

QUALITY ASSURANCE PROCESS AUDIT

INSTITUTION REPORT

2022



TERRITORIAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Emily Carr University of Art + Design respectfully acknowledges the unceded and ancestral territories and homelands of the Coast Salish people on which the University is situated. We are grateful to the xʷməθkʷəy̍əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish) and sə́lilwətaʔ (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations for their graciousness in allowing the University's students, faculty, staff and visitors to use their traditional territories for the pursuit of creativity and knowledge.

As guests of this land, we greatly appreciate the generosity of the host nations and the beauty of the land on which we learn, work and live; we acknowledge the care of the First Nations peoples in protecting and nurturing this land for millennia.

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1. INSTITUTION PROFILE

A. STUDENT ENROLMENT

FULL TIME EQUIVALENT (FTE)	
# of Undergraduate	1861.56
# of Graduate	95.22
# of Degree Programs	11
Non-Degree Programs	2 Full-Time and 10 Part-Time

B. CAMPUS LOCATION

520 East 1st Avenue, Vancouver BC, Canada, V5T 0H2

C. PROGRAM OFFERINGS

Total number of credential programs offered by credential level.

BACHELOR'S DEGREES:
Bachelor of Design (Communication Design, Industrial Design, and Interaction Design)
Bachelor of Media Arts (2D + Experimental Animation, 3D Computer Animation, Film + Screen Arts, and New Media + Sound Arts)
Bachelor of Fine Arts (Illustration, Photography, Critical + Cultural Practices, and Visual Arts)
GRADUATE DEGREES:
Master of Fine Arts (Interdisciplinary, Full-Residency and Low-Residency)
Master of Design (Interdisciplinary and Interaction Design)
Master of Digital Media (jointly credentialed with SFU, BCIT and UBC)
PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATES:
Communication Design Essentials
User-Experience Design

List of International partnerships involved in the delivery of programs which result in the conferring of credentials

We do not have any joint credentialing with international partners, though we do have 73 partnerships for student exchange.

D. IMPACT OF THE INSTITUTION MANDATE ON ITS QUALITY ASSURANCE MECHANISMS

ECU University of Art + Design is a learning community devoted to excellence and innovation in visual arts, media arts and design. The principles guiding our work, as outlined in our [2021-22 Mandate Letter](#), are: putting people first, lasting and meaningful reconciliation, equity and anti-racism, a better future through fighting climate change, and a strong sustainable economy that works for everyone. These principles are framed by a deep belief in the transformative power of art, media, and design education and an understanding that it must be equitable and accessible for all British Columbians.

The Minister Letter (2022-23) expands upon this further by prioritizing two principal areas of focus:

- Aligning education and skills training to labour market growth in the BC Economic Plan, and
- Contributing to the development of Ministry initiatives such as The Future Ready: Skills for the Jobs of Tomorrow Plan

These principles and priorities shape ECU's mission to develop informed artists, designers and media practitioners who can contribute their creative output and research to British Columbia's economic, knowledge and cultural sectors. We are committed to ensuring that our programs are relevant to the needs and interests of students and society, and that they are grounded through collaboration with industry, professional organizations and local communities. Research in visual arts, media arts and design is vital for the cultural and economic growth of local and global networks, and ECU is ready to meet this need.

In educating future cultural leaders, we understand that good citizenship is grounded in social justice, ecological and environmental sustainability, and true reconciliation with Indigenous peoples. In this we strongly align with our mandate as a public post-secondary institution to:

- engage in meaningful reconciliation that creates opportunities for, and with, Indigenous communities;
- promote climate justice and a low-carbon economy;
- prioritize a context of true equity, accessibility and anti-racism, so that everyone can contribute and succeed.

ECU's practice-based, exploratory and interdisciplinary approach to learning fosters creative experimentation and art and design-based propositions to address the sticky and complex questions of our contemporary world. Our graduates are well-positioned to make lasting and meaningful contributions to society, industry and the creative sectors.



2. QUALITY ASSURANCE POLICY AND PRACTICE

INTRO

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

Our undergraduate and graduate degrees in Fine Arts, Media and Design differ from many degree programs at other BC post-secondary institutions in that they are built around studio-based curriculum that centers creative experimentation and research: all ECU students in all degree (and most certificate) programs will complete anywhere from 60-80% of their coursework in small studio-based classes where hands-on work with material practices forms the core of their academic study. We do not offer any programs that do not require this studio-based curriculum.

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

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

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

PROGRAM REVIEW PROCESS

Academic program review is a cyclical process for evaluating academic programs and ensuring they continue to meet internal and provincial quality assurance requirements. It provides a regular opportunity for systematic reflection on curriculum, pedagogy, the current status of program areas, new developments in the field(s) and other matters that impact the development of programs and degrees, the assessment of their quality, and the educational experience and professional development of students. The process of academic program review is coordinated and driven by the faculty and relevant academic leadership and is the ultimate responsibility of the Office of the VP Academic + Provost in consultation with the University Senate.

