Academic Planning and Quality Assurance

SFU’s Accreditation with the NWCCU

SFU was granted accreditation (effective Sep 1, 2015) with the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU). The NWCCU is an independent, non-profit membership organization recognized by the U.S. Department of Education as the regional authority on educational quality and institutional effectiveness of higher education institutions in the seven-state Northwest region of Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, and Washington. It recognizes higher education institutions for performance, integrity, and quality to merit the confidence of the educational community and the public. SFU is the first major Canadian research university to be granted accreditation by the NWCCU.

After a seven-year application, candidacy, and self-assessment process, accreditation was attained following SFU’s submission of its Comprehensive Initial Accreditation Self Evaluation Report in February 2016 and the NWCCU site visit in April 2016.

Maintaining accreditation is an ongoing, continuous seven-year cycle. SFU’s next report, due spring 2019, is the Mid-Cycle Self Evaluation Report. A site visit by the NWCCU will follow the submission of this report.

The Benefits of Accreditation:

- Regular external assessment of SFU's adherence to best-practice standards increases self-accountability and the University’s accountability to external stakeholders.
- Helps establish clearer benchmarks/standards for assessing educational goals and thus benefit students’ learning experiences.
- Enhances the value of an SFU degree for alumni abroad and for international students returning home.
- Simplifies SFU’s relationships with US institutions, including government, foundations, and collegiate sports associations.
- Fosters public confidence in SFU's ability to fulfill its stated vision/mission and goals.
- Increases SFU’s reputation on world stage.
- Helped to complete NCAA standing/acceptance for SFU athletics.

For more information regarding accreditation with the NWCCU, please see this link: http://www.sfu.ca/vpacademic/accreditation.html
Quality Assurance Process Audit

In 2015, the Minister of Advanced Education tasked the Degree Quality Assessment Board with developing and implementing periodic (once every eight years) quality assurance process audits of internal program review policies and processes at public post-secondary institutions. A two-year Quality Assurance Process Audit pilot was launched in January 2017. SFU was the first to undergo an audit.

SFU prepared a 72-page Quality Assurance Process Audit Report that adhered to a Ministry of Advanced Education template. The report was followed by a site visit by three Canadian peer academics/reviewers, culminating in an assessment report of SFU’s best practices in quality assurance, with specific attention on the University’s external program review processes. The report commended SFU for its high-quality work and commitment to quality assurance. It also made some minor recommendations, to which SFU responded with a plan of action.