to develop the self-study? Do you recall what process was used to comment on and approve the self-study to ensure all of the required elements were included?



Sample Site Visit Questions, continued

To Deans:

Can you describe the Dean's role in quality assurance and in ensuring the continuous improvement of your Faculties' programs? What central supports are available to you and your units in undertaking your quality assurance work?

Can you tell us about the process you use when writing a response to the external reviewers' reports for new and/or cyclical program reviews?

To Internal Reviewers, where applicable:

What was the process used for selecting and appointing you as an internal reviewer?

For that group, some of the other questions will be aimed at getting a better sense of their role in practice, as well as their impressions of what's working/not, etc.



Sample Site Visit Questions, continued

To students:

The province's Framework for assuring the academic quality of the university's programs puts program level learning outcomes at the heart of our activities. Are you aware of your own program's learning outcomes? If so, do you think the ways in which you are assessed throughout your program will give the University a good sense of whether you are successfully achieving these learning outcomes?



The Audit Outcomes

■ Audit Report:

- Focuses on current policies and practices and the university's approach to continuous improvement
- Commentary on areas flagged for special consideration
- Identifies commendations and possible best practices
- Will include:
 - **Suggestions:** Not mandatory, used to identify areas for possible improvement and best practice (based on auditors' experience)
 - **Recommendations:** Mandatory; identified lack of compliance with IQAP or misalignment between IQAP and QAF
- May include:
 - **Cause(s) for Concern:** Identification of structural weaknesses in QA practices
- Posted on [Quality Council](#) and University websites



The Audit Outcomes, continued

- **Follow-up report**
 - One or more follow-up reports may be requested to provide an update on how the University is addressing Recommendations and/or Cause(s) for Concern
- **Focused Audit**
 - May be launched when significant issues are found
 - Deeper investigation into one particular aspect of the University's Quality Assurance practices
- **Identification of Best Practice**
 - Opportunity for universities to share Best Practices with other institutions



University of Windsor's Audit

- How can you get involved with QA activities at Windsor – Students:
 - Seek to be elected to your Senate's QA Committee
 - Participate in your program's next Cyclical Program Review
 - Input into creation of self-study (focus groups, surveys, etc.)
 - Meet with the external reviewers
 - Read your program's Final Assessment Report and Implementation Plan (outcome of the Cyclical Program Review, posted on University's website)
 - Volunteer to meet with the Audit Team during the site visit



University of Windsor's Audit, continued

- How can you get involved with QA activities at Windsor – Faculty/Staff members:
 - Get involved in your Senate QA Committee
 - Participate in your program's next Cyclical Program Review
 - Input into creation of self-study (program retreats, etc.)
 - Meet with the external reviewers
 - Read the Final Assessment Report and Implementation Plan from your program's last Cyclical Program Review (CPR)
 - Act as an Internal Reviewer for the review of another Windsor program (new or existing)



University of Windsor's Audit: Approximate Timeline

- **Now – December 2023:** University prepares initial documentation
- **January – February 2024:** Audit Team reviews the documentation, selects the 7-8 programs that will be the focus of the Audit, and requests documentation specific to those programs
- **February – July 2024:** University prepares documentation associated with programs selected for audit
- **July – August 2024:** Desk Audit of submitted documentation
- **November 2024:** Three-day site visit
- **November 2024 – January/February 2025:** Audit Team prepares the Audit Report
- **January/February – February/March 2025:** University fact-checks the Report
- **March / April 2025:** Audit Report is approved by the Quality Council and published online



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QUESTIONS?