ECU's program review process follows the Association of University and Colleges of Canada (AUCC) principles of institutional quality assurance in Canadian higher education. These principles are grounded in transparency and accountability through critical review and involve:

- a process of self-evaluation;
- soliciting input from internal and external stakeholders (including students, faculty, alumni, administrators and broader community members);
- peer review (involving external disciplinary experts);
- alignment with external standards that exist for certain professional programs (through accreditation or certification processes); and
- a response to the peer review with a formulated action plan.

Historically, ECU has reviewed Faculty units rather than distinct programs. The interdisciplinary nature of many of our programs made it practical to cluster programs under wider umbrellas: reviewing several interconnected programs together highlighted connections and relations among them and allowed us to pool limited resources to support the program review process.

In the current program review cycle, we have reviewed the following four Faculties:

2021 – Faculty of Art: Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA) review, including the interdisciplinary Visual Arts degree (Ceramics, Drawing, Painting, Print Media, and Sculpture), as well degree programs in Photography, and Illustration; the Bachelor of Media Arts; and New Media and Sound Arts.

2021 – Faculty of Design and Dynamic Media: Bachelor of Design (BDes) review, including degree programs in Communication Design, Industrial Design and Interaction Design.

2021 – Faculty of Graduate Studies: Master of Design (MDes) review, including degree programs in Interdisciplinary Design and Interaction Design.

2022 – Faculty of Design and Dynamic Media: Bachelor of Media Arts (BMA) review, including degree programs in Film + Screen Arts, 2D + Experimental Animation, and 3D Computer Animation.

2022 - Faculty of Graduate Studies: Master of Fine Arts

We have one further review underway in the 2022-23 year for the following degrees:

Faculty of Culture and Community: Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA) in Critical and Cultural Practices

PROGRAM REVIEW GUIDELINES

Senate-approved program review guidelines are included in Appendix A and describe the process for program review as well as the support provided to the Faculties undertaking review.

The guidelines for program review were shared with and approved by Senate in December 2019 prior to the start of the most recent round of reviews. Findings from reviews and action plans were also presented to and disseminated through University governance structures, including Senate and one of its key sub-committees: Academic Planning and Priorities (APP).

OVERVIEW OF THE PROCESS

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

The key stages in the process include:

- 1. Establishment of a Program Review Team**– Prior to the process of self-study, each Faculty establishes a Program Review Team consisting of the Dean, the Assistant Dean(s), and at least three faculty members (more may be necessary to address all program areas); the team may also include program staff such as studio technicians.
- 2. Assess Program Learning Outcomes and Connect to Curriculum**– In preparation for program review, areas review, renew or develop program learning outcomes and ensure they align with course learning outcomes. Mapping the curriculum ensures that program faculty reflect on how the structure of the curriculum connects to the program learning outcomes.
- 3. Self-Study Process**– The Program Review Team writes a self-study report that identifies key issues and includes input from faculty members, studio technicians, other staff, students, and the Dean, as well as Institutional data and other relevant documents provided by the office of the VP Academic + Provost. The self-study report is intended to be self-reflective, analytical, and aimed at quality improvement. The active participation of a wide spectrum of faculty, staff and students is an integral part of the process.
- 4. Selection of External Reviewers**– During the self-study process, the Dean of the Faculty consults with faculty members to identify appropriate colleagues to serve as external reviewers. The VP Academic + Provost composes External Review Committees using a combination of names provided by the Faculty and those provided in consultation with the Deans and University President.
- 5. Self-Study Report:** By the end of the self-study term, the Program Review Team submits a draft of the self-study to the VP Academic + Provost for feedback. The self-study report should articulate the key issues, questions, and/or concerns that the Faculty would like to address through the process of review. The final self-study is submitted to the VP Academic + Provost at minimum one month before the scheduled campus visit by external reviewers. The report, including any supporting materials, is then made available to the external review team.
- 6. External Review Campus Visit and Report:** This two-day campus visit is coordinated by the office of the VP Academic + Provost in consultation with the Program Review Team. The agenda for the visit is developed in consultation with the Dean of the Faculty and usually involves a tour of the facilities, meetings with those involved in the degree program(s) including: academic administrators, regular and non-regular faculty, staff who work in program Shops, Studios or Workshops, students, alumni, and representatives from other academic support areas. Four to six weeks after the campus visit, the External Review Committee submits a formal report to the VP Academic + Provost.

- 7. Internal Response:** The Dean works with the Program Review Team and Faculty to develop a draft response to the External Review Committee report, to be completed during the semester following the on-campus visit. The draft response includes any corrections of fact, a response to any significant issues identified, a set of recommendations, an initial plan of action, and a timeline for any changes to programs, curriculum or structure.
- 8. Action Plan Implementation:** A final response and action plan is submitted to the VP Academic + Provost and reported in to Senate. The Dean of the Faculty then provides updates on progress toward action plan goals in their annual reports to Senate.

CONNECTION TO UNIVERSITY MISSION

Our mission is to create a learning community devoted to excellence and innovation in visual arts, media and design. Through our work as educators, artists and designers, we are committed to the value of upholding diverse perspectives and challenging colonial structures by engaging in multiple ways of making, knowing and being, and by recognizing the role of art, media and design in the flourishing of communities.

