Quality Assurance

Process Audit

Institution Report - January 13, 2017

Prepared for the Ministry of Advanced Education
Statement of Institution Report Preparation

Declaration

The signature of Simon Fraser University’s Vice-President, Academic acknowledges the signatory’s responsibility for the contents of the report.

Signature of Declarant: ________________

Vice-President, Academic and Provost

Date: January 13, 2017
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Preamble

In 2015, the Minister of Advanced Education tasked the Degree Quality Assessment Board (DQAB) with developing and implementing periodic quality assurance process audits of internal program review policies and processes at public post-secondary institutions. A Quality Assurance Process Audit (QAPA) Committee was formed to undertake the task. The Committee’s Terms of Reference state that the audits should be based on information provided by public post-secondary institutions to ensure that rigorous, ongoing program and institutional quality assessment processes have been implemented. Institutions are to be audited every eight years.

A Quality Assurance Process Audit Framework and Assessment Criteria have been developed by the Committee and approved by the Ministry. A two-year QAPA pilot was launched in fall 2016. Simon Fraser University and Vancouver Island University are undergoing the first audits, with the submission of an institution report in January 2017 and a site visit shortly thereafter.

The Degree Quality Assessment Board has provided a prescribed template to assist institutions in the preparation of their reports. SFU has been diligent in following the template. In order to answer sections comprehensively, a certain degree of repetition has been unavoidable.

The main focus of Simon Fraser University’s institution report is on the policies and practices that are related to and that ensure high quality teaching, research, and community engagement at the University, with particular emphasis on its external review process of academic units.

As a research-intensive university, innovation, knowledge generation, and knowledge transfer are fundamental to SFU’s Vision/Mission. All research-related activities have policies and practices which would be assessed in reviewing quality at a research-intensive institution. Research is a major instructional activity at both the undergraduate and graduate levels at SFU. Linking cutting-edge research to innovative education empowers students to experience the creation and application of knowledge while cultivating the skills to take on new challenges in a changing world. Although research is reviewed as part of the external review process and is mentioned in this report, emphasis has been placed on instructional/teaching processes and policies.

Three external reviews of academic units – Faculty of Health Sciences, School of Computing Science, and Department of English – have been chosen by the Degree Quality Assessment Board to be the primary focus for assessors during a two-day site visit to SFU in March 2017. The assessment is being carried out by senior academics with applicable experience in reviewing quality assurance processes at post-secondary institutions in Canada.
SFU looks forward to the site visit and the assessors’ recommendations toward improving academic quality. A response to the assessors’ recommendations is due in July 2017.
Institutional Overview

Simon Fraser University (SFU) was created in 1963 by the government of British Columbia to relieve enrollment pressures on the University of British Columbia by providing basic programs in the arts and sciences and teacher education. The province created SFU by amending the *University Act* that governed the University of British Columbia, which ultimately granted SFU a significant measure of autonomy. SFU’s first chancellor, Gordon Shrum, was quick to exploit this by expanding the University’s mandate to incorporate graduate education and research, thus, setting the stage for SFU’s quick rise to prominence as both a teaching and research-intensive institution. When it opened its doors in 1965, SFU’s 2,500 new students included 83 graduate students, 33 of whom were PhD candidates.

SFU’s institutional culture was profoundly shaped by its birth in the cultural ferment of the mid-1960s. From the outset, there was a visionary quality to SFU’s creation, and that vision—in keeping with its moment—was experimental, fluid, and surprisingly and consciously democratic.

In many ways, SFU’s youth shaped its future: newly minted PhDs came to SFU seeking an opportunity to shape the new University in ways not possible at older institutions. They were young and idealistic and their hopes were more than met. Empowered beyond their expectations within the new and quickly developing institution, they brought their youthful energies, creativity, and desire for innovation, and built them into the fabric of SFU’s institutional culture. In doing so, they contributed enormously to the boldness and the willingness to try new ideas and approaches that still distinguish SFU. Innovative faculty were matched with adventurous students, who chose SFU precisely because it was new and promised to be different.

Among Canadian universities, SFU was the first to introduce the trimester system (1964), to offer athletic scholarships (1964), to instill student representation on its Senate (1967), to create an executive MBA (1968), to implement computerized registration (1970), to establish the first department of Women’s Studies in Canada (1972), and to appoint a female president (Dr. Pauline Jewett—1974). This tradition of innovation continues into the present day, with SFU becoming the first university outside of the United States to achieve status as the only Canadian member in the National Collegiate Athletic Association, or NCAA (2012), and the first major Canadian research-intensive university to receive accreditation from the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (2015).

SFU, which celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2015, has grown into one of Canada’s premier comprehensive universities and British Columbia’s second largest research-intensive university. It boasts three campuses in three adjacent cities within the Lower Mainland of British Columbia: Burnaby (its main campus), Vancouver, and Surrey. SFU has approximately 35,000 students (unique headcount) enrolled in for-credit programs, another 20,000
participating annually in non-credit programs, 3,000 faculty and staff, and over 130,000 alumni.

In the 2017 Maclean’s rankings of Canadian universities, Simon Fraser University was named the top comprehensive university for the third straight year. SFU was one of the top ten universities in Canada according to the 2017 Times Higher Education World University Rankings. It ranked 11th among Canadian universities in the QS Universities 2016/17 World Rankings, and for the tenth consecutive year, SFU was named one of the country's best employers in Canada’s 2017 Top 100 Employers competition.
1. INSTITUTION PROFILE

General information about the institution.
1.1 STUDENT FULL-TIME EQUIVALENT 2015/16 (FTE)

Source: Institutional Research and Planning, SFU

| FTE | 26,312.9 |

1.2 STUDENT PROFILE 2015/16

| Undergraduate FTE | 22,714.1 |
| Graduate FTE | 3,598.8 |

FTE enrolled in degree programs

(includes students in bachelor, master, and doctorate programs)

| 24,425.3 |

FTE enrolled in non-degree programs

(includes students in for credit non-degree programs, certificates, post baccalaureate diplomas, open learning, graduate certificates, and graduate diplomas)

| 1,887.6 |

Source: Institutional Research and Planning, SFU

1.3 GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATIONS

| Number of campuses | 3 |

| Campus locations (specify the country, province, city/town where the campuses are located). |

SFU’s three campuses are located in Burnaby, Vancouver, and Surrey, British Columbia, Canada. Burnaby is the site of the first and largest campus, opening in 1965, while Vancouver opened in 1989, followed by Surrey in 2002. They are served by major bus lines and the Metro Vancouver rapid transit system, making each campus accessible to all geographic regions of the Lower Mainland of BC. The three campuses share a common Vision and governance, and are unified in the fulfillment of the University’s Vision. However, each campus is also unique and celebrates this uniqueness with specialty programming such as the School of Interactive Arts and Technology and the Mechatronic Systems Engineering program in Surrey and the School for the Contemporary Arts in Vancouver. While each campus houses certain schools, majors, and/or departments, students are not restricted to the courses or facilities of any one particular campus. SFU continually strives to integrate all facets of the University experience and culture for all students across all programs, facilities, and campuses. The University is committed to making all three of its campuses accessible to students, staff, faculty, and the community.

1 http://www.sfu.ca/irp.html
1.4 PROGRAM OFFERINGS

Simon Fraser University offers face-to-face undergraduate and graduate programs at its three campuses, as well as a range of courses and programs available through online, off-campus, and distance formats. Courses and programs span a variety of topics and disciplines, from traditional academic and professional fields to contemporary and interdisciplinary subjects, and provide students with an extensive selection of scholarly activities and experiences.

SFU offers academic programs in eight Faculties. The founding Faculties in 1965 were Arts (now Arts and Social Sciences), Education, and Science. Since then, other Faculties have been added: Business (1981), now the Beedie School of Business; Applied Sciences (1985); Health Sciences (2004); and the Faculties of Communication, Art and Technology and of Environment (both in 2009).

The nature and scope of SFU’s programs are consistent with its commitment to providing programs across a wide spectrum of academic disciplines, to providing interdisciplinary education, and to emerging areas of academic inquiry and demand. Options to combine programs (joint majors, majors and minors, extended minors, and double majors) are extensive and reflect SFU’s commitment to interdisciplinary education.

In 2016, SFU offered 317 baccalaureate, 18 diploma, and 37 certificate programs at the undergraduate level, and 36 doctoral, 77 master’s, and 10 graduate diploma or certificate programs at the graduate level.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Credentials Awarded</th>
<th>2011/12</th>
<th>2012/13</th>
<th>2013/14</th>
<th>2014/15</th>
<th>2015/16</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
<td>4,624</td>
<td>4,986</td>
<td>5,240</td>
<td>5,222</td>
<td>5,114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s</td>
<td>1,001</td>
<td>924</td>
<td>897</td>
<td>943</td>
<td>1,007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctorates</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certificates</td>
<td>440</td>
<td>581</td>
<td>671</td>
<td>626</td>
<td>559</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post Baccalaureate Diplomas</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate Certificates</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate Diplomas</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Development Program - Education</td>
<td>561</td>
<td>538</td>
<td>512</td>
<td>507</td>
<td>422</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>6,993</td>
<td>7,371</td>
<td>7,683</td>
<td>7,741</td>
<td>7,492</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Institutional Research and Planning, SFU
International Partners

SFU has international agreements in more than 60 countries worldwide. These partnerships include:

- Faculty research collaborations.
- Faculty and staff exchanges.
- Joint teaching certification.
- International development projects.
- Field schools.
- Scholarship agreements.
- Student exchanges.
- Incoming study-abroad agreements.
- Dual or double degrees.
- English language training.
- International co-op placements.
- Internships and practica.

Table 2 – Third Party International Partnerships

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>External Agency/Organization</th>
<th>Program(s)/Course(s) Name(s)</th>
<th>Degree/Certificate Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Zhejiang University, China</td>
<td>Computing Science</td>
<td>BSc (dual degree)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zhejiang University, China</td>
<td>Computing Science</td>
<td>MSc (dual degree)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zhejiang University, China</td>
<td>Science PhD (dual degree)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Université François Rabelais, France</td>
<td>Teacher Education</td>
<td>Teacher Certification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FIA Business School, Sao Paulo, Brazil</td>
<td>Executive MBA Americas</td>
<td>Executive MBA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instituto Tecnologico Autonomo de Mexico, Mexico</td>
<td>Executive MBA Americas</td>
<td>Executive MBA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vanderbilt University, Owen Graduate School of Management, Tenn., USA</td>
<td>Executive MBA Americas</td>
<td>Executive MBA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sorbonne, France</td>
<td>Education - Cotutelle Program</td>
<td>PhD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universita di Bologna, Italy</td>
<td>Education - Cotutelle Program</td>
<td>PhD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Dong Hwa University, Taiwan</td>
<td>Education - Cotutelle Program</td>
<td>PhD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>École Normale Supérieure, France</td>
<td>Education - Cotutelle Program</td>
<td>PhD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ben-Gurion University, Israel</td>
<td>Education - Cotutelle Program</td>
<td>PhD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Université Blaise Pascal, France</td>
<td>Education - Cotutelle Program</td>
<td>PhD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication University of China</td>
<td>China Global Communication Double MA</td>
<td>Degree Master of Arts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Institutional Research and Planning, SFU
SFU also has numerous bilateral exchange agreements. This is highlighted in SFU’s International Engagement Profile, which is posted annually on the SFU International website.²

**Lifelong Learning**

SFU has continuing education programs that are administered by Lifelong Learning.³ The mandate of Lifelong Learning is to make education more widely available; the majority of programs feature flexible scheduling and course delivery. The unit is community-focused and offers a practical curriculum that answers to the career transitioning and professional development needs of working adults as well as offering courses of general interest and contemporary issues. It offers 30 Senate-approved non-credit certificates and diplomas in areas as diverse as applied business analysis, non-profit management, social innovation, and public relations—to name just a few of the offerings. It also offers community-specific programming such as the 55+ program and many free events such as the City Program public lectures and the Philosophers’ Café.

Lifelong Learning also includes SFU NOW: Nights or Weekends and the Centre for Online and Distance Education (CODE), both of which provide flexible options for students:

- **SFU NOW: Nights or Weekends** offers opportunity for degree completion through courses scheduled in the evenings and on the weekends for working adults not able to attend classes full-time during the day. Approximately 88 courses are offered each year at the Vancouver and Surrey campuses.
- **The Centre for Online and Distance Education** offers flexible opportunities for undergraduate course completion through online learning. Approximately 100 online courses are offered each term with over 15,000 enrollments annually.

**Co-operative Education**

Every undergraduate program at SFU, as well as many graduate programs, has a co-operative education option that is fully accredited by the Canadian Association for Co-operative Education (CAFCE). SFU co-operative education not only enhances its students’ education experiences and job readiness, but also provides significant community pathways among SFU, government, and industry.

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² SFU International: [https://www.sfu.ca/international/index/partner.html](https://www.sfu.ca/international/index/partner.html)
1.5 IMPACT OF THE INSTITUTION MANDATE ON ITS QUALITY ASSURANCE MECHANISMS

Describe how the institution’s Mandate impacts or influences the quality assurance mechanisms employed by the institution.

University Act

In 1963, British Columbia’s University Act (the “Act”)

4 created SFU and prescribed its governance system, which is “composed of a chancellor, a convocation, a board, a senate and faculties.” The Board of Governors and the Senate are the principal governing bodies, with the Act defining the scope and limits of each one’s authority, membership, and responsibilities.

