2022/23 QUALITY ASSURANCE PROCESS AUDIT
EMILY CARR UNIVERSITY OF ART + DESIGN

The Summary was prepared by the Degree Quality Assessment Board Secretariat using the Institutional Report, the Expert Panel Report, and the Response to the Expert Panel Report. The Emily Carr University of Art + Design was one of four post-secondary institutions to undertake the Quality Assurance Process Audit in 2022/23.

Introduction

The Terms of Reference for the Degree Quality Assessment Board establish that audits will be based on information provided by public post-secondary institutions to ensure that rigorous, ongoing program and institutional quality assessment processes have been implemented.

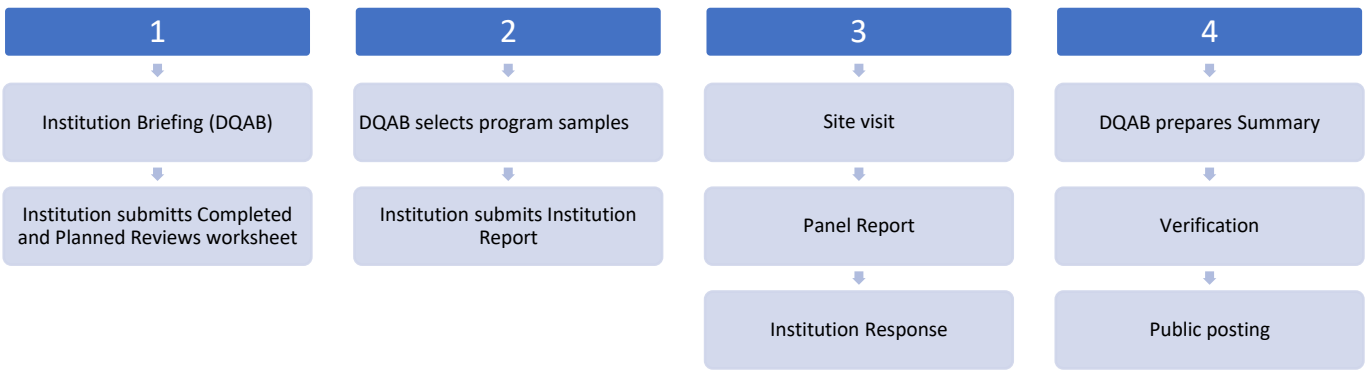
The main objectives of the quality assurance process audit (QAPA) are to ascertain that the institution:

a) Continues to meet the program review policy requirements outlined in the DQAB's *Exempt Status Criteria and Guidelines* and the *Degree Program Review Criteria and Guidelines,* as applicable to the institution;
b) Has and continues to meet appropriate program review processes and policies for all credential programs; and
c) Applies its quality assurance process in relation to those requirements and responds to review findings appropriately.

The QAPA assessment is focused on answering questions in two categories:

1. Overall process
    a. Does the process reflect the institution's mandate, mission, and values?
    b. Is the scope of the process appropriate?
    c. Are the guidelines differentiated and adaptable to respond to the needs and contexts of different units, e.g. faculties or departments or credential level?
    d. Does the process promote quality improvement?
2. Review findings
    a. Were the responses to the sample program review findings adequate?
    b. Does the process inform future decision making?
    c. Are the review findings appropriately disseminated?

Figure 1: QAPA Process



Emily Carr University of Art + Design – Institutional Context

Emily Carr University of Art + Design (ECU) is unique in British Columbia's post-secondary landscape as the only public university in the province dedicated solely to practice-based education in the fields of art, media and design. ECU is one of only four post-secondary institutions in Canada devoted to these creative fields, and in 2021 the University ranked first in Canada, ninth in North America, and thirtieth in the world for art and design education according to the QS World University Rankings.

ECU undergraduate and graduate degrees in Fine Arts, Media and Design differ from many degree programs at other BC post-secondary institutions in that they are built around a studio-based curriculum that centers creative experimentation and research: all ECU students in all degree (and most certificate) programs will complete anywhere from 60-80% of their coursework in small studio-based classes where hands-on work with material practices forms the core of their academic study. There are no programs that do not require this studio-based curriculum.

ECU is also unique in the province for being both one of the oldest post-secondary institutions and one of the newest universities. The institution was under the governance of the Vancouver School Board from its opening in 1925 until 1973; it was then moved under the governance structure of the newly independent Vancouver Community College until 1978. Though it became an independent Institute in 1995 under the province's *Colleges and Institutes Act*, the bicameral governance structure typical of the province's colleges and universities was not adopted until it became a university in 2008. Many of ECU's academic policies were not developed until that date.