In recent years and guided by the last [University Strategic Plan \(2017-2021\)](#), ECU has engaged actively in the difficult and necessary work of decolonization and reconciliation with the Indigenous host nations here in Vancouver, which has happened in parallel with our institutional commitment to anti-racism. Our recent EDI Action Plan outlines many steps and initiatives, large and small, that the University community has identified as essential to our ongoing growth and development.

The accountability framework established for the [EDI Action Plan](#) provides a useful model for how quality assurance and equity work can happen in tandem. Equity-based pedagogy and inclusive teaching and learning ensure our students develop the knowledge and skills necessary for engaging in professional practice across a range of creative fields and with many diverse communities. Central to this is a critical understanding of the complex social contexts of their disciplines, and an awareness of the responsibilities of making.

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

Our work in the years ahead will ensure that our current Institutional priorities, values and practices are reflected in the policies and resources that we develop to support and govern this work.

FACULTY SCHOLARSHIP AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

ECU's program review process builds upon the mechanisms we already have in place to review and support faculty in their teaching and professional practice (research). Given their heavy teaching loads relative to all other post-secondary institutions in the province, our faculty have managed to maintain extensive and internationally recognized research, professional and creative practices which inform the development and revision of curriculum in both formal and informal ways. The first core strategy of ECU's Strategic Plan calls for support for research and its integration into curriculum.

Faculty Hiring and Review

ECU's policy on hiring (*Policy 8.9 Hiring*) articulates that "in order to inspire excellence and innovation, the University will attract and hire the most qualified applicants in accordance with equitable and open hiring practices as set out in relevant policies and procedures and in compliance with applicable legislation and collective agreements."

Faculty hiring, review and promotion is governed by the [Collective Agreement with the ECU Faculty Association](#), in particular *Article 10 Faculty Qualifications*, *Article 11 Hiring of Faculty*, *Article 12 Faculty Performance and Tenure and Promotion Reviews*, and *Article 13 Faculty Objectives and Responsibilities* (included in Appendix F).

Under Article 12 of the Collective Agreement, ECU has a robust performance and developmental review process in place wherein performance reviews are conducted annually for probationary faculty, and at minimum once every three years for permanent (regular) faculty. Review committees are composed of the Dean of the Faculty, an Assistant Dean in the Faculty, and two regular faculty members from the Faculty, as elected by the faculty members.

Review committees consider:

- summaries of student course evaluations;
- reports for professional development, submitted annually;
- current Curriculum Vitae (CV) on file with the University;
- a statement or self-evaluation provided by the faculty member of teaching, scholarly and/or professional activities, research and service to the University and community. The statement may also include faculty member reflections on feedback from previous Developmental Review Committees;
- teaching observations and reports, if available;
- other relevant information as determined by the Committee.

The reports produced by these reviews articulate commendations and necessary improvement in the areas of teaching, professional practice (research), collegiality including community and University involvement (service), and any other information and constructive criticism necessary to meet the objectives and responsibilities set out in the Collective Agreement.

Faculty Professional Development

All regular ECU instructors are entitled to one month (22 days) of professional development per year, as articulated in the Collective Agreement and in *Policy 8.7 Professional Development Month*. Dedicated time for professional development was established in recognition that it is difficult to maintain a robust creative and research practice while teaching five courses per semester. The policy also recognizes that the University and our students derive great benefit by having active and renowned creative professionals delivering and developing our curriculum.

Faculty members are expected to undertake professional development and research that will enable them to keep up to date as researchers and creative practitioners, increase their own credibility and that of the University in their respective fields, and provide value to student learning and instruction. The policy also “encourages worthy projects in instructional methods, instructional research, pedagogical application of new technologies, and development of instructional materials.”

Faculty members submit an annual report on their professional development activities each Fall.

According to the Collective Agreement (*Article 18.01.2*) “professional development, practice or research activities will typically, but not exclusively, take place between the last duty day of Spring and the first duty day of Fall.” In practice, most faculty members continue to engage in their research and creative activities throughout the academic year, often integrating research into curriculum, and then devote their 11 weeks of combined vacation and PD time between May and September each year to further developing their research and creative projects.

Teaching Support and Development

In the past three years, ECU has made considerable investments in improving teaching through our Teaching and Learning Centre (TLC). Prior to 2019, our TLC was staffed by a single educational technology specialist who primarily supported online curriculum.

Since early 2020, we have added two new roles to the Centre including a senior educational developer and an instructional designer. Our learning technology specialist position has also been revised to focus on technology-enabled learning across all course delivery formats (in-person, hybrid and online), including considerations such as accessibility, inclusion and privacy. Through these investments, our faculty now have access to a range of workshops and supports to develop and grow their teaching, including the provincially recognized Instructional Skills Workshops and various workshops to develop online and hybrid pedagogy for studio-based curriculum.

This area has also developed supports for onboarding new faculty and graduate student teaching assistants.