The functions and duties of the University are defined in the Act as follows:

- Establish and maintain colleges, schools, institutes, faculties, departments, chairs, and courses of instruction.
- Provide instruction in all branches of knowledge.
- Establish facilities for the pursuit of original research in all branches of knowledge.
- Establish fellowships, scholarships, exhibitions, bursaries, prizes, rewards, and pecuniary and other aids to facilitate or encourage proficiency in the subjects taught in the university and original research in all branches of knowledge.
- Provide a program of continuing education in all academic and cultural fields throughout British Columbia.
- Generally, promote and carry on the work of a university in all its branches, through the co-operative effort of the board, senate, and other constituent parts of the university.

SFU does its best to achieve a level of high quality in its teaching, research, and community service. This is ensured by establishing policies and practices that promote academic quality.

Ministry Mandate

In the Ministry of Advanced Education’s April 7, 2016 Mandate letter to Simon Fraser University, the University was directed to consider the strategic priorities of the BC government.

4 http://www.bclaws.ca/EPLibraries/bclaws_new/document/ID/freeside/00_96468_01
Specific strategic priority actions of government for 2016/17 that can be directly linked to quality assurance include the following:

- Develop and implement an updated Skills Gap Plan, in alignment with priorities of the BC Skills for Jobs Blueprint.
- Continue to deepen BC’s talent pool, in support of the #BCTECH strategy, ensuring opportunities for students in the technology sector.
- Work in partnership with the government and Aboriginal communities, organizations, and institutes to implement the Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education and Training Policy Framework and Action Plan to increase the participation and success of Aboriginal learners.
- Continue to deliver on the goals of the International Education Strategy, including pursuing opportunities to advance the two-way flow of students.

Domestic student enrolments have leveled off due to funding for FTEs by the provincial government remaining unchanged since 2008/09; most growth since then is attributable to a sharp increase in international student enrollment. The fixed number of funded seats, together with the population growth in the South Fraser Region of BC, has created an increased demand for domestic student spaces and has forced the entry level GPA to rise. In this constrained environment, SFU is strategically directing its future growth toward programs that meet the urgent needs of British Columbia’s growing economy in areas such as engineering science, information technology, creative technology, health sciences, and environmental studies while continuing to support excellence in the established liberal arts, sciences, and professional programs.

The Institutional Accountability Plan and Report\(^5\) required yearly by the Ministry of Advanced Education illustrates SFU’s continued support of the priorities identified in “Skills for Growth – British Columbia’s Labour Market Strategy to 2020” and “The BC Jobs Plan” by showing how SFU is responding to student, employer, and regional economic and societal needs. SFU is helping to make British Columbia a preferred choice for both domestic and international students while also expanding research, scientific discovery, and commercialization, as it proudly pursues its Vision. In further support of the BC Skills for Jobs Blueprint, SFU is adding FTEs to graduate computing science, engineering science (including mechatronics), and business disciplines. SFU anticipates accelerating this initiative.

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SFU Vision

SFU has responded to the provincial mandate toward efficiency of educational delivery through its commitment to its own mandate/Vision by engaging students, research, and communities in as an effective and accountable manner as possible.

SFU’s Vision is to be the leading engaged university defined by its dynamic integration of innovative education, cutting-edge research, and far-reaching community engagement. The Vision consists of three core themes, each of which has a direct impact on the quality of the education provided through the achievement of the identified goals and activities for the core themes.

Engaging Students
Goal: To equip SFU students with the knowledge, skills, and experiences that prepare them for life in an ever-changing and challenging world.

The achievement of this goal supports:
- Ministry goal 1: Students are supported to achieve their education, employment, and training goals.
- Ministry goal 2: Maintain a quality post-secondary education system that provides BC with a global competitive advantage.

Engaging Research
Goal: To be a world leader in knowledge mobilization building on a strong foundation of fundamental research.

The achievement of this goal supports:
- Ministry goal 3: An education and training system that maximizes return on investment and supports British Columbia’s diverse communities.

Engaging Communities
Goal: To be Canada’s most community-engaged research university.

The achievement of this goal supports:
- Ministry goal 4: Government Communications and Public Engagement – Citizens are informed and engaged with government in a way that is inclusive, and builds both trust and quality of life.

https://www.sfu.ca/engage/background.html
University Planning Framework

SFU’s Vision/Mission and its underlying principles are at the centre of the University Planning Framework (UPF), and its principles and philosophy permeate all aspects of the University’s governance and culture. As depicted below, the Academic Plan, the Strategic Research Plan, and the Community Engagement Strategy, which represent core theme planning, form the main linkages between the Vision/Mission and the Faculty plans, the departmental plans, and functional plans. All plans are constrained by the two outer circles—Financial Model and Governance Model.

Figure 1: Depiction of SFU’s Planning Framework

The UPF, which is updated regularly, provides a means for determining future initiatives, allocating resources, and measuring success. It provides guidance to all institutional planning

7 http://mial.sfu.ca/content/dam/sfu/pres/pres_docs/University%20Planning%20Framework_Dec%202015%20(a mended%20Mar%202016).pdf
10 https://www.sfu.ca/engage/strategy.html
activities and includes mechanisms for monitoring progress and achievements. It is a dynamic document that reflects the University’s response to its changing environment.

The UPF includes goals for each core theme, expected outcomes for each theme, and indicators to measure theme performance.

The Planning Framework is reviewed by the Board of Governors and the Senate and is published on SFU’s website.

**Quality Assurance**

SFU has developed several quality assurance mechanisms over five decades, including ongoing reviews of all academic program delivery, regular performance evaluations of faculty and staff, as well as student feedback. To guide SFU’s quality and to ensure that it aligns with its values and Vision, the University operates by collegial development of strategic academic, research, innovation, and engagement plans that are periodically reviewed and renewed. SFU has a long established and rigorous quality assurance tradition to ensure that it is competitive in a highly competitive post-secondary educational environment, and that the University is successful as reflected by its rankings in national and international surveys.

SFU has strategic enrollment management, budget, and academic staffing policies that have been developed over the years explicitly to take into consideration quality of program delivery.

**Academic Planning**

The cascading of the Ministry mandate through the SFU Vision continues through to the five-year Academic Plan, Faculty plans, and departmental plans. For each of these plans, supporting actions are identified that lead to the achievement of goals and objectives, many of which impact the continued improvement of academic quality at all levels within the institution.

The objectives of the University Academic Plan, which provides direction to all Faculty and department planning, state clearly that quality is at the centre of the institution. These objectives include:

- Enhancement of the quality of education and student satisfaction.
- Improvement of support for students.
- Contribution to research excellence.
- Increasing community engagement activity.

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11 [https://www.sfu.ca/vpacademic/academic_planning/academic_plans.html](https://www.sfu.ca/vpacademic/academic_planning/academic_plans.html)
**Regular Assessments of Achievements**

SFU’s planning processes all have assessments of progress and achievement built into their cycles.

At the strategic level, a Strategic Review\(^{12}\) is conducted regularly where identified metrics are measured for each of the three core themes, and a view is determined as to how well SFU is achieving its Vision. At the next level, the Academic Plan is reviewed every two years when data and pertinent information are collected to determine progress. Reports are solicited for each Faculty and a consolidated report\(^{13}\) is presented to Senate and the Board of Governors for information.

All other functional plans are assessed regularly within the portfolios of the Vice-Presidents.

As required by the provincial government, an assessment of SFU’s performance using the measures under the Ministry of Advanced Education’s Accountability Framework for post-secondary education is undertaken annually. The results are detailed in the Institutional Accountability Plan and Report.

**Institutional Accreditation**

On an institutional level, the University has achieved accreditation from the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities,\(^{14}\) which requires SFU to self-assess and adhere to the following five Standards for Accreditation:

1) The institution articulates its purpose in a mission statement and identifies core themes that comprise essential elements of that mission. In an examination of its purpose, characteristics, and expectations, the institution defines the parameters for mission fulfillment. Guided by that definition, it identifies an acceptable threshold or extent of mission fulfillment.

2) By documenting the adequacy of its resources and capacity, the institution demonstrates the potential to fulfill its mission, accomplish its core theme objectives, and achieve the intended outcomes of its programs and services, wherever offered and however delivered. Through its governance and decision-making structures, the institution establishes, reviews regularly, and revises, as necessary, policies and procedures that promote effective management and operation of the institution.

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\(^{12}\) [https://www.sfu.ca/pres.html](https://www.sfu.ca/pres.html)

\(^{13}\) [https://www.sfu.ca/vpacademic/academic_planning/academic_plans/2013-18plans.html#main_content_text](https://www.sfu.ca/vpacademic/academic_planning/academic_plans/2013-18plans.html#main_content_text)

\(^{14}\) [http://www.nwccu.org/](http://www.nwccu.org/)
3) The institution engages in ongoing, participatory planning that provides direction for the institution and leads to the achievement of the intended outcomes of its programs and services, accomplishment of its core themes, and fulfillment of its mission. The resulting plans reflect the interdependent nature of the institution’s operations, functions, and resources. The institution demonstrates that the plans are implemented and are evident in the relevant activities of its programs and services, the adequacy of its resource allocation, and the effective application of institutional capacity. In addition, the institution demonstrates that its planning and implementation processes are sufficiently flexible so that the institution is able to address unexpected circumstances that have the potential to impact the institution’s ability to accomplish its core theme objectives and to fulfill its mission.

4) The institution regularly and systematically collects data related to clearly defined indicators of achievement, analyzes those data, and formulates evidence-based evaluations of the achievement of core theme objectives. It demonstrates clearly defined procedures for evaluating the integration and significance of institutional planning, the allocation of resources, and the application of capacity in its activities for achieving the intended outcomes of its programs and services and for achieving its core theme objectives. The institution disseminates assessment results to its constituencies and uses those results to effect improvement.

5) Based on its definition of mission fulfillment and informed by the results of its analysis of accomplishment of its core theme objectives, the institution develops and publishes evidence-based evaluations regarding the extent to which it is fulfilling its mission. The institution regularly monitors its internal and external environments to determine how and to what degree changing circumstances may impact its mission and its ability to fulfill that mission. It demonstrates that it is capable of adapting, when necessary, its mission, core themes, programs, and services to accommodate changing and emerging needs, trends, and influences to ensure enduring institutional relevancy, productivity, viability, and sustainability.

These Standards are statements that articulate the quality and effectiveness expected of accredited institutions, and collectively provide a framework for continuous improvement within institutions. The Standards also serve as indicators by which institutions are evaluated by peers and are designed to guide institutions in a process of self-reflection that blends analysis and synthesis in a holistic examination of institutional quality and adherence to its mandate and vision.

Institutional accreditation benefits SFU’s commitment to quality assurance in providing an accepted and broadly recognized set of best-practice standards that enhance the University’s reputation for academic quality in demonstrating accountability through improved institutional assessment and evaluation. It also helps establish clearer benchmarks/standards for assessing learning outcomes, smoothes the progress of curriculum reform, and benefits students’ learning experiences.
2. QUALITY ASSURANCE POLICY AND PRACTICE

This report is to introduce the QAPA team to the internal processes currently and previously in use at the institution and any other materials needed during the site visit. This should focus on how the internal policies and program review processes are reflective of the institution’s mission, whether the internal process gauges such things: how faculty scholarship and professional development inform teaching and continue to be a foundation for ensuring that programming is up to date, how learning outcomes are being achieved, and how student progress is assessed and measured.

Please Note: SFU has tried its best to address each question individually based on the template provided. Many of the questions in the template are closely related, which has resulted in some repetition in the provided answers.
2.1 Policies that Promote Quality Assurance

The quality of academic appointments substantially defines the quality of the University. SFU has a number of academic policies\textsuperscript{15} that directly influence the quality of teaching and learning. These policies reflect a key principle or rule, establish the context or provide a rationale for it, prescribe how they will be implemented, define roles and responsibilities, specify the scope of application, and otherwise provide basic guidance to community members on the policies’ relevance and application. The following refers to a select number of these policies.

2.1.1 Academic Appointments and Terms of Appointment – Policy Series A10

- **Search Committee**
  The Search Committee shall be composed of faculty, faculty and non-faculty staff, or faculty and non-faculty staff and students (depending on departmental practice). Faculty shall constitute the majority of the Committee. Both genders shall be represented on the Committee. The department Chair shall chair the Committee unless the Dean approves an alternate arrangement. The Chair is a voting member of the Committee.

- **Applicant Submissions**
  Applicants are asked to submit a curriculum vitae, examples of their research, and the names of at least three referees from whom confidential letters of reference will be sought. Short-listed applicants have a campus visit for individual interviews with faculty and to present a research seminar.

- **Appointment Recommendation and Approval**
  o The department Chair shall forward to the Dean the appointment form with a recommendation for appointment.\textsuperscript{16}
  o The Dean shall review the recommendation for appointment and shall forward the recommendation together with his/her comments to the Vice-President, Academic.
  o The Vice-President, Academic shall review the recommendations of the Chair and Dean together with supporting documentation and shall forward the recommendations to the President.
  o The President shall consider the recommendation from the Vice-President, Academic and shall forward the recommendation to the Board of Governors for action.

