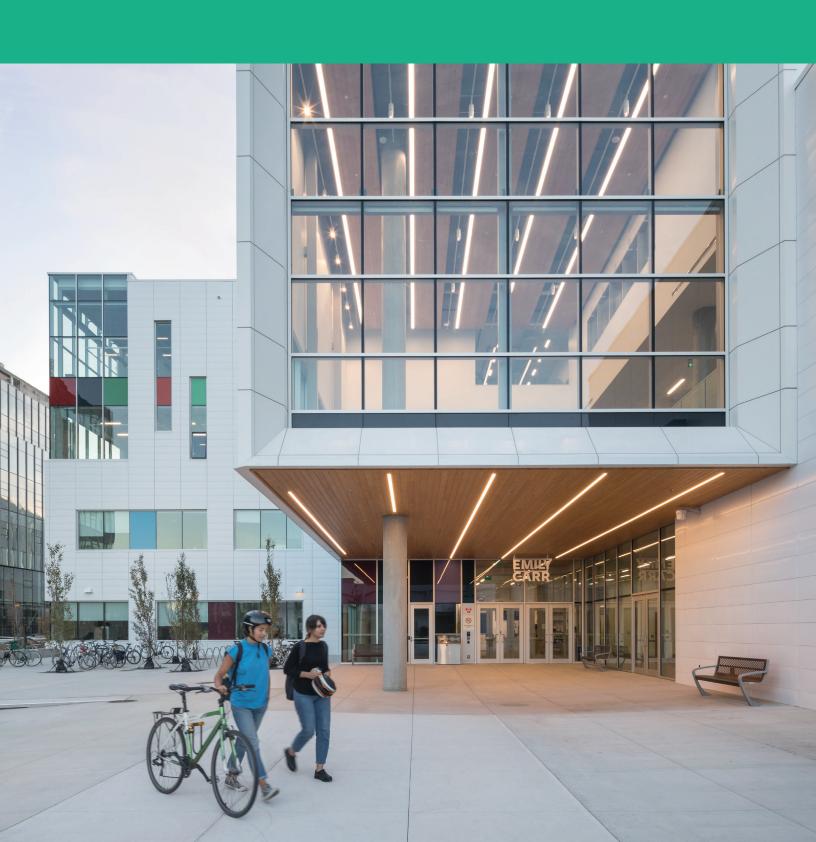# EMILY CARR
UNIVERSITY OF ART + DESIGN

QUALITY ASSURANCE PROCESS AUDIT
INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSE

May 2023

INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSE TO THE ASSESSOR'S REPORT

Emily Carr's Quality Assurance Process Audit (QAPA) took place in Fall 2022, with the site visit held on January 18-19, 2023. The report from the external QAPA Panel was received on February 6, 2023. We learned a tremendous amount about our internal quality assurance practices through the self-study that formed the basis of our Institutional Report as well as from our reviewers' feedback. Emily Carr University is early in the process of developing an institutional quality assurance framework, and moving toward greater transparency and accountability about our curriculum and programs will involve a cultural shift at our institution.

To that end, our internal QAPA steering committee viewed this audit as an ideal opportunity to introduce conversations with our faculty and student communities about quality assurance and its value to our core work of teaching and learning, and we were grateful that our reviewers acknowledged the effects of those conversations in their commendations: they noted the "high level of engagement from faculty and staff in our program review practices," the "widespread understanding among faculty and staff that quality assurance is primarily about improving teaching and learning, not meeting externally imposed requirements," and the "highly collaborative and collegial culture which was demonstrated through the self-study process across units."

We were also grateful that reviewers affirmed many of the proposed changes we had identified through self-study, including:

1. Moving from broad Faculty area reviews that include many programs to more targeted program-level or degree-specific reviews in the future;

2. Reviewing and revising our data governance practices (from collection to dissemination) to improve the quality of data informing program review;

3. Continuing work on the projects identified in our "exhaustive list of Quality Assurance projects, including policy development and renewal, operational supports, curriculum and faculty supports, institutional data, and student engagement and participation in quality assurance."

While we have responded to each of the twelve recommendations from the QAPA Panel in the table below, we also recognize that many of these recommendations will be addressed as we undertake the vital but task of envolving our **institutional framework for quality assurance** – that is, determining what quality assurance looks like at our university, who holds responsibility for it, and how it happens. This task will build on other in-progress institutional shifts including rethinking and modernizing our approach to budget planning and consultation, adopting collaborative and consultative processes in institutional strategic planning, and responding to equity and inclusion priorities through large scale changes to our strategic enrolment management and hiring processes. As a small institution, we recognize that it will take time to embed quality assurance practices fully into our day-to-day operations: to that end, we have identified that the best way to ensure long-term success in this project is to continue with the important consultative and community-based work that we have started through the QAPA process.