Teaching Associates Program

In 2020, the Office of the VP Academic + Provost launched a new program in partnership with the TLC to encourage research and development in the area of pedagogy and teaching. The Teaching Associates program invites applications for projects that will benefit or enrich teaching and learning at ECU; selected applicants receive releases from teaching for a period of 1-2 terms to develop their projects and disseminate their findings to the community. Over the course of the academic year, Teaching Associates

engage in independent research which they share with colleagues through both formal and informal events. To date, we have had ten faculty members move through the program.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

ECU is committed to identifying and articulating learning outcomes at the course and program levels for all degree and certificate programs as our program review guidelines demand; this work is still in progress, however The Teaching and Learning Centre offers support and guidance to help instructors and program areas articulate course or program learning outcomes. They also work to identify tools that will assist with curricular mapping, such as the open access, web-based tool recently developed by UBC Okanagan. Being able to provide instructors and those responsible for program review and development a clear visual representation of how course learning outcomes map onto program learning outcomes will dramatically improve the ability of program areas to identify areas of success and improvement in their curriculum.

Recently, all programs in the Faculty of Design and Dynamic Media have completed an extensive project of developing learning outcomes for all years of study for all degree programs. This work and those outcomes then informed and guided the work of program review in the most recent round of reviews.

Some of our older programs, however, especially those in the Faculty of Art, will require extensive curriculum mapping and community consultation before they can articulate similar program-level outcomes because of the interdisciplinary nature of these programs and the multiple curricular pathways students can take to complete a degree. In partnership with our Teaching and Learning Centre, this work is now underway with the first planning sessions scheduled in Fall 2022. We hope to have program learning outcomes in place for all Art degree programs before individual areas begin their next cycle of program review.

At the course level, all courses developed or revised since 2018 have had to articulate learning objectives as part of their submissions to our Curriculum Planning and Review Committee (samples of the New Course Proposal and Course Change Proposal forms are included in the Appendix). But many of our older courses have not yet undergone review and so may not yet have learning objectives attached to their Senate-approved course descriptions. Program areas will be working to update this curriculum as part of their regular review and renewal processes.

STUDENT PROGRESSION

Student progression through their education and success beyond their degree is a key priority for ECU.

The structure of the undergraduate programs at ECU is planned so that students take on an increased level of responsibility for their projects from second to fourth year of their studies. This progressive approach supports student growth, allowing them to first learn within predetermined frameworks, then with exposure to a wide range of methodologies, and finally with an eye to professional practice in their discipline. Throughout this, they are developing tangible, transferable practices and skills.

Students in the undergraduate programs begin with a Foundation year, managed by the Faculty of Culture and Community. The Foundation year builds skills through critical inquiry, creative exploration and interdisciplinary practice. The curriculum is structured around a required common Humanities course each

term, a core interdisciplinary studio course in the Fall, and a core media, art or design studio course in the Spring. Students also take elective courses to introduce them to their intended program area.

In the second year of an undergraduate degree, core studio projects are short and tightly structured by faculty, allowing students to explore within constraints and experience what it means to work as an artist, filmmaker or designer. Second-year requirements for all Majors include specific Critical Studies requirements and studio-based courses focused on foundational skill sets for the different programs.

As students move into their third year, they are assigned core studio projects of a longer duration and often topically focused. Some faculty introduce experimental or research-oriented projects at this stage of study. Across all degree programs, third-year core studio projects are increasingly contextual, and many studios work with community and/or research partners. Students in most programs participate in 3rd year review panels at the end of their third year.

In the last year of the undergraduate degrees, core studio projects are entirely student-driven and managed. Students choose their project's area of investigation, have increasing agency in establishing the criteria for success, and select their working methodologies. With faculty mentors offering support, students manage all aspects of the project and identify and connect with appropriate communities of professional practice. Work originating in these capstone projects is usually featured in 4th year review panels held in December and in the Grad Show in May.

At the graduate level, the curriculum also moves from more structured courses in the first semesters to the development of a body of work or thesis project that is student-directed and under the guidance of a graduate supervisor. Beyond individual course grades, multiple milestones for review and assessment of progression include Open Studios, Advancement Reviews, Summer in Review: Symposia (MDes) or Exhibition (MFA) and Candidacy. The final thesis presentations undergo both internal and external review and are manifested through formal exhibitions and symposia.

Further supporting student progression through their studio curriculum, Emily Carr maintains [20 shops and studios](#), or distinct art, design and media production environments, each designed to help students gain hands-on experience and skill building. Each area is maintained by expert technical staff who collaborate with university faculty, academic leadership and staff to provide meaningful instruction and guidance. Technical staff ensure safe and accessible working environments and lead instructional workshops in support of curriculum.

To support students beyond their studio curriculum, the University has invested heavily in student support programs over the past decade, including an expansion of the University's Writing Centre to include learning skills support, further investment in Counselling, Accessibility and Wellness programming, additional staffing in our Aboriginal Gathering Place, and the addition of a Program Manager of Violence Reduction + Incident Response to support students in crisis. These areas, along with other Student Services and the work of Academic Affairs, play a central role in supporting student retention and progression.

