

June 23, 2017

Dr. Nicholas Rubidge, Chair
Degree Quality Assessment Board
Ministry of Advanced Education
P.O. Box 9177 Stn Prov Govt
Victoria, BC V8W 9H8

Dear Dr. Rubidge:

Re: Simon Fraser University's Response to the Quality Assurance Process Audit Recommendations

Attached is Simon Fraser University's Action Plan in response to the Quality Assurance Process Audit Assessors' Report of March 22, 2017.

On behalf of SFU, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Ministry of Advanced Education's Degree Quality Assessment Board and the Quality Assurance Audit Committee for inviting SFU to be one of the pilot institutions to undergo a quality assurance process audit. SFU is proud to be a part of this initiative.

SFU is committed to offering quality education. The institution has established a robust and multidimensional quality assurance process, which includes regularly scheduled departmental external reviews and associated follow-ups. In recent years, we have furthered our efforts and commitment by becoming the first Canadian research-intensive university to be accredited by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities. We regard the Ministry's Quality Assurance Process Audit also to be an important process in maintaining high-quality education.

The audit was an extremely positive experience. We welcome the assessors' feedback and have addressed each of their recommendations in the attached Action Plan.

We hope that your experience with SFU has been helpful as you proceed with future quality assurance process audits.

Sincerely,



C. Peter Keller, PhD
Vice-President, Academic and Provost
Professor of Geography
Simon Fraser University

Attachment (1)

c: Dorothy Rogers, Director, Quality Assurance, Government and Quality Assurance Branch, AVED
Glynn Nicholls, Director, Academic Planning and Quality Assurance, SFU

**SFU RESPONSE TO QUALITY ASSURANCE PROCESS AUDIT
ASSESSORS' REPORT OF MARCH 22, 2017**

**ACTION PLAN
June 8, 2017**

This Action Plan has been prepared by the Vice President Academic and approved by the President, Vice Presidents and Deans.

SFU Response to QAPA Recommendations		
1	Recommendation	The Action Plans should identify time limits for each action and the individual(s) responsible for executing the action(s).
	Response/Action	This recommendation has been built into SFU's Action Plan template, which is provided to departments that are developing actions arising from the recommendations made by the external reviewers. The template now includes the following headings for each section: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Expected Completion Date:</i> • <i>Responsibility for Action:</i>
	Responsibility	Not applicable.
	Implementation Details	Completed.
2	Recommendation	Consider restricting the length of the self-study report (for example, 30-35 pages; appendices as additional).
	Response/Action	Each external review process begins with a departmental meeting called by the Office of the Vice President, Academic to inform all faculty and staff of the coming external review and to outline the process to be followed. At that time, the Department Chair will be encouraged to limit the length of the departmental self-study to a manageable number of pages and provided with suggestions regarding what data and background should be included as appendices.
	Responsibility	Associate Vice President, Academic.
	Implementation Details	Length of the departmental self-study will be included as a point of discussion at the departmental meeting, starting in fall 2017.

3	Recommendation	In the development of new programs, at an appropriate stage, and prior to submission to the Ministry, the draft should be subject to external peer review; in some cases, a desk review would suffice, while in others a site visit may be needed.
	Response/Action	Institutional and Ministry requirements already stipulate that program proponents seek external review and feedback on new program proposals. Such consultation may result in curricular suggestions or changes as part of the feedback. Proponents are required, as a standalone step, to provide evidence that they have consulted both internally and externally with other post-secondary institutions and discipline experts that offer similar, complementary or competing programs, and with industry/professional experts where applicable. In many cases, proposed interdisciplinary programs have internal cross-discipline steering committees that develop the program, and external advisory committees that include discipline and external industry/community/professional organization representation.
	Responsibility	Not applicable.
	Implementation Details	Completed.
4	Recommendation	Exercise flexibility in deciding the number of external reviewers (for example, allow for as many as four); the test is what number of reviewers are needed to perform the task of review).
	Response/Action	The principle of determining the number of reviewers necessary to cover the breadth or specialized areas within the department is already an accepted practice and applied accordingly. The number of reviewers is a point of discussion at the departmental meeting with the Associate Vice President, Academic.
	Responsibility	Not applicable.
	Implementation Details	Completed.
5	Recommendation	Include the line Deans in the selection of external reviewers; the line Dean should be included at each significant step of the process.
	Response/Action	External reviewers are selected from a ranked list of scholars suggested by the faculty in the department being reviewed. The CVs of suggested scholars are reviewed by the Office of the Vice President, Academic to meet the requirements within the <i>Senate Guidelines for External Reviews of Academic Units</i> . In future external review cycles, the list of suggested reviewer names from the department will be channeled to the Dean's office for approval. However, it is acknowledged that, in large diversified Faculties, the Dean or Associate Dean may not have knowledge of scholars in the discipline, but should briefly

		consider the suggested CVs and discuss them with the Department Chair before submission to the Office of the Vice President, Academic for final selection.
	Responsibility	Associate Vice President, Academic.
	Implementation Details	Starting in fall 2017, this process will be a point of discussion at the departmental meeting with the Associate Vice President, Academic and the Faculty Dean.
6	Recommendation	Increase the emphasis on the importance of teaching quality in various processes: for example, in all important personnel decisions (appointment, tenure and promotion) by recommending the need for evidence of teaching quality beyond course evaluations, and in the external review process (starting with the self-study).
	Response/Action	<p>How to observe and measure quality and excellence in teaching and learning are ongoing topics of discussion at SFU.</p> <p>The Faculty Association Collective Agreement already specifies measures of teaching effectiveness that go well beyond course evaluations. Units are constantly reminded that rigorous and fair consideration of teaching quality is an expectation.</p> <p>Each academic unit is expected to adopt criteria and standards for assessment of teaching that must be either reaffirmed or revised no less than every three years, and approved by the Dean.</p> <p>A working group was struck recently to develop strategies for advancing the definition and assessment of learning outcomes.</p>
	Responsibility	Associate Vice President, Academic, Teaching and Learning Centre, Deans and Department Chairs/Directors.
	Implementation Details	In process and ongoing.
7	Recommendation	Consider how to harmonize the accreditation and external review processes to reduce 'review fatigue'; explore what other universities are doing in this regard.
	Response/Action	<p>This recommendation is under consideration and makes intuitive sense; it would require Senate approval.</p> <p>However, programmatic accreditation looks mainly at teaching while SFU's departmental external reviews take a close look at all aspects of a unit, including quality of research, administration and the workplace environment. It may be possible to align accreditation processes with departmental reviews, enabling units to use common data sets and documents for both processes.</p>
	Responsibility	Associate Vice-President, Academic.

	Implementation Details	Under review.
8	Recommendation	Consider ways in which revision (and often simple tweaking) can be made to the Senate Guidelines to strengthen attention to curriculum (e.g. the first purpose in the second section of Part 2) and to encourage critical self-reflection.
	Response/Action	<p>The <i>Senate Guidelines for External Reviews of Academic Units</i> are to be reviewed.</p> <p>Attention to curriculum revision is ongoing at SFU, with encouragement of foci on program and course objectives, learning goals, and critical self-reflection, as well as course access and course scheduling/sequencing.</p> <p>Curriculum workshops are offered on a regular basis by the Teaching and Learning Centre.</p> <p>A working group was struck recently to develop strategies for advancing the definition and assessment of learning outcomes.</p>
	Responsibility	Associate Vice-President, Academic and Senate Committees.
	Implementation Details	In process.