This history continues to shape ECU's context. Not only is ECU relatively new to the quality assurance structures expected of a public university in the province, but it also negotiates legacies of its governance history that complicate this work, including faculty labour contracts developed under the Vancouver School Board that dictate a 5/5 course teaching load and a one-month professional development time to be taken at a set time in the academic calendar.

ECU is guided by the province's mandate letter, the Minister's Letter, and its last *Strategic Plan* (2017-2021). Under the strategic plan, ECU has engaged actively in the difficult and necessary work of decolonization and reconciliation with the Indigenous host nations in Vancouver, which has happened in parallel with its institutional commitment to anti-racism. ECU's recent EDI Action Plan outlines many steps and initiatives, large and small, that the University community has identified as essential to its ongoing growth and development.

Table 1: Student enrollment

	Undergraduate	Graduate
Full-time equivalent (FTE)	1,861	95

ECU is committed to robust and responsive quality assurance processes and views this audit process as an exciting opportunity to formalize current practices, bring them into alignment with provincial expectations, and improve accountability to its community.

Table 2: Program offerings

Credential Type	# of Programs
Bachelor's	3
Master's	3
Certificates	2

Institution Self-Study

The QAPA review was initiated with an institution briefing on May 5, 2022. The briefing was conducted virtually by video conference. The briefing provides an overview of the QAPA process and the documentation institutions are requested to submit. At its meeting on July 22, 2022, the Quality Assurance Audit Committee reviewed the Completed and Planned Review worksheet submitted by ECU and selected the following for sampling: Bachelor of Fine Arts; Bachelor of Media Arts; and Master of Design.

Self-Evaluation Approach

ECU's current program review processes and guidelines were introduced to the community in 2019, providing an update to the process that was used in the first round of program reviews in 2012-14. The goal of the self-evaluation for QAPA was to assess:

1. whether and how this relatively new approach to academic program review is effective in evaluating program curriculum, student experience, and graduate outcomes; and
2. whether it provided meaningful information and concrete steps for program areas to revise and further develop their programs.

To supplement the information provided in the Senate-approved program review guidelines, the quality assurance team felt it imperative to gather data from community members who had participated in program review under the new guidelines. This feedback will provide the foundation for future policy development work.

Membership of the institution's quality assurance team and their respective roles:

- VP Academic + Provost (QAPA Executive Lead): responsible for institutional quality assurance processes and liaising with DQAB, the Board, Senate and the President's Executive Council.
- Dean of Design and Dynamic Media: responsible for representing and consulting with the academic leadership team, including Deans and Associate/Assistant Deans.
- Manager, Operations + Analysis, Academic Affairs: responsible for gathering quantitative and historical data, conducting interviews and consultations, and drafting key sections of the report.
- Senior Advisor, Teaching and Learning: responsible for liaising with faculty and student communities, conducting consultations and interviews, presenting information sessions to the academic community, and drafting key sections of the report.
- Executive Assistant to VP Academic + Provost: responsible for administrative support, collecting documents, and scheduling consultation and information sessions.

From June – July 2022, the Quality Assurance Committee reviewed DQAB guidelines for program review and quality assurance in comparison with the Senate-approved guidelines provided to program review teams. At this stage, program review policies and processes at other BC institutions were also considered. From this work, questions were developed around ECU's program review process and a list of areas for improvement based on the analysis of other approaches to program review.

Beginning in August 2022 and continuing through October, the Committee engaged the academic community in consultations about quality assurance generally and the existing program review process in particular. A list of potential improvements to the process previously identified was reviewed at each consultation and teams were asked to prioritize or respond to them. The following Faculty review teams were consulted:

- Faculty of Graduate Studies: Master of Design
- Faculty of Art: BFA Visual Arts, BFA Illustration, BFA Photography, BMA New Media and Sound Arts
- Faculty of Graduate Studies: Master of Fine Arts
- Faculty of Design and Dynamic Media: BMA in Film and Screen Arts, BMA in 2D/3D Animation
- Faculty of Design and Dynamic Media: BDES in Communication Design, BDES in Interaction Design, BDES in Industrial Design

The Quality Assurance Committee offered information presentations at all scheduled Faculty meetings in the months of September and October to inform the ECU community about the audit process and to prepare them for the work that will emerge from this process. The committee also attended a meeting of the Students' Union to inform students about this audit work and to collect their perspectives on quality assurance at the University. Finally, the Committee presented key findings and information about the self-evaluation process at meetings of the following University committees: Senate; Academic Planning and Priorities; and Curriculum Planning and Review.