We are also fortunate at ECU to have an engaged and vocal student community who are empowered to communicate student needs and expectations through various formal and informal channels. Informally, students at ECU have raised issues about their education in multiple ways. Most recently, a student-initiated petition about anti-racism led to the development of our [EDI Action Plan](#) which contains several action items related to teaching, learning, and curriculum.

Formally, student representatives participate in all Senate committees and in many non-Senate committees as well. Student representatives are often standing members of Faculties and attend regular Faculty meetings. Additionally, Faculties engage students through regular meetings of Student Advisory Committees which are facilitated by the Faculty Dean.

Our Senate governance structure contains several committees that are devoted to student success in their studies, in particular:

The International Development Committee was formed in 2017 with a mandate to “recommend teaching and learning resources in support of diverse and inclusive learning environments” for international and multilingual students. Student committee members work with Student Services staff, faculty members and representatives from academic support areas to identify and develop programs and resources to support the particular needs of international students.

The Aboriginal Advisory Committee, also formed in 2017 and invested with a broader mandate in 2020, advises Senate on the development of Aboriginal, Métis and Inuit specific programming to enhance and improve recruitment, retention and academic success for Aboriginal learners. Composed of Indigenous faculty members, staff from the University’s Aboriginal Gathering Place, and Indigenous students, this committee serves a key function in supporting progression and academic success among our Indigenous learners.

Finally, the Senate Appeals Committee supports students in their academic appeals but also considers appeals from students who are requesting a return to studies after an absence.



3. SELF-EVALUATION APPROACH

3. SELF-EVALUATION APPROACH

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

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

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

The main questions guiding the work of this audit were:

- Did the program review process unfold as outlined in the guidelines?
- How did program review teams experience the process?
- Did areas undergoing review have the support and/or resources they needed throughout the process?
- Are there aspects of the process that could be improved?

QUALITY ASSURANCE COMMITTEE

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

Trish Kelly, VP Academic + Provost (QAPA Executive Lead):

responsible for institutional quality assurance processes and liaising with DQAB, the Board, Senate and the President's Executive Council.

Celeste Martin, Dean of Design and Dynamic Media:

responsible for representing and consulting with the academic leadership team, including Deans and Associate/Assistant Deans.

Chelsea Hug, Manager, Operations + Analysis, Academic Affairs:

responsible for gathering quantitative and historical data, conducting interviews and consultations, and drafting key sections of the report.

Heather Fitzgerald, Senior Advisor, Teaching and Learning:

responsible for liaising with faculty and student communities, conducting consultations and interviews, presenting information sessions to the academic community, and drafting key sections of the report.

Mahsa Salehi, Executive Assistant to VP Academic + Provost:

responsible for administrative support, collecting documents, and scheduling consultation and information sessions.

DATA SOURCES

To conduct this self-evaluation, the committee considered several sources of information:

- Senate-approved ECU program review guidelines and the self-study template provided to program areas;
- Information and instructions provided to external reviewers;
- The University's Strategic Plan;
- Relevant Senate policies and procedures;
- The Collective Agreement between ECU and the ECU Faculty Association;
- Materials produced through recent program reviews (self-study documents and action plans);
- QAPA reports and program review policies and procedures from peer institutions;
- Reports and information from the Association of Independent Colleges of Art and Design (AICAD).

We also conducted interviews and consultations with various members of our academic community, including:

- Deans and other members of the academic leadership team;
- All program review teams who participated in program review within the past three years;
- The University Secretary on University policies and relevant Senate documents;
- The ECU Students' Union.

TIMELINE AND PROCESS

From June – July 2022, the Quality Assurance Committee reviewed DQAB guidelines for program review and quality assurance in comparison with the Senate-approved guidelines we provided to program review teams. We also considered, at this stage, program review policies and processes at other BC institutions. From this work, we developed some questions around our own program review process and a list of areas that we could improve based on our analysis of other approaches to program review.

Beginning in August 2022 and continuing through October, we engaged our academic community in consultations about quality assurance generally and our program review process in particular. Using the following open brainstorming questions, we engaged each program review team in a discussion of existing program review practices at ECU:

- How do you think your area benefited from the program review process?
- What do you see as the strengths in that process?
- What would have improved your ability to assess the quality of your program(s)?
- If you were reviewing a program at another institution, what markers or indicators would you look for to assess quality?

We ended each consultation by reviewing the list of potential improvements to the process we had previously identified which we asked teams to prioritize or respond to.

We met with the following Faculty review teams:

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

The Quality Assurance Committee offered information presentations at all scheduled Faculty meetings in the months of September and October to inform our community about the audit process and to prepare them for the work that will emerge from this process. The committee also attended a meeting of the Students' Union to inform students about this audit work and to collect their perspectives on quality assurance at the University.

