ONTARIO UNIVERSITIES
COUNCIL on QUALITY ASSURANCE

SUMMARY OF THE PRINCIPAL FINDINGS OF THE QUALITY ASSURANCE AUDIT OF WILFRID LAURIER UNIVERSITY

AUGUST 2019

Summary of the Principal Findings of the
Quality Assurance Audit of Wilfrid Laurier University

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Wilfrid Laurier University is one of three universities to be audited in the seventh year of this first cycle of quality assurance audits under the Quality Assurance Framework (QAF). The primary objective of the 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), for the development of new programs, cyclical program reviews and major program modifications. 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 Wilfrid Laurier University's IQAP (the original version ratified by the Quality Assurance Council on June 21, 2011 and subsequent revisions were re-ratified by the Quality Council on November 15, 2012, March 13, 2014 and March 22, 2017) and focused on a sample of nine programs that have undergone the various processes included in the QAF. A desk audit of documents for each program preceded a three-day site visit, which took place from February 4 – 6, 2019. 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. It was clear to the auditors from the outset that the University has firmly embraced the quality assurance process and seeks to make improvements on an ongoing basis. The auditors left the site visit confident that the University's commitment to quality assurance—as it relates to teaching, learning, and research—is both deep and genuine.

The audit focused on the following programs:

- **New Programs**

    - Data Science, BSc
    - Game Design and Development, BFAA

- **Expedited Approval of New Program**

    - Spiritual Care and Psychotherapy, G Dip (Type 3)

- **Cyclical Program Reviews**

    - Global Governance, PhD
    - Health Studies, BA/BASc
    - Music Therapy, BMT/MMT
    - Psychology, BA/BSc/MA/MSc

- **Major Modifications**
  - o Archaeology and Classical Studies, BA
  - o Social and Environmental Justice, BA

The audit report makes seven recommendations. Two of the recommendations concern recordkeeping of all documentation, including monitoring final Cyclical Program Review recommendations. These are intended to ensure that Laurier has a record of the creation of the documentation and appropriate sign-off procedures at each stage of the quality assurance process. One recommendation is about revising the IQAP to clarify that distinct internal responses are required from both the academic unit and the relevant Dean. One recommendation concerns the requirement that students and staff be explicitly engaged in both the New Program and Cyclical Program Review processes. One recommendation concerns the Final Assessment Reports and the Implementation Plans: there are instances where there is no explanation for including or excluding reviewers' recommendations in these documents. One recommendation concerns the requirement that when multiple programs are reviewed concurrently, the quality of each must be addressed explicitly. Finally, one recommendation concerns the requirement that the articulation of learning outcome assessments must be addressed in each Cyclical Program Review self-study.

The audit report also includes five suggestions, which are offered to assist Wilfrid Laurier University in strengthening its demonstrated commitment to the quality assurance agenda. The suggestions refer to:

- Requiring that existing FAR and IP reports be provided to incoming Chairs and Deans so that continuous monitoring of previous reviews will occur as part of regular administrative oversight.

- Considering a review of the practices of the Program Review Sub-Committee in its determination of the FAR and IP reports to ensure consistency.

- Considering developing a formal tracking system for written documentation related to the quality assurance processes.

- Considering providing more detail and/or training for internal reviewers.

- Considering putting a protocol in place for dealing with reviewers' reports that are incomplete.

In addition to the recommendations and suggestions, the report identifies two aspects of Laurier's quality assurance process that are examples of best practice. These are: the templates and guidance material provided by the Quality Assurance Office for the quality assurance processes; and the well-designed and well-adhered to governance approval system for quality assurance, and in particular, the work of Program Review Sub-Committee, a sub-committee of the university's Senate Academic Planning Committee..

In conclusion, the audit of quality assurance at Wilfrid Laurier University has revealed a significant and on-going engagement with the goals and practices of the Quality Council. Reviews have been undertaken with rigour and attention to detail. Commitment and support from the senior administration has provided strong and helpful leadership for the campus community. The result is that there is a culture of understanding of and concern for quality across the institution. While several recommendations and suggestions have been provided by the auditors, their overall assessment is that policies and procedures at Laurier work well.

Recommendations

Wilfrid Laurier University must:

RECOMMENDATION 1: Ensure that the explanation for including or excluding external reviewers' recommendations for the FAR and IP is well documented.

RECOMMENDATION 2: Ensure that there is a clear and transparent system for implementing and monitoring CPR recommendations that are to be acted on.

RECOMMENDATION 3: Retain complete and accurate documentation for each stage of all quality assurance processes.

RECOMMENDATION 4: Ensure that the articulation of learning outcomes assessment are adequately addressed in each self-study for Cyclical Program Reviews.

RECOMMENDATION 5: Revise the relevant sections in Policy 2.1. and 2.2. of the University's IQAP to clarify 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 students and staff are explicitly engaged in specific ways in the process of New Program Proposals and Cyclical Program Reviews.

RECOMMENDATION 7: Ensure that when multiple programs are reviewed concurrently, the quality of each academic program is addressed explicitly, as set out in the evaluation criteria (QAF 4.2.2).

Suggestions

There are five suggestions, which are listed below.

Wilfrid Laurier University should:

SUGGESTION 1: Consider ensuring that the IP and subsequent monitoring reports be provided to incoming Chairs and Deans, with appropriate orientation added regarding this aspect of their role, to ensure continuity of action.

SUGGESTION 2: Consider reviewing the practices of the Program Review Sub-Committee in determining the appropriateness of the FAR and IP in order to ensure consistency of approach to the outcome of all CPRs.

SUGGESTION 3: Consider developing a sign-off element within the current tracking system for written documentation to ensure all sign-offs occur at each step of the relevant process.

SUGGESTION 4: Consider providing more detail and/or training on the role of the Internal Reviewer.

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