\textsuperscript{15} \url{https://www.sfu.ca/policies/gazette/academic.html}

\textsuperscript{16} Departments have an Appointments Committee to advise the Chair on appointments strategies and practices.
2.1.2 Renewal, Tenure and Promotion, and Other Academic Appointments – Policy Series A11 and A12

Criteria for Appointment, Contract Renewal, Tenure and Promotion, and Salary Review

Faculty members in accepting appointment undertake to uphold and promote the aims of the University in the creation, dissemination, and application of knowledge. Their professional efforts should be directed primarily to teaching, research, and service to the University and the community. As teachers, they should be effective in transmitting a knowledge of and interest in their fields and should keep abreast of knowledge in their fields. Their research should be of such calibre as to contribute to the advancement of their fields. Faculty members are expected to carry their share of service work. Career advancement will be based upon the extent to which these obligations are fulfilled.

University and departmental criteria for contract renewal, tenure and promotion, and salary review are communicated to new faculty when appointed. Faculty are evaluated when they are up for contract renewal and/or tenure and promotion. They are also evaluated biennially during salary reviews. The general evaluation criteria are specified in University policy and must include teaching effectiveness, scholarly activity, and service to the University. In addition, each academic unit has its own departmental criteria, standards, and assessment methods ratified by the department, approved by its Dean, and vetted by the Vice-President, Academic. Departmental criteria are renewed and/or revised every three years.

Each department’s Tenure and Promotion Committee (TPC) conducts evaluations. The composition of TPCs is regulated by University policy, with each committee composed of faculty members across the ranks and members elected by their respective department/school or program. When and where appropriate, tenure and promotion are denied.

Categories of Evaluation

A faculty member who is being considered for contract renewal, tenure and promotion, and for salary review must be evaluated on the basis of their performance in three key areas of activity: teaching effectiveness; scholarly activity; and service to the University, their academic discipline, or the broader community.

✔ Teaching Effectiveness
   Success as a teacher is of fundamental importance for evaluating the performance of a faculty member. Matters which should be taken into consideration in evaluating teaching include: mastery of the subject,
generation of enthusiasm in students, maintenance of appropriate academic standards, dedicated involvement within one’s field, openness to innovation, graduate supervision, and development of academic programs. Consideration shall be given to the ability and willingness of a faculty member to teach a range of subject matter and at various levels of instruction. Teaching effectiveness should be measured or assessed through a combination of methods, including student questionnaires, the observations of faculty colleagues, teaching portfolios, and the calibre of supervised dissertations and theses. At a minimum, faculty members must follow the general procedures developed by their departments to evaluate teaching effectiveness. Services to students over and above formal teaching should also be taken into consideration, particularly where the service is of a time-consuming nature.

SFU recently launched a Student Evaluation of Teaching and Courses (SETC) initiative, a new online system that has replaced pen-and-paper course evaluations in many SFU academic units. Ultimately, the SETC initiative is about providing instructors and administrators with better information for use in developing effective student learning experiences. The system focuses less on student perceptions of instructors, and more on how students learn. In fall 2016, just over half of the primary course sections at SFU used the SETC evaluation form.

✓ **Scholarly Activity**
Research achievement is of fundamental importance in the evaluation of the performance of a faculty member. The nature of research achievement will vary by discipline. Consideration should be given to evidence of scholarship reflected in the ability of the faculty member to have his/her research published or otherwise subjected to appropriate peer evaluation. In judging research, emphasis must be placed on quality as well as quantity. Consideration should be given to recognition by national and international professional societies and granting agencies, and special recognition by such societies, agencies, or other universities should be noted.

✓ **General Contributions to the University and to Society**
It is expected that each faculty member will be an active participant in the collegial governance of the University. The faculty member's contributions to all levels of the administration of the University should be considered. Account should also be taken of the faculty member’s contributions in initiating and participating in seminars, public lectures, or similar activities on campus, and of the stimulation and help he/she may afford to other faculty members of the University. Included in this category are the public service contributions which faculty members may make. There should, however, be a
strong focus on the academic content of the contribution by the faculty member in this category.

**University Criteria for Appointment or Promotion**

- **Requirements for Assistant Professor:** Appointment to the rank of Assistant Professor presumes a strong academic record and completion of academic or professional training. There should be clear indications that the individual has the aptitudes of a successful teacher, the potential to grow in stature as a scholar as well as a willingness to play an active role in the University. These views should be supported by strong referee reports.

- **Requirements for Associate Professor:** Appointment or promotion to the rank of Associate Professor is based on a record of successful teaching, scholarly achievement, and participation in service to the University and the community. An important criterion is the demonstration of continued professional growth of the individual in his/her field(s), including recognition as an established scholar. External referees of high academic stature must assess the individual's research contributions.

- **Requirements for Professor:** The total overall career contributions of the faculty member in areas of teaching, research, and service to the University and the community shall be taken into consideration. The rank of Professor is designed for those who have excelled in teaching and research. Appointment or promotion to this rank requires evidence of national or international reputation in their area of expertise, supported by letters from external referees of high academic stature.

**University Criteria for Tenure**

All candidates for tenure will be expected to demonstrate that, since the commencement of the tenure-track appointment,

- there has been continued growth as an established scholar, as evidenced by the development of a significant program of research and scholarship;
- there has been a sustained commitment to undergraduate and/or graduate teaching and supervision; and
- he/she has become a responsible and contributing member of the University/academic community.

**Departmental Criteria and Standards for Tenure and Promotion**

Each department, school, and non-departmentalized Faculty or area within a non-departmentalized Faculty will draw up, and have adopted by the tenure-track faculty, sets of criteria, standards, and methods of assessment for tenure and for promotion to Professor that will be reviewed and either reaffirmed or
revised no less than every three years. These departmental criteria must be approved by the Dean, copied to the Vice-President, Academic, and must be consistent with the general University requirements for tenure and promotion contained in the policy.

When a faculty member is hired into a tenure-track position, he/she must be given a copy of the most recently approved departmental criteria for tenure. These will be the applicable standards when that faculty member is considered for tenure unless he/she opts to be evaluated against the department’s most recently approved criteria for tenure.

When a faculty member is being considered for promotion to Professor, his/her performance will be measured against the most recently approved criteria for promotion to Professor in existence at the time of consideration.

**Other Academic Appointments**

**Part-Time Faculty**
A part-time faculty member is defined as one who performs the duties and responsibilities of a full-time faculty member, but with a reduced load. A part-time faculty member must have the same qualifications as a full-time Lecturer, Instructor, Assistant Professor, Associate Professor, or Professor at Simon Fraser University.

**Sessional Lecturers**
A Sessional Lecturer would be a person who has substantial expertise in the academic discipline which he/she is appointed to teach.

2.1.3 **Employment Policies for Academic Personnel – Policy Series A30**

The following two policies relate to faculty practice and have an impact on academic quality.

**Code of Faculty Ethics and Responsibilities**

The first responsibility of university teachers is the pursuit and dissemination of knowledge and understanding through teaching and research. University teachers are expected to:

- Devote their energies conscientiously to develop their scholarly competence and effectiveness as teachers.
- Be conscientious in the preparation and organization of their subject matter and should revise this periodically in the light of developments in their fields.
• Conscientiously strive to improve the methods of presentation of their subjects to their students.
• Encourage the free exchange of ideas between themselves and their students.

**Tenure-Track Faculty Workload**

This policy describes the University’s expectations and procedures concerning the workload of tenure-track faculty. Among its objectives, the policy promotes the integration and balance of research and teaching for faculty.

The University’s expectation is that a normal annual faculty workload will include contributions from all three areas of activity. Research and teaching will take precedence.

2.1.4 *Faculty Scholarship*

Both research faculty and teaching faculty are, as a rule, seriously engaged in ensuring that their research and professional activity informs their teaching and the programming in which they are engaged.

Research faculty often teach, for at least a portion of their load, in a field which is very directly associated with their research specialty. Integrating contemporary content into their teaching is an important source of satisfaction while also helping to recruit students for research training. Involvement in professional associations fosters an awareness of how trends are shaping undergraduate teaching both in Canada and worldwide; such awareness is often explicitly developed through short courses or seminars, either taken or given, at national or international meetings or in specific workshops. In many cases, these involve specific training opportunities in which students also take part. Thus, the normal pursuit of research activity puts faculty in contact with such trends, and the biennial review process normally rewards efforts of this kind. These efforts likewise feature in self-studies for review, which comment routinely on the ways in which programs might be revised in order to better reflect contemporary practice.

Teaching faculty also frequently take it as an aspect of their mission to develop specific innovations that keep pace with trends elsewhere. These too are supported through the professional development process and through program review. Study leave provisions for teaching faculty typically require that such leave activity specifically address teaching issues. Interaction between teaching and regular faculty in curriculum planning likewise is a regular source of review and renewal of the relevance and currency of course content and approaches.
SFU’s standards for evaluation of scholarly performance are continually reviewed and revised to reflect the times. SFU is leading the trend towards explicit recognition of community-engaged scholarship and the co-creation of knowledge with communities (industry, Aboriginal communities, special interest groups, etc.), including revision of standards and expectations to ensure that community-based research (CBR) quality is recognized and rewarded.

2.1.5 Faculty Professional Development

Faculty Development Program - Lifecycle Framework

The Faculty Development Program uses a lifecycle framework, seeking to support faculty development through the full life course of faculty career. This includes:

- Onboarding new faculty.
- Advancing assistant professors toward tenure.
- Jump starting midcareer faculty.
- Developing leadership potential among the faculty.
- Filling leadership roles in the faculty.
- Moving faculty toward retirement.

Development Process

Programming in each of these areas has been developed by researching best practices, networking with potential partners and consulting with relevant leaders, piloting offerings, assessing those pilots, and, based on the results, making plans for continuing and sustainable programs.

Program Components

Programming developed in each area includes the following components:

- Cohort Formation: Creating a network among members of the supported group by introducing them to one another and facilitating their ongoing interaction.
- Mentoring: Forming relationships between members of the cohort and more experienced practitioners, facilitating their continuing interaction, providing training for the mentors where necessary, and rewarding their mentoring activities.
- Training: Providing members of the supported group with access to the relevant body of knowledge, in both policy and good practice.
- Feedback: Assessing program offerings on an on-going basis by conducting post-event surveys and debriefing program graduates.
**Initiatives**

- New faculty orientation.
- Career retreat for assistant professors.
- Faculty-based mentors.
- Developing leadership potential.

Faculty development is also conducted by the Teaching and Learning Centre and the Centre for Online and Distance Education (refer to Section 4.1.4, Criterion ii).

SFU has a professional development fund for faculty that provides long-term members and most limited-term appointments with an annual allotment of funds to cover expenses related to the purchase of books or periodicals; memberships in learned societies and professional organizations; the purchase of employment-related equipment; travel expenses for study leaves or conferences and other expenses related to teaching, scholarship, or related academic activities.

2.1.6 **Learning Outcomes at SFU**

In Canada, there is no established tradition of using learning outcomes in research universities, except when required by professional accreditation bodies (e.g., business, engineering science). Today, the merits underlying learning outcomes are debated in Canada, with institutions adopting best practices, informed by an established literature. SFU’s practice is to refer to “learning outcomes” also as “educational goals,” with the latter the preferred internal terminology. Given that learning outcomes is the more common language used outside SFU, and given that the audience of this report is primarily external to SFU, this report will continue to use “learning outcomes,” acknowledging that SFU’s internal documents more frequently use “educational goals.”

Simon Fraser University continues to work toward establishing articulated and assessable learning outcomes, with some academic units (notably the accredited professional schools) already having developed learning outcomes at both the program and course level.

Moving an entire institution to assessment of student learning through a learning outcomes process is a significant task, especially when there is no regulatory body that requires it. Adopting a learning outcomes and assessment approach is a significant cultural and administrative change for the SFU academic community.

To link program goal processes to existing academic unit assessment processes, the Vice-President, Academic proposed that learning outcomes be defined and assessed as an integral part of each unit’s regular seven-year external review process. These
goals, assessment plans, and any resultant modifications are to be articulated within external review self-study reports, post-review action plans, and mid-cycle progress reports and made publicly accessible on unit websites. Academic units up for review may then use feedback from their external review to adjust their articulated goals and develop their assessment plans. At the mid-cycle point (in the fourth year of the seven-year cycle), units will report to the Vice-President, Academic on progress made from the assessment process. By incorporating the development of outcomes and assessment into the external review process, which is already a well-entrenched and valued method of continuous improvement, the entire initiative is progressing incrementally.

Dedicated financial support has been made available by the Vice-President, Academic to units at different stages of implementing learning outcomes. The Teaching and Learning Centre’s educational consultants are providing expertise in curriculum development, and assistance with learning outcomes articulation and assessment methods development. Program Directors at CODE also provide expertise in curriculum development, online course design, optimization of course management systems tools for course delivery, and learning outcomes articulation and assessment methods development. A core group of staff from Academic Planning, the Teaching and Learning Centre, Institutional Research and Planning, University Curriculum Planning, and Information Technology are working on a plan to integrate data collection and analysis processes for various assessment activities across the University.