Finally, we presented key findings and information about the self-evaluation process at meetings of the following University committees:

- Senate
- Academic Planning and Priorities
- Curriculum Planning and Review



4. QUALITY ASSURANCE PROCESS AUDIT (QAPA) SELF-STUDY

4.1. OVERALL PROCESS

A. DOES THE PROCESS REFLECT THE INSTITUTION'S MANDATE, MISSION AND VALUES?

ECU has a newly introduced and Senate-approved program review process that has been used consistently for all program reviews beginning in 2020.

The current program review planning cycle at ECU was established in Fall 2019 with the initial procedures and guidelines for program review approved by Senate in December 2019. These guidelines are included in the Appendix.

To date, five program areas have been reviewed under this current process, with one more review scheduled in the 2022-23 academic year. As part of this revised program review process, all Faculties now submit their action plans to Senate and then report, through the Dean, into Senate annually on progress to date. This makes the work of program review and its accountability structure visible throughout the 5-7 year cycle and places the responsibility for continuous refinement and improvement of curriculum solidly within the Faculty itself, driven by the faculty members who teach in the curricular programs.

Our initial effort at program review in 2012-14 was limited in its accountability framework and there was a general sense that the work done in those reviews was not actioned by institutional mechanisms. This new framework intends to more clearly align the work of program review to the academic work of Senate and its sub-committees to better support program areas in their work to enact curricular change.

The effectiveness of this framework can be seen in the work that has already been completed. Several programs have now completed the difficult and time-consuming work of defining and articulating program learning outcomes which was a new process for us at the start of these reviews. We expect several rounds of curricular change to move through our Curriculum Planning and Review committee and Senate coming out of this review process.

During the course of our recent reviews, however, it became clear that our practice of examining large curricular areas (Faculties) rather than individual programs, is not always the most effective approach. We originally believed that the cross-disciplinary and integrated nature of our programs would be easier to assess if we reviewed all undergraduate programs simultaneously. As a small institution, the resource requirements and workload inherent in a more regular and recurrent process of program review seemed daunting.

We now recognize that this mode of broad analysis poses its own challenges for individual program areas, particularly in their ability to access more program-specific institutional data and address issues at the local program level. In planning the next cycle of program reviews, we have taken this experience into consideration and instead scheduled a cycle of program-level reviews which will ensure that each individual degree and certificate program will undergo a more granular program review process every 5-7 years. It is our hope that moving to more regular and continuous program-level review across the University will also help us to build and support a culture of ongoing reflection, review and revision of our curriculum and programs.

B. IS THE SCOPE OF THE PROCESS APPROPRIATE?

ECU's program review process guidelines were approved by the University Senate in December 2019 but this process has not yet been formalized in policy. This is the first and most obvious area of improvement for our quality assurance process, and the work of policy development is already underway. We expect to have a program review policy approved by Senate by or before May 2023.

The process that ECU introduced in 2019 was informed by institutional past practice as well as the principles of institutional quality assurance articulated by the Association of University and Colleges of Canada (AUCC). This process includes all of the required components of program review including: a self-study undertaken by program faculty that incorporates multiple data and information sources; an external review that involves a campus visit, a written report and a response to the external review report; and a final report, including an action plan, that is also shared with Senate.

The Senate-approved program review guidelines are included in Appendix A.

Self-Study

The self-study process is guided by a Program Review Team and includes an overview of faculty creative and academic work as well as program changes since the previous program review. These areas of the self-study offer context for curricular directions influenced both by faculty professional development and research as well as changes in the respective industries and creative fields. Faculty CVs, which include curricular initiatives and evidence of professional development and scholarship activities, are available to program review teams to support self-study.

To facilitate self-study, and allow for broader engagement, the VP Academic + Provost's office, through the Manager, Operations and Analysis provides data from Institutional Research and other University departments on the following:

- the composition of the program area (demographics, faculty/student ratios, part-time/full-time ratios, faculty rank, sabbaticals, and leaves for the last 5 years);
- enrolment trends over the past 5 years (number of students in each program, demographics, institutional graduation rates, job placement, etc).

Additional information in the following areas is provided where possible:

- an overview of the operations, size, and scope of the program area as well as the available resources (staff, operations, technical, physical and budgetary);
- Broad usage information for Technical Services (Shops, Studios and Workshops) and other academic support units.

The self-study report, which contains important information on the program's history, values and evolution, is the outcome of this process of critical reflection, consultation, and review.

The self-study process was cited in all of our consultations as the most helpful stage of the review. All Program Review Teams reported the value of reflecting on and reviewing programs through dialogue,

data analysis, and consultation. The conversations that emerged during the self-study phase were referred to as “enlightening and enriching” while others noted their value in creating solidarity and consensus among program area faculty. All participants in program review found the self-study report to be a helpful “baseline” against which the program can be assessed in future.

Those community members who were involved in the (only) previous round of program reviews in 2012-14 commented explicitly and favourably on the level of community conversation and engagement in the self-study portion of the current review process compared to the earlier process.

External Review

The success of the program review process at ECU relies upon external review by experts in the program area. Given the unique nature of the programs offered at ECU, it is particularly important to have the insights of practitioners and educators who work in related creative fields. The University currently supports this external review process in the following ways:

Preparation for External Review: By the end of the self-study term, the Program Review Team submits a draft of the self-study to the VP Academic + Provost for feedback. At least one month before the External Review Committee visit, the final self-study is submitted to the VP Academic + Provost, who meets with the Program Review Team to finalize the agenda and materials for the external visit.