The development of relevant quality assurance policies, procedures and resources will necessarily be part of this work, but in developing a "fit for purpose" quality assurance framework for Emily Carr, we understand that we will need to address the following recommendations in particular:

- Clarifying the role of the Board and Senate of a special purpose teaching university in relation to program quality;

- Defining what internal review and consultation can and should look like across our highly diverse program areas;

- Clarifying and defining the role of external perspectives on program development and review;

- Developing mechanisms for connecting the learning and knowledge gained through program review to other university planning processes (such as strategic planning, budgets, strategic enrolment management, etc.); and

- Ensuring that our data collection practices align with the needs of quality assurance work.

As part of our QAPA self-study, we collected information from faculty, staff and students about the lived experience of program review at our institution; as we move into this next phase of the work, we begin to shift our attention to institutional governance and broader institutional systems to determine how quality assurance in general, and program review in particular, becomes central to our operations as a university. The table below outlines how we anticipate this work unfolding in the coming years.

A NOTE ABOUT CATEGORIZATIONS:

All recommendations below have been categorized into one of three categories:

1. Policy Development, which is the responsibility of the President and the Board as well as the VP Academic + Provost and Senate;

2. Operational Planning, which is the responsibility of the Academic Affairs office;

3. Training and Resource Development, which is the responsibility of the Teaching and Learning Centre

RECOMMENDATIONS

1- 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

Response:

ECU will develop an institutional framework for quality assurance which will specify, through relevant policy and procedures, the roles and responsibilities of all governing bodies at the university, including Senate and the Board.

This work is already underway with a draft Program Review Policy being prepared for consultation at our Academic Planning and Priorities Senate sub-committee in Fall 2023. We expect final approval of this policy and accompanying procedures by Senate and the Board in Fall 2024.

Category: Policy Development

2- 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.

Response:

ECU fully agrees that action plans need to include actionable items with appropriate timelines and budgets (where relevant). To that end, we have started work on a project to develop action plan templates and models to be used by all program areas as part of our **Program Review Handbook** (see recommendation 4 below). This work is scheduled to begin in Fall 2023 and happen alongside the policy development work articulated in recommendation 1 above.

Our program review policy and procedures will outline expectations and responsibilities for bringing forward and approving action plans from the program level up through Senate and the Board (see recommendation 3 below). This will include procedures for connecting program action plans with other relevant planning processes such as budgeting, strategic planning, and enrolment planning.

Category: Training and Resource Development   Policy Development

3- 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.

Response:

In response to this recommendation, and recognizing a gap in our current process, ECU is working to develop a vetting and approvals process for action plans within the program review policy, which will include processes for logging action items that are not actionable by individual program areas (such as items that require budget investments beyond the resources of the program area, or those that require significant cross-Institutional support or collaboration).

This proposed process includes several levels of review and approval for action plans, including:

1. Review and Approval by Dean responsible for program area;

2. Initial Review by VP Academic and Provost, who will recommend further review from any of the following as relevant:
    2a) Manager of Operations and Analysis
    2b) VP Finance + Administration
    2c) Academic Affairs committee
    2d) Strategic Enrolment Management committee

3. Review and approval by relevant Senate sub-committee (Curriculum Planning and Review and/or Academic Planning and Priorities);

4. where necessary (for large budgetary or programmatic shifts), review and approval by the Board; and Final approval and publication by VP Academic + Provost.

Category: Policy Development   Operational Planning

4- 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.

Response:

Having reviewed resources to support program review at other institutions as part of our self-study, ECU had already identified the necessity of developing more guidelines and training resources to support program review teams. We envision folding this recommendation into that work, where planned support for program review teams will also include support for internal and external reviewers.

The core of this work is the development of a **Program Review Handbook** which will include guidelines,

templates, and support resources (including models, where appropriate) for every stage of the process, including external review.

Work on this project has already begun, with an aim for phased completion over the next two years. Phase 1 will provide support for the self-study stage of the process and should be completed by Fall 2024; Phase 2 will provide support for the site visit stage of the process (for both internal and external participants) and should be completed by Spring 2025; Phase 3 will provide support for responding to the site visit report and developing action plans and should be completed by Fall 2025.

Category: Training and Resource Development

5- 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.

Response:

ECU takes great care in selecting external reviewers to participate in our program review processes, guided strongly by faculty recommendations. But our past practice of conducting reviews at the Faculty level (which can often house programs from many different disciplines) makes it difficult to identify reviewers with broad and varied enough disciplinary expertise to meet all program requirements. We believe our move toward program- or degree- specific reviews, as noted in the first affirmation above, will significantly address concerns about reviewer qualifications or expertise.

Further, the process for identifying qualifications for external reviewers' selection, such as prior experience in review processes, will be outlined in the program review policy currently under development (see recommendation 1 above).

Category: Policy Development   Operational Planning

6- 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.

Response:

We agree with reviewers that there were scheduling issues with some external site visits during our most recent round of reviews. In part, those issues stemmed from the number of programs being reviewed under one Faculty which meant either large consultation groups, which were difficult to schedule, or many shorter consultations with different program areas.