SFU continues to develop its internal expertise to support faculty and staff through the cultural shift to articulated learning outcomes and assessment. The University has sent key internal academic and administrative personnel to relevant national and international learning outcomes and assessment symposia and conferences. Teaching and Learning Centre educational consultants and CODE Program Directors familiar with learning outcomes development and assessment planning, provide support and guidance to faculty in formulating assessable learning outcomes. The Office of the Vice-President, Academic has sponsored annual summer workshops since, facilitated by the TLC educational consultants who are working directly with academic units on learning outcomes and assessment.

The Teaching and Learning Centre has developed a dedicated Learning Outcomes and Assessment website to support units by providing informational resources, examples, and templates that can be adapted and customized to their unique needs. The information ties the learning outcomes process into the external review process and provides timelines and milestones for all aspects of the cycle. The Centre developed the site with ease of use in mind and incorporated significant feedback
from faculty and staff, the targeted audience. The website is designed to be dynamic, and, as the initiative progresses, more information and interactivity will be added.\(^{17}\)

In summary, Simon Fraser University is working very hard to identify and adopt best practices for the implementation of assessable learning outcomes across the curricula in a realistic timeframe, given the challenge of promoting change to institutional culture. The Terms of Reference and Senate-approved principles furnished SFU and the Learning Outcomes and Assessment Working Group with guidance as the University navigated the politically and administratively complex process of transforming into an institution that practices learning outcomes assessment consistently across its undergraduate and graduate programs. The resultant Senate-approved proposal to develop program-level learning outcomes and assessment methods is the culmination of many months of consultation, debate, and compromise and represents an innovative model that acknowledges SFU’s uniqueness. The process will develop and build over time, which will allow for a review and assessment of the initiative as the University moves forward.

### 2.1.7 Student Progress and Assessment

Assessment of student progress takes place through the complex assessment processes that occur in individual courses, in policies that govern admission to specific programs, in the ongoing assessment of GPA, and whether students are attaining thresholds that lead them toward graduation with an appropriate credential. The last of these is taken on at the University, Faculty, and unit levels. At the University level, the establishment of levels of assessment are part of the policies that are approved by Senate for individual degrees and programs; in that context, the comparison with institutions locally and elsewhere to determine appropriateness is ongoing and subject to rigorous scrutiny.

Assessment of individual progress, and of the individual progress of students with respect to their peers, is governed at the course level by the faculty member in charge of the course. However, in many units, particularly in courses that are required for certain programs, standards are regularly checked for consistency by internal structures, including for example the unit’s undergraduate committee. Course coordinators, frequently with appointments as teaching faculty, check that both ongoing and sessional instructors adhere to norms that are established in the unit as to frequency and nature of assessment, grading standards, and topics covered. Teaching assistants also receive close supervision and training in such practices from course directors and coordinators.

Individual assessment is multifaceted and highly variable. It includes written and oral examinations, tests, and quizzes; the production of projects of a research or practical

\(^{17}\) [http://educationalgoals.tlc.sfu.ca/](http://educationalgoals.tlc.sfu.ca/)
nature, which can take the form of essays, presentations, posters, as well as videos, working devices, or works of art, with appropriate documentation; and recording and assessment of participation in discussion. Policies encourage varied forms of assessment. Across all programs, writing, quantitative, and breadth requirements seek to ensure that all students are assessed in a variety of ways for a spectrum of skills deemed important for any graduate.

Efforts are also made to ensure that standards in various disciplines are met in ways that are consistent across various jurisdictions. Here, there are so many individual arrangements that an example will have to serve as illustrative. SFU is a member of the British Columbia Committee on the Undergraduate Program in Mathematics and Statistics, and University representatives participate in coordination of standards in order to ensure transferability of credit in such courses. Assessment is thus a major focus of this organization, which is far from unique. This is part of the service load of individual faculty members.

The professional development process (including study leaves and support for membership in professional or disciplinary associations) supports the participation of individual faculty members in ongoing training or discussion of assessment at the local, national, and international levels. Workshops and training of this kind are supported both by the professional development grant and by the ongoing biennial assessment process. The Teaching and Learning Centre and the Centre for Online and Distance Education likewise offer discussion of assessment.

All such processes are normally described as part of the self-assessment exercise when individual units proceed for review; for units with accreditation, it is typical for sample examinations and marking schemes to be part of the overall picture. Hence, these processes are subjected to the same kinds of peer assessment through review.

### 2.2 Senate Guidelines for External Reviews of Academic Units

SFU’s commitment to quality assurance at the program level can be seen in its academic unit external reviews, which are mandated by Senate.

All academic units (departments, schools, and non-departmentalized Faculties) must undergo an external review, normally once every seven years. The purpose of such reviews is to enable units to conduct their own assessments of their strengths and weaknesses, to obtain the views of external experts in the field, and to support academic planning.

The review process is intended to ensure that:

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18 [https://www.sfu.ca/senate/senate-committees/scup/SCUP-ExReview.html](https://www.sfu.ca/senate/senate-committees/scup/SCUP-ExReview.html)
• The quality of the unit's programs is high, and there are measures in place to ensure the evaluation and revision of the teaching programs.
• The quality of faculty research is high, and faculty collaboration and interaction provide a stimulating academic environment.
• Unit members participate in the administration of the unit and take an active role in the dissemination of knowledge.
• The unit’s environment is conducive to the attainment of the objectives of the unit.

Figure 2 depicts activities related to the planning and preparation for an external review, from the initiation of the process, to the creation of a self-study, and the development of a visit schedule.

Figure 2: SFU External Reviews – Planning and Preparation
Figure 3 depicts activities related to the site visit and its outcomes, including the reviewers’ report, its resultant action plan, and subsequent progress report.

**Figure 3: SFU External Reviews – Site Visit to Action**

- **Reviewers conduct site visit (2 or 3 days) – Jan/April**
  - Meet with:
    - Faculty, staff, students
    - Senior administrators

- **Reviewers submit report within 6 weeks**

- **UNIT prepares action plan within 6 weeks**

- **UNIT, Dean, and VPA OFFICE discuss/agree on action plan**

- **Unit action plan presented to SCUP**

- **Action plan approved by SENATE**

- **Unit action plan – update (progress report) 3.5 years after review** to SENATE

*Senate Committee on University Priorities*
2.3 Accreditation

Institutional Accreditation

SFU was granted accreditation (effective September 1, 2015) from the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU). The NWCCU is one of six independent, non-profit membership organizations recognized by the U.S. Department of Education as regional authorities on educational quality and institutional effectiveness of higher education.

To be accredited, the institution needs to comply with five Standards (refer to Section 1.5), which are interconnected and built upon each other in a recursive cycle of continuous improvement. The Standards articulate the quality and effectiveness and serve as indicators by which institutions are evaluated by their peers. The Standards ensure that an institution has appropriate and clear goals, sufficient resources to achieve them, is fulfilling its objectives, and will continue to do so.

In essence, accreditation is a voluntary, peer review process. It serves three main purposes: (1) to assure quality to the public, (2) to ease student decisions by signaling quality, and (3) to certify a graduate’s credentials to employers. The process provides colleges and universities with an opportunity for reflection, honest assessment of strengths and weaknesses, along with a chance to develop strategies for continued improvement.

SFU is currently the only major Canadian research-intensive university with accreditation from the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities.
Specialized Program Accreditation/Recognition

SFU has several programs that are accredited and/or recognized by relevant professional governing bodies and associations. Reviews are demanded by professional associations and industry in order to maintain the highest possible standards for all respective programs.

Table 3 - SFU’s Current Specialized or Programmatic Accreditation and/or Recognition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Faculty</th>
<th>Degree or Program</th>
<th>Accrediting Agency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Applied Sciences</td>
<td>Engineering Science</td>
<td>Canadian Engineering Accreditation Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applied Sciences</td>
<td>Mechatronic Systems Engineering</td>
<td>Canadian Engineering Accreditation Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts and Social Sciences</td>
<td>PhD-Clinical Psychology</td>
<td>Canadian Psychological Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>Business Administration</td>
<td>European Quality Improvement System (EQUIS)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>Business Administration</td>
<td>Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>Business Administration</td>
<td>(Signatory to) Principles of Responsible Management Education (PRME)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>Business Administration-Management Information Systems</td>
<td>Business Technology Management Accreditation Council (BTMAC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Teacher Certification</td>
<td>BC College of Teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>Physical Geography-Geosciences Concentration</td>
<td>Recognized by the Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of British Columbia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>Master of Resource Management (Planning)</td>
<td>Recognized by the Canadian Institute of Planners and the Planning Institute of BC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Sciences</td>
<td>Public Health</td>
<td>Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>Chemistry</td>
<td>Canadian Society for Chemistry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>Earth Sciences</td>
<td>Recognized by the Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of British Columbia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>Biomedical Physiology and Kinesiology (Kinesiology major only)</td>
<td>Canadian Council of University Physical Education and Kinesiology Administrators</td>
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<td>Science</td>
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<td>Science</td>
<td>Actuarial Sciences</td>
<td>Canadian Institute of Actuaries</td>
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<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>Biological Sciences</td>
<td>College of Applied Biology</td>
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</table>
3. SELF-EVALUATION APPROACH

Provide a general overview of the approach used by the institution to complete its internal evaluation process (self-study) for the QAPA. This section should outline the following: the main issues of the self-evaluation; the membership of the institution’s quality assurance team/committee members and their respective roles; the distribution of duties and responsibilities; data/evidence collection procedures; data/evidence analysis procedures used to critically assess the effectiveness of quality assurance mechanisms; any consultations carried out.
Self-Evaluation Process

This institution report is concerned with quality assurance. Since this is a pilot, SFU needed to identify resources and assign roles and responsibilities. Below is an overview of the actions taken to complete this report.

A) Governance of the QAPA Process at SFU

A high level of commitment was made to the process with a Steering Committee being appointed to oversee the self-evaluation. Members included the President, Vice-Presidents, Associate Vice-Presidents, and Deans.

B) Development of the Institution Report

The development of the institution report was managed by the Director of Academic Planning and Quality Assurance and supported by staff (Accreditation Officer; Coordinator, University Curriculum and Institutional Liaison; and the Academic Planning Assistant). Academic input was provided by ex-departmental chairs, faculty members, the Vice-President, Academic, and the Associate Vice-President, Academic.

During this process, the following actions were undertaken:

- All policies that both directly and indirectly relate to academic quality were reviewed.
- The external review process and the Senate Guidelines for External Reviews of Academic Units were reviewed.
- An analysis of five completed unit external reviews was done to determine the completion rate of approved actions that flowed from the reviews.
- A survey related to external reviews was undertaken to collect perceptions of the process and effectiveness of external reviews from Deans, Chairs, Directors, faculty, and staff.

C) Review of the Draft Institution Report

The institution report was reviewed by the Steering Committee and the Senate Committee on University Priorities before being submitted to the Ministry.

D) Assessor Visit Schedule (March 13 and 14, 2017)

All parties expected to meet with the assessors were advised of the dates of the visit and were asked to make themselves available.

Space was reserved for the meetings.
An online document repository was established for access by the assessors and the Ministry and populated with all the required documentation.

E) Next Steps

It is anticipated that the following steps would be covered to conclude this audit:

- Receive a draft of the QAPA assessors’ report (April/May 2017).
- Respond to the draft report regarding accuracy and/or omissions.
- Receive and respond to the final QAPA assessors’ report (July 2017).
- Post the assessors’ report and SFU’s response on the web (July 2017).
- Consider the recommendations made in the report and develop an action plan (July – Dec 2017).
- Provide a progress report on the action plan to the Ministry (July 2018).

Sources of Information

SFU has put considerable efforts into assessments and surveys that help to support its commitment to quality assurance.

A Quality Assurance and Process Audit survey was created with the assistance of the Office of Institutional Research and Planning specifically for the QAPA institution report. It was distributed to a sample of approximately 200, including Deans, faculty, and staff at SFU who have been directly involved in the external review process over recent years. The survey consisted of 30 questions that focused on major aspects of the external review process, including the effectiveness of the process itself and its significance on teaching, student learning, and research. The survey encouraged respondents to provide feedback in order to help the University improve the external review process. The survey, completed in November 2016, had an approximately 50% rate of response.

An analysis and summary of five selected external review updates from 2015 was also done. This analysis focused specifically on the action plans that were developed as a result of the unit reviews. The intent was to determine how many items within each action plan have been completed, are currently in progress, or have been superseded.

The Institutional Accountability Plan and Report (IAPR) is another resource that SFU has also drawn upon for this report. Included in Section 4.1.1 are the findings of the student survey from the IAPR that measure student satisfaction with the level and quality of education attained at SFU.
4. QUALITY ASSURANCE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

*Please Note:* SFU has tried its best to address each question individually based on the template provided. Many of the questions in the template are closely related, which has resulted in some repetition in the provided answers.
4.1 OVERALL PROCESS

4.1.1 DOES THE PROCESS REFLECT THE INSTITUTION’S MANDATE, MISSION, AND VALUES?

Criterion
The institution should be able to demonstrate that it has an established institutional and program review planning cycle and process to assess the effectiveness of its educational programs and services, their responsiveness to student, labour market, and social needs. The process should contribute to the continuous improvement of the institution.

Describe how the institution meets these criteria. Relevant institutional policies should be attached as an appendix.

4.1.1.1 Quality Assurance Planning

SFU’s quality assurance is guided by its commitment to its Vision and the goals of the Ministry of Advanced Education as laid out in the Ministry’s annual Service Plan. At the strategic level, the University continually assesses and reports on its planning activities through the Academic Plan, the Research Plan, the Community Engagement Strategy, the Institutional Accountability Plan and Report, the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities self-evaluation reports, just to name a few. In each case, indicators are used to assess performance.