On-Campus Visit and Report: This two-day, on-campus visit is coordinated by the VP Academic + Provost’s office. It involves meetings with regular and non-regular faculty, technical and support staff, students and alumni, and the Deans. The External Review Committee writes a formal report within one month of the visit.

The External Review phase of the review was perceived as variably useful. Some areas articulated appreciation for how the external report highlighted program successes and validated known areas of concern. Others felt that external reviewers did not respond appropriately to the work reported in the self-study or were overly influenced by one or two voices in the external review consultations.

These variable responses point to a need to better prepare external reviewers for the work of program review at ECU, and to provide Program Review Teams with clearer guidelines on how to address the external review findings.

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

The process that ECU has used to develop and approve new programs is currently not formalized in policy, which is another obvious area of improvement.

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

- a rationale for why the new program is needed;

- learning outcomes for the program;
- descriptions of any new courses; and
- a program requirement worksheet (included in the Appendix) which articulates the curricular pathway students will take to meet the requirements of the program.

Consultation then takes place with other stakeholders at the University, particularly those specifically involved in any curricular pathways. After discussion with the Assistant Deans and at the Academic Affairs table, the package then comes to our Curriculum Planning and Review Committee for discussion. Once approved by CPR, the package moves to Senate for final approval.

Most of our newer programs have been at the graduate level which required approval by the Degree Quality Assessment Board, so those programs were subject to external review. But we recognize that we will need to incorporate a peer review component into the policy governing new program development.

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

The guidelines for academic program review provide a consistent baseline and terms of reference for all programs and curricular areas at the university. They provide a mechanism to evaluate Institutional accountability regarding program quality and relevance, and a process for clarifying and making visible a program's strengths, accomplishments, and opportunities for improvement. Currently, all program areas leading to degrees utilize this same set of guidelines. We are in the process of adapting the language of our guidelines to work with our non-degree certificate programs in Continuing Studies with the aim of having all degree and certificate programs using the same procedures.

The latitude offered through the reflexive practice of self-study, external review, response to external review, and accountability to Senate is central to the effectiveness of the process. It allows the issues and questions raised by the faculty, which may be vastly different based on program area, to ground the mechanisms of review in adaptive and supportive ways.

Through our consultations, we discovered that while our guidelines are flexible and adaptable to the needs of our differing programs, they did not result in consistently positive experiences for Program Review Teams. There seemed to be several factors that interfered with the consistency of the process:

1. Program vs. Wider Faculty Area Reviews

Our consultations clearly demonstrated that reviews which focused on a single program were both easier and resulted in clearer actions for program improvement than those reviews which had to assess multiple programs. While some faculty members noted the benefit of being able to see and respond to intersections between related programs, most teams agreed that a wider scope for review interfered with the ability of the team to identify clear, actionable steps for program improvement.

2. Learning Outcomes

Program areas which had already defined and articulated program learning outcomes reported much

higher rates of confidence in their ability to assess the quality of their programs compared to those areas which did not have clear program learning outcomes in place before review began. Program areas that incorporated the work of defining program learning outcomes into the self-study phase reported that they felt this review and the resulting report would provide a good “baseline” for future reviews, implying that having defined outcomes to measure progress and success against would have helped the program review process.

3. Interdisciplinarity and Multiple Curricular Pathways

All undergraduate programs at ECU involve some level of interdisciplinarity, as all students participate in an interdisciplinary Foundation year at the start of their programs and all programs require studies in art, media or design history to complement the studio-based academics. All Program Review Teams at the undergraduate level struggled to represent and assess these interdisciplinary aspects of their programs. The higher the degree of interdisciplinarity and the more possible curricular pathways students could take to complete a program, the more the area struggled with the process of review. For example, the team that reviewed our MDES program, which is a program that involves a single, fairly consistent curricular pathway and little interdisciplinarity, reported very little difficulty in undertaking review. In contrast, the team that reviewed our BFA in Visual Arts, our most interdisciplinary program with few required courses and many possible curricular pathways, struggled much more with determining which aspects of the curriculum to assess.

4. Access to Data

All Program Review Teams articulated issues with accessing data that would have helped them assess the effectiveness of their programs. The most common issues were accessing data related to graduate and alumni outcomes, and accessing data related to student progression, retention and satisfaction. Some of these issues such as graduate and alumni outcomes point to gaps in our current data collection practices which we will need to address. But others simply highlight an issue in how data is shared with or made available to Program Review Teams: for example, data we collect on faculty professional development through current reporting processes is not available to Program Review Teams. Still others point to how and whether we consistently collect or disaggregate data at the program level. Reviewing and improving our data collection and dissemination practices would provide much more consistency for all areas undertaking program review.