Quality Assurance Policy and Practices

Quality assurance processes at ECU emerged from its culture of practice-based art, media, and design context which prioritizes reflection, critical feedback and continual experimentation and innovation. ECU celebrates the ways in which these processes both reflect and transform its cultural practices and values. But ECU also recognizes through this audit that some aspects of its local institutional practices need to be brought into better alignment with the quality assurance expectations of a public post-secondary institution in British Columbia.

ECU has a newly introduced and Senate-approved program review process that has been used consistently for all program reviews beginning in 2020. The work in the years ahead will ensure that ECU's current institutional priorities, values and practices are reflected in the policies and resources that are developed to support and govern this work.

ECU's program review process builds upon the mechanisms already have in place to review and support faculty in their teaching and professional practice (research). Given their heavy teaching loads relative to all other post-secondary institutions in the province, ECU faculty

have managed to maintain extensive and internationally recognized research, professional and creative practices which inform the development and revision of curriculum in both formal and informal ways. The first core strategy of ECU's *Strategic Plan* calls for support for research and its integration into curriculum.

In the past three years, ECU has made considerable investments in improving teaching through the Teaching and Learning Centre. Prior to 2019, the Teaching and Learning Centre was staffed by a single educational technology specialist who primarily supported online curriculum. Since early 2020, two new roles were added including a senior educational developer and an instructional designer. The learning technology specialist position has also been revised to focus on technology-enabled learning across all course delivery formats (in-person, hybrid and online), including considerations such as accessibility, inclusion and privacy. Through these investments, faculty now have access to a range of workshops and supports to develop and grow their teaching, including the provincially recognized Instructional Skills Workshops and various workshops to develop online and hybrid pedagogy for studio-based curriculum. This area has also developed supports for onboarding new faculty and graduate student teaching assistants.

ECU is committed to identifying and articulating learning outcomes at the course and program levels for all degree and certificate programs as program review guidelines demand; this work is still in progress, however the Teaching and Learning Centre offers support and guidance to help instructors and program areas articulate course or program learning outcomes. They also work to identify tools that will assist with curricular mapping, such as the open access, web-based tool recently developed by UBC Okanagan. ECU is working towards having program learning outcomes in place for all Art degree programs before individual areas begin their next cycle of program review.

<u>Program Development</u>
The process that ECU has used to develop and approve new programs is currently not formalized in policy, which is an area for improvement.

The current process to approve new programs mirrors the process used to approve new courses— discussions and consultations start at the program or Faculty level who work to develop:

- a rationale for why the new program is needed;
- learning outcomes for the program;
- descriptions of any new courses; and
- a program requirement worksheet which articulates the curricular pathway students will take to meet the requirements of the program.

Consultation then takes place with other stakeholders at the University, particularly those specifically involved in any curricular pathways. After discussion with the Assistant Deans and at the Academic Affairs table, the package then comes to the Curriculum Planning and Review Committee (CPRC) for discussion. Once approved by the CPRC, the package moves to Senate for final approval. Most of the newer programs have been at the graduate level which required approval by the Degree Quality Assessment Board, so those programs were subject to external review. A peer review component will be incorporated into the policy governing new program development.

Program Review

The process of academic program review is coordinated and driven by the faculty and relevant academic leadership and is the ultimate responsibility of the Office of the VP Academic + Provost (VPAP) in consultation with the Senate. ECU's program review process guidelines were approved by the Senate in December 2019 but has not yet been formalized in policy. The process that ECU introduced in 2019 was informed by institutional past practice as well as the principles of institutional quality assurance articulated by Universities Canada. Formalizing the process is the first and most obvious area of improvement for ECU's quality assurance process, and the work of policy development is already underway. Senate approval for the new program review policy is expected by or before May 2023.

Historically, ECU has reviewed Faculty units rather than distinct programs. The interdisciplinary nature of many of it programs made it practical to cluster programs under wider umbrellas: reviewing several interconnected programs together highlighted connections and relations among them and allowed the University to pool limited resources to support the program review process. During the course of recent reviews, however, it became clear that the practice of examining large curricular areas (Faculties) rather than individual programs, is not always the most effective approach. It was originally believed that the cross-disciplinary and integrated nature of the programs would be easier to assess if all undergraduate programs were reviewed simultaneously. As a small institution, the resource requirements and workload inherent in a more regular and recurrent process of program review seemed daunting.