The principles that guide all quality assurance at SFU are set out below, with some examples to demonstrate how they are put into practice.

A) Quality assurance is a continuous process

This principle is based on the belief that attention to quality should be the responsibility of many (ideally all) employees and that attention to quality should permeate activities, rather than being an occasional check on performance. Examples: academic units are reviewed on a regular cycle; student feedback is sought on virtually all courses; progress on the University Academic Plan is reviewed regularly and the plan itself is on a five-year cycle; in-house and external surveys of students are conducted regularly; Institutional Research and Planning produces regular reports on a wide range of data and indicators; key performance indicators are examined at the institutional level by Senate and the Board of Governors; faculty members go through contract renewal, tenure and promotion reviews, and a performance review every two years; senior administrators (Deans, Associate Vice-Presidents, Vice-Presidents and President) are reviewed annually.
B) **Quality assurance is built on good data that are available to all**

Whenever possible, one should use well defined and appropriately collected data to understand quality. Furthermore, by making data available widely, individual units are encouraged to compare their performance against others. Primary responsibility for this rests with Institutional Research and Planning (IRP), but other units may also be responsible. Examples: the Vice-President, Research maintains data on research grants and citations to publications; Facilities Services keeps track of building condition; Finance maintains records of revenues and expenditures. As far as possible, SFU promotes open access to data. Considerable amounts of data are available publicly on the IRP website, and further data are password protected for internal use by SFU employees only.

C) **Quality assurance is enhanced through independent peer review**

This principle encompasses three ideas. First, derived mainly from academic culture, is the concept that those with an equal level of expertise in a particular field should undertake reviews of quality. Second, peers should include people from outside the unit or the institution. Third, reviewers must be sufficiently independent that other considerations cannot affect the integrity of their review. Examples: virtually all serious reviews of academic and support units are conducted by teams that include individuals external to the University; the University undertakes institutional accreditation through NWCCU to ensure that its overall operations are reviewed by peers; some academic units undergo discipline-based accreditation conducted by external teams (e.g., business, engineering science, health sciences, psychology); financial statements are audited independently; the University has some employees who are charged with the authority to conduct independent assessments that may be critical of the institution (e.g., ombudsperson, internal audit); external reviewers of faculty members for tenure and promotion must not be in a conflict-of-interest.

D) **Quality assurance requires action**

This principle derives from an understanding that there is often a need for action in order to improve performance. Many quality assurance processes have a required or optional follow-up phase in which corrective action can be taken. Examples: in reviews of academic units this is a formal requirement—the unit develops an action plan that is approved by Senate and there is a mid-term review of achievement of the plan before the next external review is initiated; faculty members whose performance is judged to be in need of improvement may be required to develop a formal plan for improvement. In other cases, an action plan may be initiated on an ad hoc basis, depending on the results of a quality assurance process. A significant change in the results of a routinely undertaken survey might result in the development of a task force to address the problem, or in assigning someone to take responsibility for improvement. Examples: the Teaching and Learning Centre was reconfigured following the results of the Task Force on Teaching and Learning that was itself the result of perceived dissatisfaction with the previous Centre; changes in the learning management system and the system for acquiring student feedback on courses and
instructors were made following ad hoc reviews; the Centre for Online and Distance Education was restructured in 2014 to provide better support for teaching innovation through distance delivery and for the adoption of various technologies in online learning.

The benefits of review action plans have included the following, all of which have had a positive effect on quality assurance:

- Creation of new programs and revision of current programs.
- Curriculum reviews.
- Reallocation of space and renovations.
- Infrastructure development.
- Reorganization of administration and services.
- Increased academic collaboration across the University.

4.1.1.2 Quality Assurance Activities

A) External Reviews

SFU has a very thorough external review process with guidelines and requirements that all units have to adhere to. Each unit is subject to an external review every seven years that is conducted by three external reviewers and one internal reviewer, each with credentials and expertise within the appropriate field. All aspects of the program are reviewed, such as the unit’s structure, the delivery of its courses, the faculty performance and research, the resources and facilities available, and how these and other aspects of and issues within the unit relate to the overall quality and sustainability of the unit. The process includes a two or three day site visit, involving interviews with senior administration, faculty, staff, and students where standardized external review questions are asked of the unit along with focus questions developed specifically for the unit. The visit is followed by a written report with commendations and recommendations for improvement. The report is distributed to the unit under review, the appropriate Dean, and the Vice-President, Academic. The unit reviews the report and drafts an action plan in response to the review’s findings and recommendations. The Dean, Chair/Director, and Director of Academic Planning and Quality Assurance meet to finalize the action plan before it is forwarded to Senate for final approval and implementation.

The effectiveness of the external review process is evident with the analysis of five unit review updates from 2015 (Archaeology, Communication, Contemporary Arts, English, and Molecular Biology and Biochemistry), which determined that 72% of the items in the action plans had been completed, 22% were ongoing, and 6% were either superseded or the unit was unable to proceed with them for various reasons.

19 Senate Guidelines for External Reviews of Academic Units: http://www.sfu.ca/content/dam/sfu/vpacademic/files/academic_planning/Senate_ER_Guidelines.pdf
B) Institutional Accreditation

SFU is accredited by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU). It received this accreditation, effective fall 2015, after an approximately seven-year long application and candidacy process that required the University to submit several self-evaluation reports and host a number of site visits by peer reviewers. All self-evaluation reports are made available on the SFU website upon submission to the NWCCU. Recommendations, which SFU must respond to in subsequent reports, are offered by the reviewers after each SFU report submission and/or NWCCU site visit. This cycle of self-assessment and peer assessment will be ongoing as accreditation is not granted permanently. It is an ongoing status that must be reaffirmed periodically.

C) Professional Program-Specific Accreditation

Professional program-specific accreditation follows similar processes to that of the institutional NWCCU accreditation. Self-assessments are completed by the units in question and an outside governing body, usually a professional association, will review the self-assessment and potentially follow-up with a site visit. Commendations and recommendations are made, and a determination of best practices is done by the professional association before accreditation is ultimately granted.

D) Unit Plans

Each unit within the University (both academic and non-academic) produces a five-year plan that is aligned with the University Vision, the Academic Plan, Research Plan, and Community Engagement Strategy. The unit plans outline what each unit has accomplished, what the unit is striving to accomplish, and how it will be attained.

4.1.1.3 Responsiveness to Student, Labour Market, and Social Needs

SFU’s planning processes have many factors in place that allow the University to gather accurate information to ultimately respond to the needs of the students, the labour market, and the society that it serves.

SFU is leading the way for cutting-edge universities to embrace collaboration with industry, government, and civil society in delivery of both academic programming and scholarship—including work-based and experiential learning, and community-based scholarship.

The University’s annual Institutional Accountability Plan and Report includes student and labour market survey data. The data are also used to monitor the skills gap as it pertains to enrollment trends at SFU. The University is committed to providing adequate seats in the programs that train students for in-demand careers and jobs.

20 https://www.sfu.ca/vpacademic/accreditation/draft3report.html
As previously noted in Section 1.5 of this report, the Institutional Accountability Plan and Report illustrates SFU’s continued support of the priorities identified in “Skills for Growth – British Columbia’s Labour Market Strategy to 2020” and “The BC Jobs Plan” by showing how SFU is responding to student, employer, and regional economic needs.

Statistics taken from the 2015/16 Institutional Accountability Plan and Report show that SFU is not only meeting ministry targets but consistently exceeding them. The report also illustrates the high level of student satisfaction that is felt by SFU graduates.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FTE</td>
<td>Funded</td>
<td>Actual</td>
<td>Funded</td>
<td>Actual</td>
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<tr>
<td>20,203</td>
<td>22,661</td>
<td>20,203</td>
<td>22,713</td>
<td>20,203</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| % Achieved | 112.2% | 112.4% | 110.5% | 109.8% | Source: SFU Institutional Accountability Plan and Report 2015/16

Table 5: Percentage of Students Who Were Very Satisfied or Satisfied with the Education They Received

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SFU’s Achievement:</th>
<th>Achieved</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2015-16 Target:</td>
<td>≥ 90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015-16 Actual:</td>
<td>91.6% (±0.9%)</td>
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Source: SFU Institutional Accountability Plan and Report 2015/16

Table 6: Percentage of Students Who Rated the Quality of Instruction in Their Program Positively

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<th>SFU’s Achievement:</th>
<th>Achieved</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2015-16 Target:</td>
<td>≥ 90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015-16 Actual:</td>
<td>93.0% (±0.8%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Source: SFU Institutional Accountability Plan and Report 2015/16

SFU has answered the need for training in specific high demand and/or unique career paths with, for example, the Executive MBA in Aboriginal Business and Leadership for Aboriginals credential; the Terrorism, Risk, and Security Studies Program; and the School of Mechatronic Systems Engineering. SFU continues to monitor the social and economic needs of society to develop programming to meet those needs.

SFU’s Continuing Studies unit offers over 30 non-credit certificates and diplomas. They provide learners with the applied knowledge and practical skills needed to prepare for new careers that are helping to close Canada's skills gap, or to advance in chosen fields. Examples include certificates in Public Relations, Human Resource Management, and Applied Project Management. Recently developed certificates include Social Innovation, Plain Language, and First Responders Trauma Prevention and Recovery.
Flexible education at SFU encompasses the ways in which the University community collectively and individually designs, delivers, and supports learner and instructor choice within academic programs in response to increasingly diverse student needs.

SFU NOW, offered through Lifelong Learning at the Vancouver campus, provides opportunity for degree completion through courses offered in the evenings and on the weekends for working adults not able to attend classes full-time during the day.

A Task Force on Flexible Education (TFFE) was formed in 2014 to develop processes and actions to integrate flexible learning into the SFU education experience. Ultimately, the task force subscribes to the notion that flexible education can be understood as the attempt to support creative and responsive teaching and learning approaches that lead to more engaging and effective student learning.

SFU has been successful at articulating and leveraging the value of long-standing experiential learning opportunities such as co-operative education, study abroad opportunities, and field schools. Innovative and small-scale programmatic offerings, such as the Semester in Dialogue\(^1\) and Change Lab,\(^2\) incorporate intensive, credit-bearing curriculum designed to be both experiential and interdisciplinary. Some Faculties have built explicit experiential education into their core degree programming. Most Continuing Studies programs include a practicum, fieldwork, or other experiential learning to further develop students' professional skills under the guidance of industry experts. SFU continues to consider how best to expand experiential course offerings and more deeply embed internal and external experiential opportunities.

The Teaching and Learning Centre works with units to integrate EAL (English as an Additional Language) curricular support within course design, offers instructional design workshops that addresses EAL issues, creates on-line resources for students and instructors, encourages communication across academic and support areas in order to increase efficiency and share best practices, finds creative ways to fill support gaps, and uses opportunities for research to identify what works well for EAL support of SFU’s diverse population and for the SFU community as a whole.

Centre for English Language Learning, Teaching and Research (CELLTR) provides Simon Fraser University students, staff, and faculty with teaching and learning services that support them in SFU’s multilingual and multicultural environment. CELLTR embraces a holistic and proactive approach to English language teaching and learning and academic literacy development, and aims to conceptualize, deliver, and promote a comprehensive range of EAL support services across the University.

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1. [https://www.sfu.ca/dialogue/semester/](https://www.sfu.ca/dialogue/semester/)
2. [http://innovates.vpr.sfu.ca/programs/change-lab](http://innovates.vpr.sfu.ca/programs/change-lab)
The seven-year self-assessment cycle that accompanies accreditation with the NWCCU allows SFU to self-monitor and assess. As part of the cycle, the University is regularly assessed by a group of NWCCU-appointed peers who give commendations and recommendations related to the delivery of the University’s education mandate and its means to fulfill that mandate.

Continual feedback regarding best practices is given to the University through specific professional unit accreditation/recognition, unit external reviews, and institutional accreditation.

**Faculty Budget Model**

In 2011, SFU transitioned from an incremental to a performance-based budget model for the funding of academic units. The model rewards numbers of students attracted to courses and programs. Putting on attractive and competitive programs that appeal to highly qualified students becomes key. This approach has led to a stronger applicant pool and student body, much improved course access, and greater student success, and thus retention rates. The budget model is being continually refined to ensure that it also supports promotion of strategic priorities and continued delivery of excellence. This includes ensuring delivery of academic programming that supports both disciplinary and interdisciplinary pedagogy.

**Interplay: Research and Teaching**

Investment in research enhances the teaching and learning experience for students. Research discoveries are incorporated in curriculum topics, and student queries sometimes inspire research questions. SFU is committed to recruiting stellar faculty who contribute not only to research programs but also to undergraduate and graduate teaching, motivate the next generation of scholars, and encourage student participation in research. Such individuals tend to spark students’ interests by providing the latest research perspectives, and they also attract outstanding undergraduate and graduate students. The top undergraduate students set the standard for their peers by serving as role models, while the graduate students advance knowledge as research assistants and provide valuable instruction to undergraduates as teaching assistants. Furthermore, research-intensive faculty provide opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students to explore scholarly research through focused course seminars, independent study semesters, and honours and thesis projects. The combination of these elements heightens the experience of both students and faculty and builds highly qualified alumni.