We expect that our shift to more focused program-level reviews, as identified in affirmation 1 above, will address some of these scheduling issues, by allowing reviewers more time with smaller groups from the program area. We also propose to offer more preparation for groups participating in these external consultations so that conversations can be more targeted and productive (see recommendation 4 above).

Category: Operational Planning   Training and Resource Development

7- 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.

Response:

Our current process of proposing and reviewing curriculum is overseen by the Curriculum Planning and Review Committee, a sub-committee of Senate. The forms used to bring forward curriculum for review or approval feed directly into the course descriptions in our registration and course outline systems, but to date, there has been no way to make course learning outcomes visible in those systems. There has also been historical variation in what information has been included or requested in these forms. And finally, there has been resistance to using our current course outline system because of technical issues with the platform, leading to a lack of consistency across the institution.

Addressing this recommendation thus requires a three-fold approach:

1. We need to review and update policies and forms related to course development and revision to ensure that best practices are being followed for course review and revision;

2. We need to work with our ITS department to find solutions for underlying technical limitations that impede the straightforward flow of information from Senate-approved course forms to our registration and course outline systems; we also need to identify an alternate to our current antiquated Course Outline Manager system;

3. We need to improve training and support for instructors in using the common course outline template to improve consistency.

Work on each of these items has already begun; we anticipate policy and forms changes (item 1) will be completed by Spring 2025; item 3 depends partially on completion of item 2, which we do not yet have a timeline for, though it is on the list of priorities for ITS. We have begun work, alongside other provincial colleagues, to assess the landscape for course outline management systems; once an appropriate solution has been identified, ITS staff will work with colleagues in our Teaching and Learning Centre to develop training and support for instructors.

Category: Policy Development   Operational Planning   Training and Resource Development

8- 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.

Response:

As part of our policy development work, we will initiate a process of consultation across program areas to identify opportunities, risks and benefits of including external perspectives during the program review process (see recommendation 1 above).

Historically, ECU has not had formal advisory councils, but many programs have informal processes through which they engage with external perspectives, for example, through industry and community partnerships, research initiatives, professional networks, and work-integrated learning. Through our consultation process, we will investigate how or whether a universal approach to external input is workable in our context and what form that approach might take.

Category: Operational Planning   Policy Development

9- 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.

Response:

Currently, ECU has a Data Governance Committee and a Data Reporting Working Group, both of which are working to establish key metrics and data frameworks for important areas of university work.

This work will impact program review by establishing:

- Key KPI and metrics that will allow the university to evaluate success through a defined set of metrics. A full list of key metrics for program review is part of that project.

- Key definitions and metric assessment tools which will allow program areas to meaningfully glean key insights and engage with data.

- Timelines for reporting. For academic and program review, this will include an annual report for each program area that will highlight key metrics.

- Community sharing procedures for annual reports and other program review documents.

A full timeline of all data governance projects has already been developed, with the above projects relevant to program review scheduled for completion by or before Fall 2024.

Category: Operational Planning

10- 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.

Response:

Given that many of our programs are relatively small, grouping programs for review may be both more efficient and effective. As part of our policy development work, we will build in flexibility to allow for grouping programs for review whenever a program area perceives a benefit to doing so (see recommendation 1 above).

In our work to develop the cycle of program reviews, we will identify those programs that may benefit from undergoing review alongside similar or complementary programs and develop a schedule that will allow them to coordinate processes and leverage adjacencies.

Category: Policy Development   Operational Planning

11- 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.

Response:

ECU has been engaged in a strategic planning process for the past year, and we look forward to the anticipated release of our new strategic plan in Fall 2023. We expect that strategic priorities will need to be explicitly addressed in the program review process.

We anticipate several ways that strategic priorities will inform the program review process including:

- Providing information about strategic priorities in training materials for program review teams so that these priorities are centered in the work of program review (see recommendation 4 above);

- Ensuring that final report and action plan templates include space for programs to indicate how action plans respond to strategic priorities (see recommendation 2 above);

- Formally and explicitly connecting the process of program review to strategic priorities through policy (see recommendation 1 above)

Category: Operational Planning   Training and Resource Development   Policy development

12- 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 ECUAD 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.

Response:

We agree wholeheartedly that ECU needs to develop a comprehensive set of policy and procedures – inclusive of roles, responsibilities, and accountabilities – to guide new program development for both credit and non-credit programs, which is why we included this project in both our self-study and in the list of quality assurance projects we provided the external reviewers during their site visit.

To date, we have relied heavily on our course development policies and processes to approve programs, but as new program development emerges as a priority through strategic enrolment management and budget planning. We have already begun work to develop new program development policy and procedures aligned with institutional and provincial best practices. Our plan is to introduce draft policy to Academic Planning and Priorities in Fall 2023 alongside the policy work outlined in recommendation 1 with the goal of having policy approved by or before Fall 2024.

Category: Policy Development