It is now recognized that this mode of broad analysis poses its own challenges for individual program areas, particularly in their ability to access more program-specific institutional data and address issues at the local program level. In planning the next cycle of program reviews, this experience has been taken into consideration. The next review cycle will focus on program-level reviews, ensuring that each individual degree and certificate program will undergo a more granular program review process every 5-7 years. Hopefully, moving to more regular and continuous program-level review across the University will also help the institution to build and support a culture of ongoing reflection, review and revision of the curriculum and programs.

Reviews of individual programs are managed and driven by specific Faculties. Each Faculty takes responsibility for the development of a self-study for all programs within that Faculty. Where responsibility for a program is jointly held across different Faculties, the review process includes representation from faculty, students and other stakeholders across Faculties, as appropriate to the structure of the program.

External review takes place in the semester immediately following the self-evaluation period. The key stages in the process include:

1. Establishment of a Program Review Team – Prior to the process of self-study, each Faculty establishes a Program Review Team consisting of the Dean, the Assistant Dean(s), and at least three faculty members (more may be necessary to address all program areas); the team may also include program staff such as studio technicians.
2. Assess Program Learning Outcomes and Connect to Curriculum – In preparation for program review, areas review, renew or develop program learning outcomes and ensure they align with course learning outcomes.

3. Self-Study Process – The Program Review Team writes a self-study report that identifies key issues and includes input from faculty members, studio technicians, other staff, students, and the Dean, as well as institutional data and other relevant documents provided by the office of the VPAP. The self-study report is intended to be self-reflective, analytical, and aimed at quality improvement. The active participation of a wide spectrum of faculty, staff and students is an integral part of the process.
4. Selection of External Reviewers – During the self-study process, the Dean of the Faculty consults with faculty members to identify appropriate colleagues to serve as external reviewers. The VPAP composes External Review Committees using a combination of names provided by the Faculty and those provided in consultation with the Deans and University President.
5. Self-Study Report: By the end of the self-study term, the Program Review Team submits a draft of the self-study to the VPAP for feedback. The self-study report should articulate the key issues, questions, and/or concerns that the Faculty would like to address through the process of review. The final self-study is submitted to the VPAP at minimum one month before the scheduled campus visit by external reviewers. The report, including any supporting materials, is then made available to the external review team.
6. External Review Campus Visit and Report: This two-day campus visit is coordinated by the office of the VPAP in consultation with the Program Review Team. The agenda for the visit is developed in consultation with the Dean of the Faculty and usually involves a tour of the facilities, meetings with those involved in the degree program(s) including: academic administrators, regular and non-regular faculty, staff who work in program Shops, Studios or Workshops, students, alumni, and representatives from other academic support areas. Four to six weeks after the campus visit, the External Review Committee submits a formal report to the VPAP.
7. Internal Response: The Dean works with the Program Review Team and Faculty to develop a draft response to the External Review Committee report, to be completed during the semester following the on-campus visit. The draft response includes any corrections of fact, a response to any significant issues identified, a set of recommendations, an initial plan of action, and a timeline for any changes to programs, curriculum or structure.
8. Action Plan Implementation: A final response and action plan is submitted to the VPAP and reported to Senate. The Dean of the Faculty then provides updates on progress toward action plan goals in their annual reports to Senate.

ECU will use initial feedback on this process to inform future revisions.

QAPA Review

The QAPA panel conducting the assessment were Stephen Grundy, panel chair, and panel members Ann-Barbara Graff and Laureen Styles. The site visit was held at the Vancouver campus on January 18-19, 2023. Dao Luu, a member of the DQAB Secretariat also attended. The QAPA panel submitted its report on January 28, 2023. The panel report provided commendations, affirmations and recommendations.

Commendations are areas where the institution has shown exemplary practice. ECU has several areas of exemplary practice:

- The panel recognizes the high level of participation and engagement across Faculties of faculty and staff. Moreover, the institution demonstrated that they had internalized and meaningfully understood that quality assurance is about teaching and learning (and not an artificial imposition).
- At ECU, there was a clear openness and desire to focus on improvement through quality assurance.
- ECU demonstrated a highly collaborative and collegial culture which is necessary and effective for building an exemplary practice.

Affirmations are areas where the institution has identified weaknesses and intends to correct it. The Assessors have identified three areas where they can confidently affirm the wisdom of the institution's actions and their continuing effect:

- The university has demonstrated good judgement that evaluation by Faculty was the right thing to do now (to produce a good baseline) but may need to change to program specific or degree specific review going forward.
- The university has clearly recognized and articulated that a review of data governance (from collection to dissemination) is required for continuous improvement.
- The university has developed an exhaustive list of Quality Assurance projects that are in-progress covering areas such as policy development and renewal, operational supports, learning outcomes and curriculum mapping, institutional data, and student participation.
- The next step is to work on priorities and dependencies. Considering that there has been little new program development at the university, developing substantive policy and procedure for new program development (including new course development, definitions of credentials, templates and tools) aligned with governance responsibilities and accountabilities (Faculty level, Senate, and Board of Governors) is key and recognized by the institution.