**Physical and Technological Infrastructure**

SFU works hard to ensure that its physical and virtual facilities are accessible, safe, secure, and sufficient in quantity and quality to ensure the healthy learning and working environments that support SFU’s Vision/Mission, programs, and services.
The University has three campuses, one in each of British Columbia’s three largest municipalities, all within Metro Vancouver. Together, the Burnaby, Vancouver, and Surrey campuses contain approximately 24,000 square meters of classroom space, 15,000 square meters of teaching laboratories, and 33,000 square meters of research laboratories. The technological infrastructure at SFU is well developed, functional, up-to-date, stable, and fully able to support University functions, programs, and services. Information Technology (IT) changes over the last decade have been massive, pervasive, and successful, and SFU’s IT environment continues to evolve in response to the needs of the SFU community and within the context of a complex funding landscape. Maintaining and upgrading this virtual infrastructure as well as the physical facilities to operate at the leading edge of learning environments and research capacity are extremely important and a priority for SFU.

4.1.1.4 Continuous Improvement

SFU is committed to continual self-assessment of its best practices. The external review process is a seven-year cycle that requires every unit to be reviewed at least once within this timeframe. Institutional accreditation with the NWCCU is also a seven-year cycle in which SFU has to continually adhere to the prescribed standards of best practice in order to maintain accreditation. Similarly, many units within the University have to adhere to their respective professional accreditation cycles. Academic plans are required of each unit within the University every five years, while an Institutional Accountability Plan and Report is prepared annually for the Ministry of Advanced Education.

### INSTITUTION ASSESSMENT

*Based on the preceding and where appropriate, provide a critical assessment of areas of strengths and improvement of its quality assurance mechanisms and the implementation of measures to address areas for improvement. This should include an evaluation of their impact on continuous quality improvement.*

### Areas of Strengths

The University’s commitment to its Vision is evidenced by the many institutional plans and unit plans that build upon a foundation of self-assessment and improvement that has its origins in the University Vision. The plans themselves are reviewed and updated regularly.

The University is committed to self-assessment and improvement. It tracks and monitors student feedback and surveys, on which it reports annually to the Ministry in the Institutional Accountability Plan and Report. Resulting from its accreditation process with

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23 [https://www.sfu.ca/vpacademic/academic_planning/academic_plans.html](https://www.sfu.ca/vpacademic/academic_planning/academic_plans.html)
the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities, SFU has developed a strategic review process that continually assesses, records, and monitors the outcomes and indicators the University uses to measure Vision fulfillment.

SFU’s commitment to its external review process is strong, and the process is well organized and leads to improvements in all aspects of academic teaching and learning as well as research and research/teaching integration.

The University is collaborative and inclusive. The Vision itself was born out of an extensive collaborative effort that included input from faculty, staff, students, and the community. The recent adoption of learning outcomes to assess student learning at the program level was the result of numerous town hall style meetings facilitated by the Vice-President, Academic and the commitment of Senate to improve student learning and faculty teaching.

In the 2017 Maclean’s rankings of Canadian universities, SFU was ranked the number one comprehensive university in Canada, which is the ninth time in the last ten years that SFU has been awarded this ranking.24 SFU was also ranked 11th among Canadian universities in the 2016/17 QS Universities World Rankings25 and ninth in Canada by the Times Higher Education 2017 World University Rankings.26

For the tenth consecutive year, SFU was named one of the country's best employers in Canada’s Top 100 Employers competition.

The results of the recently conducted QAPA survey undertaken by the Office of the Vice-President, Academic show that SFU’s external review process has an overall positive effect on the academic quality of the University. A high percentage of external review participants reported positively upon the process and feel that it is beneficial to the unit and to the University. Below are excerpts from the survey:

**SFU’s external review process effectively improves academic quality:**
- 75% either strongly agree or agree with this statement, while 15% are undecided and 10% either disagree or strongly disagree.

**Do you believe that SFU’s external review process promotes continuous academic quality improvement at SFU?**
- 76% agree with this statement, while 24% disagree.

**The self-study completed by a unit for the purposes of an external review is useful:**
- 80% either strongly agree or agree with this statement, while 12% are undecided and 8% either disagree or strongly disagree.

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Areas of Improvement

Although the University is strongly committed to its Vision and the goals of the Ministry, continual assessment of all facets of the University regarding Vision fulfillment is somewhat irregular and can vary from unit to unit.

In order to achieve accreditation with the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities, the University has fully committed to meaningful and regular self-assessments. Much advancement has been attained as a result, but the University still has to reassess its means of measurement. Indicators of success are under review as the University strives to find the most relevant units of measurement that accurately reflect its Vision fulfillment.

The external review process itself has not been assessed in regards to its effectiveness from unit to unit. It serves the institution well and has no systemic weakness, but work needs to be done in order to ascertain how well it serves each of the units that undertake the process. First steps to tackle this issue have been done with a survey that was distributed amongst unit Deans, faculty, and staff that have been involved in external reviews.

Learning outcomes are currently being implemented at the program level only through the external review process. The University is working to expand this to the course and institutional levels by adopting best practices for the implementation of assessable education.

The results of the recently conducted QAPA survey undertaken by the Office of the Vice-President, Academic suggest that SFU could improve the external review process to be more responsive to student preferences, labour market needs, and community and social needs. Below are excerpts from the survey:

SFU’s external review’s responsiveness to student preferences:
- 40% either strongly agree or agree with this statement, while 45% are undecided and 15% either disagree or strongly disagree.

SFU’s external review’s responsiveness to labour market needs:
- 30% either strongly agree or agree with this statement, while 43% are undecided and 27% either disagree or strongly disagree.

SFU’s external review’s responsiveness to community and social needs:
- 28% either strongly agree or agree with this statement, while 47% are undecided and 25% either disagree or strongly disagree.
4.1.2 IS THE SCOPE OF THE PROCESS APPROPRIATE?

Criterion (i)
There should be evidence of a formal, institutionally approved policy and procedure for the periodic review of programs against published standards that includes the following characteristics:

A. A self-study undertaken by faculty members and administrators of the program based on evidence relating to program performance, including strengths and weaknesses, desired improvements, and future directions. A self-study takes into account:

   o the continuing appropriateness of the program’s structure, admissions requirements, method of delivery and curriculum for the program’s educational goals and standards;
   o the adequacy and effective use of resources (physical, technological, financial and human);
   o faculty performance including the quality of teaching and supervision and demonstrable currency in the field of specialization;
   o that the learning outcomes achieved by students/graduates meet the program’s stated goals, the credential level standard, and where appropriate, the standards of any related regulatory, accrediting or professional association;
   o the continuing adequacy of the methods used for evaluating student progress and achievement to ensure that the program’s stated goals have been achieved;
   o the graduate satisfaction level, student satisfaction level, and graduation rate; and
   o where appropriate, the graduate employment rates, employer satisfaction level, and advisory board satisfaction level.

B. An assessment conducted by a panel that includes independent experts external to the institution. The assessment should normally include a site visit, a written report that assesses program quality and may recommend quality improvements; and an institution response to the report;

C. A summary of the conclusions of the evaluation that is made appropriately available.

Describe how the institution meets these criteria. Relevant institutional policies should be attached as an appendix.
Criterion (i) A – Topics Addressed in Self-Study

At the unit level, SFU engages in regular self-studies through its external review of academic units, which is governed by a set of procedural guidelines that have been approved by Senate. All action plans resulting from external reviews require Senate approval. The process is guided indirectly by general University policies and best practices, as well as a commitment to the University Vision.

External Reviews – Self-Study

All academic units are reviewed on a periodic basis, normally every seven years. The purpose of such reviews is to enable units to conduct their own assessments of their strengths and weaknesses, to obtain the views of external experts in the field, and to support academic planning.

Topics addressed in every SFU external review self-study:

- Institutional role, unit role, and activities, goals, and aspirations.
- A statement of learning outcomes for each academic program (commencing with reviews in the spring term of 2014).
- An evaluation of the success of the unit in meeting the learning outcomes of its program(s), using methods and evidence selected by the academic unit (commencing with reviews scheduled for spring term of 2015). The evaluation should include evidence for student demand, access to courses, quality of teaching, educational experiences (including co-op and exchange opportunities), student academic achievement, scholarships and awards, student opinions of courses and programs, degrees and other credentials completed, student experience, and satisfaction following graduation.
- Quality of scholarship demonstrated through grants, graduate student achievements, knowledge mobilization (including publications, patents, applications, and impact on communities), awards, citations, honours, and appointments.
- Service to the community demonstrated by public service activity, involvement in related community groups, and membership on boards or similar bodies.
- Collegial environment for all members (faculty, staff, and students) of the unit.
- Appropriate orientation, training, and support for all employee development.
- Resources for unit activities: faculty, staff, operating budget, space, equipment, and library holdings (including the process for determining collection strategies).
- Planning for the renewal of the unit's faculty members.

27 A full list of topics addressed by the external reviews can be found at:
http://www.sfu.ca/content/dam/sfu/vpacademic/files/academic_planning/Senate_ER_Guidelines.pdf
**Criterion (i) B – Peer Assessment**

Each unit is visited and assessed, usually over a period of two or three days, by three external peer reviewers and one internal peer reviewer. These reviewers are highly experienced and excellent scholars who understand the discipline being reviewed. They may be from other Canadian universities or from international institutions. Their assessment involves a review of the self-study, various data, and a site visit, which includes interviews with senior administrators (Vice-Presidents, Associate Vice-Presidents, and Deans) as well as faculty, staff, and students within the unit.

**Criterion (i) C – Summary of the Conclusions of the Evaluation**

The reviewers’ report is distributed to the members of the unit, the Dean, the Vice-President, Academic, the Vice-President, Research, and the Dean of Graduate Studies. An action plan is developed by the unit to address the issues brought forth by the reviewers. It is subsequently approved by the Senate Committee on University Priorities (SCUP) and Senate. Progress on the implementation of the action plan is reported to SCUP and Senate in the fourth year of the external review cycle.

The recently conducted QAPA survey undertaken by the Office of the Vice-President, Academic asked:

- Does the use of an action plan developed by the unit, endorsed by the Dean, and approved by Senate improve academic quality?
  - 84% of respondents said “Yes.”

**Criterion (ii)**

The institution can demonstrate that it has a policy and process for new program approval that includes peer/external review by appropriate experts.

*Describe how the institution meets these criteria. Relevant institutional policies should be attached as an appendix.*

**Process for New Program Approval**

New program proposals at SFU undergo multiple levels of peer review prior to implementation. New proposals initially go through a “notice of intent” stage through various curriculum committees; vetted proposals are then developed into a “full program proposal” that incorporates feedback and suggested revisions or inclusions from the earlier stage.
New program proposal ideas are initiated at the unit level and submitted for review and discussion with program-level steering committees where relevant, unit-level curriculum committees (undergraduate or graduate), unit Chairs/Directors, and Faculty-level Associate Deans (responsible for undergraduate or graduate curriculum). A brief Notice of Intent is then developed, which describes the proposed program and its purpose, provides details on student demand and labour market demand, any resourcing impacts, and any initial support from within and without the University. The Notice of Intent is reviewed and approved (or sent back for revision) at the relevant unit-level curriculum committee, the Faculty-level curriculum committee, the Senate sub-committee level that oversees curriculum (Senate Committee on Undergraduate Studies or Senate Graduate Studies Committee), and SCUP.

After approval at SCUP, the Notice of Intent returns to the unit to be developed into a comprehensive Full Program Proposal. The Full Program Proposal requires proponents to ensure they have consulted both internal and external peers, government, industry, professional bodies, and/or community where relevant, to provide review and feedback throughout the program development stage. The Full Program Proposal is sent through the various curriculum committees for approval, and may require revision or modification at any stage before moving onto the next committee level. Once the Full Program Proposal has been approved by SCUP, it is forwarded to Senate for final academic approval before being submitted to the Board of Governors’ University Relations Committee for its approval.

From program idea, to Notice of Intent, to Full Program Proposal, and all of the varying stages and levels of approval, the process can take anywhere from 18 to 24 months.

The Terms of Reference for each of the Senate sub-committees identify academic program approval and oversight as central responsibilities. The role of Senate in academic program approval and oversight is identified in the University Act.28

SFU has “exempt status” with the Ministry of Advanced Education. This provides an expedited review process once a new program is sent to the Ministry for review. SFU programs are posted for external public review and comment for 30 days on the Ministry web portal, and then proceed directly to the Minister for review/consent without requiring the additional step of further review by the Degree Quality Assessment Board.

**INSTITUTION ASSESSMENT**

*Based on the preceding and where appropriate, provide a critical assessment of areas of strengths and improvement of its quality assurance mechanisms and the implementation of measures to address areas for improvement. This should include an evaluation of their impact on continuous quality improvement.*

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28 [http://www.bclaws.ca/civix/document/id/consol21/consol21/00_96468_01](http://www.bclaws.ca/civix/document/id/consol21/consol21/00_96468_01)
Consistency and quality of proposals can vary. SFU has attempted to streamline the process with templates to ensure that all necessary details have been incorporated, and appropriate research has been done, to provide a strong rationale for the development and implementation of the proposed program, prior to making its way through the committee vetting stages. Interpreting Ministry of Advanced Education criteria and requirements can be challenging. There can be reluctance to request required support or feedback until well into the process, which can lead to significant need for revisions.

Once programs have been approved and are implemented, quality assurance returns to the academic unit and Faculty levels, with any program changes requiring approvals through the curriculum committees identified above. The seven-year external review cycle for academic units provides another opportunity for units, Deans, and external peers to review and make recommendations regarding program quality and relevance.

### 4.1.3 ARE THE GUIDELINES DIFFERENTIATED AND ADAPTABLE TO RESPOND TO THE NEEDS AND CONTEXTS OF DIFFERENT UNITS, E.G., FACULTIES OR DEPARTMENTS OR CREDENTIAL LEVEL?

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<thead>
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<th>Criteria</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Are the guidelines adaptable to the range of programs and offerings within the institution?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do the guidelines provide measurable, consistent means and direction to undertake diversified program review?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are the guidelines consistent with institutional Mandate, mission, vision, and associated strategic goals?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Describe how the institution meets these criteria. Relevant institutional policies should be attached as an appendix.

### External Review Guidelines

Standardized guidelines for external reviews were updated and approved by Senate in June 2013. The impetus behind the creation of these guidelines was the University’s desire to establish one consistent set of criteria that could be equally applied, without bias, to any unit in the University. The guidelines account for the diversity of units at the University and have been designed in such a way to be inclusive and applicable to every unit regardless of its size or discipline.

To accommodate differences and uniqueness of units, all Terms of Reference allow for “focus questions” to be added by the unit. These questions are unique to each unit and...
provide adaptability to the process. These questions are developed by the unit to be reviewed, in conjunction with the Faculty Dean, the Vice-President, Academic, the Vice-President, Research, and the Dean of Graduate Studies.

The Terms of Reference for each review are consistent with SFU’s mandate and Vision.

**Adaptability of External Review Guidelines**

The external review process provides a great deal of flexibility for individual units to describe their programs, strengths, weaknesses, and the challenges that they face. It provides an opportunity to seek advice from peers and to bring problems to the attention of others (administration, Senate). While it can at times be self-serving, the prospect of external assessment means that exaggerated claims are subject to control and that it is difficult to gloss over major weaknesses.

The effectiveness of the reviewers is naturally variable. Working in teams that have no previous experience together, and (apart from the mandated SFU member) coming from other jurisdictions and often other countries, they are compelled to grasp particularities of the local situation while identifying and suggesting remedies for a variety of situations, not all of which have necessarily been drawn to their attention. Rather remarkably, the results are generally both valid and useful. This is due in part to the careful selection of reviewers, in a consultation process between unit and administration that seems to work reasonably well; while there can be exceptions, in the main, reviewers grasp rapidly the essential strengths and weaknesses of a unit, and are often able to make imaginative suggestions for their resolution. However, the success of the process is also in no small part due to the final stages of the process, in which the unit responds and the University, through Senate, oversees action. This gives the opportunity for acting on the best suggestions while putting aside some that may be irrelevant or ill-conceived for various contextual reasons. The processes of discussing suggestions that may, at first, seem irrelevant can often help improve both self-understanding within the unit and communications between the unit and other units/levels at the University. So, even when external reviewers do not quite grasp something about the SFU context, their misunderstandings can still provide a valuable impetus for internal improvements.

Therefore, it seems that the guidelines provide consistent means and direction to undertake reviews of diversified programs. The question of whether the means and direction are measurable probably refers more to whether the criteria for positive or negative review are in some sense measurable. The University does provide measures to the reviewers, for example, of impact factors in some units, student numbers, budgets, and so forth. However, which of those measures is taken to be important resides in the main with the reviewers. This is important in accommodating the diversity of assessments of quality that prevail in different disciplines and even different specialties of practice. It also gives priority to the views and expertise of the peer assessors, a priority which is tempered by the final disposition of the recommendations in the report at the institutional level. These, once
again, respond to overall provincial mandate as well as to the University Vision and to constraints of budget, physical plant, and general feasibility.

**INSTITUTION ASSESSMENT**

*Based on the preceding and where appropriate, provide a critical assessment of areas of strengths and improvement of its quality assurance mechanisms and the implementation of measures to address areas for improvement. This should include an evaluation of their impact on continuous quality improvement.*

**Areas of Strengths**

The external review process is well entrenched within the SFU culture and has proven to be a valued method of continuous improvement. It has Senate-approved guidelines that encourage honest and meaningful self-assessment with a focus on ongoing adaptability and forward thinking development. Listed below are seven specific strengths pertaining to the external review guidelines:

- All units (departments, schools, and non-departmentalized Faculties) participate.
- A developed set of standardized questions and requirements for all units.
- Each review includes focus questions specific to the unit under review.
- Effective vetting of recommendations.
- Each unit prepares an action plan, which serves as an agreement between the unit and the Faculty Dean.
- The action plan is approved by Senate.
- Progress of implementation is reported to Senate in the fourth year of the external review cycle.

SFU external reviews make good use of reviewers external to the University, especially for research assessment, program issues, and overall administration issues.

**Areas of Improvement**

Currently, the guidelines for external reviews are extremely relevant and adaptable. They clearly highlight and lay out each step of the seven-year review cycle. What they do not mention though is specific time limits for any particular step of the process, which can lead to inconsistent completion times for unit reviews.
4.1.4 DOES THE PROCESS PROMOTE QUALITY IMPROVEMENT?

Criterion (i)
The institution should be able to demonstrate that it has appropriate accountability mechanisms functioning for vocational, professional, and academic programs.

Describe how the institution meets these criteria. Relevant institutional policies should be attached as an appendix.

External Review Process Promotes Quality Improvement

The University has an appropriate accountability mechanism in place for each of its programs in the form of its external reviews.

The external review begins with a unit self-study that includes the unit’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. This self-study is forwarded to the reviewers who read the report before visiting the unit to gain a first-hand view. Upon completion of the visit, the reviewers’ findings are forwarded to the unit. Within the reviewers’ report, recommendations are made for improvement. In response to the report and its recommendations, the unit develops an action plan that is ultimately ratified by the Dean and the University Senate. In the fourth year of the review cycle, a progress update is submitted to Senate to ensure that the unit is on course with its action plan.

In addition to regular external reviews, SFU also has an institutional academic plan that stems from the Vision. This academic plan cascades down to all Faculties and departments, which, in turn, produce their own plans. Each of the plans outlines the initiatives and directives that are in place, the impact that they have on the quality of teaching, research, and engagement, and proposals for future initiatives. Regular progress reports are completed throughout the planning cycle to ensure that all units are on course with their initiatives and directives.

Criterion (ii)
The institution should be able to demonstrate how faculty scholarship and professional development inform teaching and continue to be a foundation for ensuring that programming is up to date.

Describe how the institution meets these criteria. Relevant institutional policies should be attached as an appendix.
Faculty Scholarship and Professional Development

Individual units possess a diverse collection of strategies for program modification and development. Professional development for faculty as researchers includes support for applying for grants (e.g., Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council grants and travel awards). Teaching innovation and development is encouraged through grants, and general and targeted seminars both at the unit level (e.g., Math Learning Seminar) and at the University level (through the Teaching and Learning Centre). Awards at unit, Faculty, and University level reward good teaching (also for teaching assistants) and graduate supervision. The University provides staff support for nominations for major teaching awards. In accredited fields, the accreditation review process is supported by the University (typically at the Faculty level through the provision of staff). In non-accredited fields, each unit has an undergraduate studies committee, with broad participation from the unit, and ongoing assessment of course offerings. New hires form a source of innovative ideas, and a healthy hiring program is one of the most effective methods of remaining current.

Tenure and promotion for faculty play an integral part in SFU’s commitment to scholarship and professional development. SFU has a policy in place for tenure and promotion. The policy promotes the fair and ethical evaluation of a faculty member’s scholarly work. Scholarly work includes lecturing and teaching at the undergraduate and graduate levels, supervising master’s and doctoral students, curriculum development, and scholarly publications, presentations, and performances.

The biennial assessment provides considerable incentive for regular faculty to remain current. External grant support, expected in many units, hinges on currency and impact. Teaching excellence as reflected both through student satisfaction and through innovative practice and professional development is rewarded. SFU recently launched a Student Evaluation of Teaching and Courses (SETC) initiative designed to provide instructors and administrators with better information for use in developing effective student learning experiences. The system focuses less on student perceptions of instructors and more on how students learn. In fall 2016, just over half of the primary course sections at SFU used the SETC evaluation form.

Teaching and Learning Centre

SFU has a Teaching and Learning Centre (TLC) dedicated to the support of SFU instructors and academic units in the development and delivery of innovative approaches to scholarship designed to enhance the learning experiences of SFU students. The TLC provides educational consultation, technical and pedagogical services, assistance with course and curriculum development, and professional development opportunities.

29 https://www.sfu.ca/policies/gazette/academic/a11-05.html
The TLC supports quality learning experiences at SFU by:

- providing support for quality teaching at multiple levels:
  - institutional priorities
  - Faculty level
  - department/program/curricular level
  - course level
  - individual level
- providing faculty development in multiple modes:
  - consulting
  - workshops, programs, events, symposia
  - online resources
- providing development in a variety of areas such as:
  - learning outcomes
  - experiential learning
  - English as an Additional Language (EAL)
  - learning technologies
  - educational media
  - teaching large classes
  - voice and presentation skills
- providing development through multiple approaches:
  - capacity-building
  - removing barriers
  - partnering to provide better, more integrated support
- staying current:
  - staying current with advances in post-secondary education
  - contributing to advances in post-secondary education by participating and supporting instructors in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL).

**Centre for Online and Distance Education**

The Centre for Online and Distance Education (CODE) was established in 1975 and has grown to be one of the largest distance education online programs in Canada, with course offerings spanning a wide range of academic areas. CODE staff are dedicated to supporting Faculties and departments in the development and delivery of online courses from the inception phase through to course offering. Support for course development is typically provided through one-on-one meetings with faculty course authors, and an entire team of support personnel is made available to faculty developers.

CODE supports quality learning experience at SFU by engaging with Faculties and departments to ensure that institutional priorities for flexible learning are addressed through the development and delivery of online courses. Program Directors provide individual support to faculty members in developing and implementing practices that support online learning by working with faculty members individually, conducting
workshops to small groups, and providing access to a library of resources that support various online teaching methodologies and pedagogies.

CODE Program Directors and technical support staff work with faculty members to ensure learning outcomes are developed appropriately and that assessment measures match established outcomes. CODE’s media specialists work as a team with the faculty member and Program Director to determine best practices for the use of media and learning objects within courses. CODE’s learning technologist staff provide guidance in the selection and implementation of appropriate technologies to support faculty members with their instructional goals and the learning needs of students while also ensuring that both are well supported.

CODE Program Directors and technical staff all participate in ongoing professional development to remain up-to-date on emerging technologies and teaching trends. Program Directors are encouraged to continue to participate in scholarly publishing in conference and journals related to the field of online and distance education.

**Criterion (iii)**
The institution should be able to demonstrate how learning outcomes are being achieved and how student progress is assessed and measured.

*Describe how the institution meets these criteria. Relevant institutional policies should be attached as an appendix.*

**Learning Outcomes**

SFU has a long history of having informative course descriptions and course outlines that explain the goals of courses and grade assessments. Moving toward NWCCU accreditation has allowed SFU to focus on broader program goals as the University looks to apply formalized learning outcomes on multiple levels.

As noted earlier, SFU’s practice is to refer to “learning outcomes” also as “educational goals,” with the latter the preferred internal terminology. Given that learning outcomes is the more common language used outside SFU, and given that the audience of this report is primarily external to SFU, this report will continue to use “learning outcomes,” acknowledging that SFU’s internal documents more frequently use “educational goals.”

The notion of learning outcomes as part of a formal internal planning and assessment process is new to SFU and to the Canadian post-secondary culture in general. By seeking accreditation with the NWCCU, a governing body that requires a commitment to learning outcomes from all of its accredited institutions, SFU was faced with the task of introducing learning outcomes into its planning and assessment processes.
As approved at Senate, learning outcomes at SFU are considered broadly, as the anticipated benefits to students from participation in an academic program, and may include knowledge, understanding, skills, competences, experience, attitudes, ethics, and professional development. Learning outcomes are intended as a framework for curriculum discussion, course mapping, and program structure, and more clearly reflect what is already occurring within units. SFU’s definition of learning outcomes allows a diversity of intentions to be incorporated along with more specific outcomes. For example, learning outcomes can incorporate student experiences with certain pedagogies (experiential education, reflective education), rather than being confined to what operations students can perform or what specific knowledge they possess. SFU’s academic units are being encouraged to define and assess their learning outcomes in a way that best suits each unit’s discipline and context.

Beginning with the spring 2014 external review cycle, the development of learning outcomes at the program level has become a part of the external review process. By 2021, all programs at SFU will have learning outcomes within the pedagogy.

The Teaching and Learning Centre is providing foundational resources to assist units in designing or redesigning courses or curricula that include learning outcomes and learning assessment processes. Learning outcomes and student assessment are also covered in Sections 2.1.6 and 2.1.7.