Recommendations are areas needing improvement. The panel identified the following areas:

- From our interpretation of the University Act, the Board of Governors appears to have responsibilities regarding academic quality. It was not clear to the review committee that the Board of Governors has policies that govern the execution, responsibility, and allocations of resources to assume their portion of responsibilities that Section 35.2(6) infers. **We recommend (1) that the institution draft appropriate policy at the Board and Senate levels to make the accountabilities and responsibilities clear.** This would include programming that may or may not be for credit undertaken by continuing studies, while still allowing continuing studies to be flexible and nimble in its operations and delivery.
- The process of program review as laid out by ECU results in an Action Plan reported to the Senate via its Academic Priorities and Planning (APP) committee. More clarity in this final step of the process is warranted. In some cases, the final results read more like a list of recommendations and/or observations rather than an Action Plan**. We recommend (2) that the university considers carefully how to convert the recommendations from Faculty/unit or program reviews into actionable items** inclusive of timelines.

- **A mechanism is also warranted (3) for addressing recommendations that are deemed non-actionable at the time of the review.** This final process requires clear responsibilities and accountabilities that are tightly defined, as well as guidelines/decision making considerations to determine non-actionable recommendations.
- During our meetings, there were perspectives raised about the effectiveness of the external review site-visit and the resulting recommendations. It was appreciated that such a short visit (usually two days) makes it difficult to fully understand a program or Faculty and can result in recommendations that are based on errors of fact. The development of handbook(s) for internal and external reviewers will help. **We also recommend (4) that the university look at additional ways to on-board or orient internal and external reviewers to the university in general as well as the process**.
- Related to this is the criteria and qualifications of external reviewers and **we recommend (5) that the university be more explicit with guidance to the type of external reviewer that they deem to be most appropriate for the program or Faculty under review.**
- Based on the external reviewers site visit schedule, many of the sessions were quite brief to afford time with a wide range of constituents. Given the focus of the institution on creativity, decolonization and EDI **we recommend (6) that the university investigate approaches to decolonize the external review, to maximize the reviewers interaction with key constituents to produce a more effective review.**
- There are curriculum templates for course revisions/program revisions for minor and major course revisions, though the review/approval steps appear to be nearly similar, and the minor course change process includes one additional step **We recommended (7) that the university review the guidelines/policies regarding course revision and consider a common course outline template that could help with efficiency and effectiveness of course revision, review and approvals.**
- It was clear to the reviewers that the faculty maintain networks of professional practitioners outside of the university and this is to be encouraged and applauded. However, there is no formal mechanism by which those networks are formally consulted during the program review process. **We recommend (8) that the university explore how voices external to the institution could be brought into the review process that would add value to the programs.** Many institutions have formalized some type of program advisory council for example.
- The university demonstrated understanding that making appropriate unit, program, and university information available to the review process was important and is undertaking efforts to make this more effective (e.g., student surveys, program costing). **The reviewers recommend (9) that these data be made available on an on-going manner and not just concentrated at the time of program review.**
- Based on this last round of review, the university has decided that program reviews would be preferable to Faculty unit reviews, using the current review cycle to establish a baseline. We understand this decision, but we also heard from faculty members that they had difficulty accommodating the time required for the review process. Programs with a very small faculty complement may also have difficulty meeting the requirements of reviews. **We recommend (10) that the university re-examine how grouping programs and creative scheduling could result in better satisfaction with the process and potentially better outcomes.**

- In some cases, the role and relationship of institutional priorities in the program review process and the programs themselves was not clear. We understand that the university is undertaking a new strategic planning process that may possibly result in new priorities. **We recommend (11) that a mechanism be sought that allows for these priorities to be explicitly included in the program review process.**
- Based on the information provided in the self-study, the focus of this external review focused heavily on program review as there has not been recent new program development at ECU for some time. That said, there are substantive actions to develop and implement a solid and effective range of policies, procedures, and processes for new non-credit and credit programs. **We recommend (12) that a comprehensive set of policy and procedures – inclusive of roles, responsibilities and accountabilities - be developed in support of academic quality assurance and reflective of bi-cameral governance.**

ECU provided a response on June 2, 2023 that included an action plan to address the recommendations.