**INSTITUTION ASSESSMENT**

*Based on the preceding and where appropriate, provide a critical assessment of areas of strengths and improvement of its quality assurance mechanisms and the implementation of measures to address areas for improvement. This should include an evaluation of their impact on continuous quality improvement.*

**Areas of Strengths**

Effective fall 2015, SFU was granted accreditation by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities. In its Initial Accreditation Peer-Evaluation Report following its site visit, the NWCCU provided a list of five commendations to SFU, one of which highlights SFU’s commitment to faculty scholarship and professional development:

- The University is commended for its innovative, faculty-led approach to supporting professional growth and faculty development through the Institute for the Study of

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Teaching and Learning in the Disciplines. This Institute engages instructors in teaching as a socially situated practice, a unique and laudable goal.

Another commendation mentioned SFU’s commitment to the development of learning outcomes:

- Simon Fraser University is commended for the integrity with which it has demonstrated the serious commitment needed to pursue accreditation through the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities. This approach has honored the centrality of the faculty governance process in maintaining academic freedom and also endorsed the importance of developing a culture of learning outcomes assessment within the University.

These commendations from the NWCCU could not have been achieved without the cooperation and commitment of faculty as well as the external review process being used as a tool to implement learning outcomes. The University rollout of learning outcomes is taking place through the external review process as all units, beginning spring 2014, must have learning outcomes developed at the program level. Improving faculty teaching, research, and professional development is a primary goal of the external review process and one of its greatest strengths.

**Areas of Improvement**

Currently, SFU is only implementing learning outcomes at the program level. Units that have attained professional accreditation such as business and psychology, for example, already have learning outcomes at both the program and course levels in response to their professional accreditation requirements. The University is looking at various ways to pursue learning outcomes at both the course and institutional levels but has yet to determine a definitive course of action to accomplish this goal.
4.2 REVIEW FINDINGS

4.2.1 WERE THE RESPONSES TO THE SAMPLE PROGRAM REVIEW FINDINGS ADEQUATE?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The institution has a follow-up process for internal program reviews and acts in accordance with it.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Describe how the institution meets these criteria. Relevant institutional policies should be attached as an appendix.*

All externally-reviewed units receive a report from the reviewers after their visit. In this report, general and specific observations are made with commendations and recommendations being given. This becomes the foundation for the development of the unit’s action plan. The action plan is endorsed by the appropriate Dean and approved by Senate before being implemented. A follow-up occurs in the fourth year of the external review process to discuss the action plan and to update the University community on the progress of its implementation. Both the unit Chair/Director and the Dean report to SCUP and Senate on the progress made in implementing the action plan.

**INSTITUTION ASSESSMENT**

*Based on the preceding and where appropriate, provide a critical assessment of areas of strengths and improvement of its quality assurance mechanisms and the implementation of measures to address areas for improvement. This should include an evaluation of their impact on continuous quality improvement.*

**Areas of Strengths**

SFU has a robust and well-administered external review process that is fully adhered to by all units in the University. It provides regular and continual transparent feedback that has allowed the University to continue to self-assess and to ultimately improve the quality of its teaching and research.

Units that are using the processes to their advantage will self-assess regularly and engage in ongoing planning. These units can usually organize for the external review relatively easily. The self-study in this case can be a collegial process in which the unit is able to identify strengths and weaknesses and prepare for the review.
**Areas of Improvement**

While the external review process is robust and required of all academic units, it does suffer from some inconsistencies in regards to completion times. Extraneous circumstances such as unit reorganizations and/or changes in key administrative personnel can have an effect on how long it can take a unit to complete a review.

### 4.2.2 DOES THE PROCESS INFORM FUTURE DECISION MAKING?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion</th>
<th>The program review ensures that the program remains consistent with the institution’s current mission, goals, and long-range plan.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

*Describe how the institution meets these criteria. Relevant institutional policies should be attached as an appendix.*

The external review guidelines clearly define four purposes for the external reviews that relate to the three core themes of the University Vision/Mission and a fundamental theme. By remaining true to these guidelines, the focus of the external review process will always remain consistent with the University’s Vision/Mission.

Table 7: Alignment of External Reviews with SFU’s Vision

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SFU Vision Core Themes</th>
<th>External Review Purposes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Engaging Students</td>
<td>The quality of the unit’s programs is high, and there are measures in place to ensure the evaluation and revision of the teaching programs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaging Research</td>
<td>The quality of faculty research is high, and faculty collaboration and interaction provides a stimulating academic environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaging Communities</td>
<td>Unit members participate in the administration of the unit and take an active role in the dissemination of knowledge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leveraging Institutional Strength (fundamental theme)</td>
<td>The unit’s environment is conducive to the attainment of the objectives of the unit in that the resources (people, finance, systems, and facilities) are adequate to provide excellent teaching and learning.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INSTITUTION ASSESSMENT

Based on the preceding and where appropriate, provide a critical assessment of areas of strengths and improvement of its quality assurance mechanisms and the implementation of measures to address areas for improvement. This should include an evaluation of their impact on continuous quality improvement.

Areas of Strength

The adherence of all units to the Senate-approved guidelines has proven to be fundamental in maintaining a consistent process for all external reviews. Furthermore, the purpose of the external reviews, as laid out in the guidelines, is directly related to each of the core themes of the University Vision, which ensures that all units maintain alignment with the overall strategic direction of the University.

Areas of Improvement

Currently, there is a progress report required in the fourth year of the external review process. This is the only formal follow-up to the review, and it only looks specifically at what was achieved through the action plan. It does not review any other aspect of the unit.

4.2.3 ARE THE REVIEW FINDINGS APPROPRIATELY DISSEMINATED?

Criterion

The institution has a well-defined system to disseminate the review findings to the appropriate entities.

Describe how the institution meets these criteria. Relevant institutional policies should be attached as an appendix.

The recently conducted QAPA survey undertaken by the Office of the Vice-President, Academic supports the notion that there is adequate dissemination of external review findings. The survey asked:

- Are the results (report findings) of the external reviews appropriately disseminated?
  - 79% of the respondents said “Yes.”

The external review timeline below illustrates not only the external review process, but the thorough dissemination of information, including the findings, that takes place to all appropriate entities.
### Table 8: Timeline of the External Review Process

| April – May | • A list of proposed external reviews is brought forward to the Senate Committee on University Priorities (SCUP) and Senate.  
• Notification is sent to the unit of the upcoming external review. |
|---|---|
| June – August | • An information meeting is held with the Associate Vice-President, Academic at the request of the Chair/Director of the unit to clarify the external review process. (optional)  
• Funds for the development of learning outcomes will be transferred to the units in July. |
| September | • The Associate Vice-President, Academic, the Dean, and the Director of Academic Planning and Quality Assurance attend a departmental meeting to advise faculty and staff of the external review process.  
• A training workshop is offered to the unit’s administration staff to assist with logistical and administrative procedures.  
• The unit is asked to provide names of 10 – 12 faculty members from other universities to serve as members of the External Review Committee. If applicable, the list is divided into three “specialty” sections specific to the unit. Four to five names of SFU faculty members to serve as internal members of the review committee are included. These lists are due to the Office of the Vice-President, Academic three weeks after the initial meeting and should include site visit dates. |
| October – December | • The unit undertakes a retreat to develop its self-study. Learning outcomes at the program level are included in the self-study.  
• An optional review of the unit’s research productivity is offered by the Office of the Vice-President, Research.  
• The Vice-President, Academic develops the Terms of Reference for the external review, in consultation with the unit, Faculty Dean, Vice-President, Research, and Dean of Graduate Studies. |
| January – April | • A two- or three-day site visit is undertaken by the External Review Committee. The committee is asked to produce a written report of their impressions and recommendations within six weeks of its visit. |
| May – onward | • Once the report of the External Review Committee is received, the unit Chair/Director and the Faculty Dean are asked to study the report in preparation for the development of an agreed action plan for the unit. The Chair/Director confer with members of the unit to develop a proposed plan for the recommendations made by the External Review Committee.  
• A copy of the action plan is sent to the Director, Academic Planning and Quality Assurance and the Faculty Dean.  
• A meeting is scheduled by the Office of the Vice-President, Academic for the Faculty Dean, Chair/Director of the unit, and the Director, Academic Planning and Quality Assurance to discuss and finalize the action plan. This process should be completed within six weeks of receiving the external review report. The action plan is owned by the unit.  
• Once the action plan has been finalized and endorsed by the Faculty Dean, it is forwarded together with the findings to SCUP for review and further recommendations. The plan for  

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31 All underlined items in Table 8 directly reference dissemination of the review findings.
assessing the unit’s learning outcomes is included. The Faculty Dean, the Chair/Director of the unit, and the Director, Academic Planning and Quality Assurance are invited to SCUP to speak to the reviewers’ report and the unit’s action plan.

- Senate reviews the report and approves the recommendations of SCUP regarding the action plan and advises the unit and the Faculty Dean of any particular follow-up requirements.
- In the fourth year of the external review cycle, the unit is asked to provide an update with respect to the action plan. This is forwarded to SCUP and Senate for information. Report on the progress of the learning outcomes assessment will be included.
- All documents are considered “public documents” and appear in the Senate agenda/minutes. Also, some units publish their reports and action plan on their website (faculty self-portal).

**INSTITUTION ASSESSMENT**

*Based on the preceding and where appropriate, provide a critical assessment of areas of strengths and improvement of its quality assurance mechanisms and the implementation of measures to address areas for improvement. This should include an evaluation of their impact on continuous quality improvement.*

**Areas of Strengths**

The external review process and all of its corresponding steps are well defined. The timeline for external reviews, like the guidelines, is the result of ongoing assessment to ensure that the process achieves its objectives. Before the process is complete, the reviewers’ findings are seen by the unit’s faculty, staff, Chair/Director, and the Faculty Dean as well as the Vice-President, Academic and relevant staff. The action plan and the findings are subsequently forwarded to SCUP before being submitted to Senate for final approval.

The action plan becomes a public document. Every step is transparent and is a major strength of the external review process as a whole.

**Areas of Improvement**

SFU is not aware of any areas in need of improvement at this time as it pertains to the dissemination of review findings.
5. INSTITUTION IDENTIFIED FOCUS

Quality assessment issues the institution would like the assessors to address, if any.

*Describe any assessment issues the institution would like the assessors to address.*

- SFU recognizes opportunity and need for further conversation for the purposes of:
  - Advancing the metrics and processes to assess quality related to efforts mobilizing knowledge in historically non-conventional ways.
  - Participating in community-based scholarship and knowledge co-creation.
  - Embracing Indigenous ways of knowing and living.
  - Advancing student engagement with entrepreneurship and innovation.

The University looks forward to the assessors addressing the above in relation to its processes.

- SFU looks forward to learning from the assessors if the institution is engaging in best practices assessing responsiveness to student preferences, labour market conditions, and community and social needs.
6. QUALITY ASSURANCE POLICIES AND PROCESSES

Institutions must attach the following policies and processes with the Institution Report.

- Policy and processes for ongoing program and institutional assessment to ensure the effectiveness of its educational programs and services, and for continuous development and improvement

Provide an overview of the policy and processes. Include a description of how the policy was developed, the formal approval process, and when the policy was last reviewed.

When a new policy or substantive changes to a policy are considered, the University community has an opportunity to comment on drafts prior to approval. Announcements to faculty, staff, and students outline the nature of proposed changes or the intention of the proposed policy and invite comments on the draft, which are posted on the “Draft Policies” website. Comments are reviewed and drafts are amended as useful and appropriate. Final drafts are forwarded to Senate and the Board for information and/or approval.

Refer to Section 2.1 for an overview of policies that promote Quality Assurance.
Academic Policies: https://www.sfu.ca/policies/gazette/academic.html

- Policy and processes for the approval of new programs

Provide an overview of the policy and processes. Include a description of how the policy was developed, the formal approval process, and when the policy was last reviewed.

Refer to Section 4.1.2 Criterion ii.

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32 http://www.sfu.ca/policies/draft.html
7. OTHER INSTITUTION COMMENTS

- SFU always seeks opportunity to inform itself of best practice in quality assessment processes established elsewhere, and the University looks forward to learning more about its own efforts and those of other institutions through this Quality Assurance Process Audit.

- Quality assessment is, in part, an understanding of performance relative to equivalent performance elsewhere. SFU looks forward to learning from the assessors how it may benefit from comparable data and metrics collected elsewhere that the University is not utilizing in its own processes to benchmark itself.
8. **PROGRAM SAMPLES**

*Identify the programs selected by the DQAB for sampling:*

1. School of Computing Science
2. Department of English
3. Faculty of Health Sciences

All documents related to these reviews may be found in the online document repository.
Concluding Remarks

Simon Fraser University takes great pride in its commitment to quality assurance in teaching, research, and community engagement and continually strives toward a higher level of excellence.

SFU has a long-standing commitment to quality assurance and quality improvement, and appreciates the opportunity to participate in the pilot of this Quality Assurance Process Audit. The University continually seeks feedback that may help improve its policies, procedures, and practices and looks forward to using the feedback on this report to increase awareness within the University community of the benefits of such processes.

The many facets that combine to achieve excellence in academic quality—highly-motivated faculty and staff, well-equipped laboratories and teaching/learning environments (both physical and virtual), creative and effective pedagogy, and well-structured curricula—have different but overlapping needs in the context of quality assurance. Rigorous evaluation of both policy and practice (i.e., operationalization of policy) forms the cornerstone of continuous improvement, and SFU is committed to working with the Ministry of Advanced Education to ensure that it is using the best possible processes for assessing its performance.