5. Centralized Communications and Access to Resources

We heard from several teams that communications throughout the process and access to shared resources made a significant positive difference in faculty experience of program review. Those teams who were able to create a shared resource hub and maintain regular communications among review team members reported better engagement throughout the process and a stronger perception of the value of program review. In contrast, team members who were unable to easily access key documents or who were not included at all stages of the process reported more frustration, lower satisfaction with the outcome of the review, and a lower perception of the value of the process. Significantly, teams without centralized information and communication also reported spending considerably more time on administrative tasks such as tracking down information or determining who was responsible for key tasks which took time away from the more substantial work of review.

6. Time and Support for Program Review

While the Academic office wholeheartedly supports program review as a necessary reflexive process, the perception of Institutional support for the work varied widely among different Faculties. All teams commented on the time and additional workload required to conduct a thorough, meaningful review: this is a systemic issue at ECU because of our high (5/5) teaching load. But those teams who felt the process was not rushed and who further felt well supported in the process — by being provided with timelines, templates and examples, for example — experienced far less frustration and anxiety compared to other teams and found the process less burdensome overall.

Clearly, scheduling adequate time for the work of program review, providing institutional support in the form of clear timelines for each stage of review, clear expectations for the consultation and data analysis activities of the self-study, and a clear template for the written reports would resolve many of these inconsistencies in the experience of the process.

7. Student Voice and Participation

Finally, the level of inclusion of students in the program review process varied across program areas. Some areas reported satisfaction with the small, focus-group approach to student consultation while others would have liked access to broader information about student experience to balance the information gathered in the smaller focus groups or external review meetings. Without access to consistent information from and about students, many teams were unable to determine whether issues raised by students in external review meetings were representative of the broader student experience or only relevant to a small sub-set of students.

Both Program Review Teams and students expressed a desire for more and clearer information about student demographics: knowing the ratio of domestic vs. international students in a program, for example, could have helped design more representative focus groups. Similarly, knowing which programs attract or retain higher numbers of BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Colour) students could help faculty identify areas of curriculum or programming that need greater investments in equity work.

Students who had participated in the program review process articulated a desire for more accountability following consultation, including having access to the completed reports or being able to track a program's progress on addressing issues raised through the review process.

D. DOES THE PROCESS PROMOTE QUALITY IMPROVEMENT?

Program review at the University currently provides a mechanism for faculty to reflect on the structure, sequencing and effectiveness of their curriculum and solicit community feedback to aid in the improvement of curriculum. Consultations with students provide insight into how the program is meeting student expectations and needs, while faculty relationships with industry professionals in the field ensure currency and relevance of the curriculum for future labour market needs.

Currently, it is difficult for Program Review Teams to directly link faculty professional development and

creative practice with curricular development, as the data collected in annual professional development reports is protected by Human Resources and thus not available to program review teams. Many areas solve this issue by conducting their own surveys of faculty research and professional development as part of information gathering during the self-study, but this practice is not universal or consistent. Going forward, making available to program review teams a summary of the professional development activities undertaken by faculty in a program area (drawn from data collected through our existing PD reporting process) will improve their ability to assess how faculty professional activities contribute to teaching and the currency of the program.

Until all program areas have developed program learning outcomes and done the work to map course learning objectives and assessment practices with these outcomes, it remains difficult for Program Review Teams to accurately assess program quality. Evaluation and assessment of student progress currently takes place through evaluation of student work in relation to course learning objectives, which are approved by CPR and Senate, but Program Review Teams do not consistently have access to representative samples of student work. All studio programs include developmental reviews of student work in 3rd and 4th year (student review panels) which provide program faculty with a sense of student progress across the year of study, but these panels are often optional and ungraded which means there is no data for Program Review Teams to reference in relation to these reviews. This is a clear area of improvement in our process, both in terms of defining program learning outcomes across all programs and determining methods to evidence how and whether students and graduates are meeting those outcomes.

INSTITUTION ASSESSMENT

STRENGTHS

Our current program review process is an important reflective exercise for Faculties, drawing attention to areas of the curriculum that are working well and those that require improvements. Faculty members who participated in the process found the work “enriching and rewarding” and felt that the process of review created a strong sense of shared values and purpose among program faculty.

The external review component of program review was also effective at surfacing and validating known areas of concern for program area faculty.

As this was a new process for our community, there was a general sense that these reviews will form a useful “baseline” for future reviews which helped generate enthusiasm for a regular and ongoing cycle of review and reflection. We have identified many areas for improvement, which is to be expected in a new process.

AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT

1. Policy Development and Renewal

- a. Development of a University policy governing program review priorities and procedures.

- b. Development of a University policy governing the development and approval of new programs which includes peer/external review as part of the approval process.
- c. Review and revision of *Policy 4.3 Program and Curricular Change*.

2. Operational Supports

- a. Produce a list and visual map of quality assurance projects resulting from this audit.
- b. Draft a timeline and recurring 5-7-year cycle for program-level reviews.
- c. Create a centralized resource hub for program review that will make accessing and sharing information among Program Review Teams more efficient.
- d. Develop a handbook for program review that includes
 - clearly articulated steps for completing reviews,
 - a guide to accessing and understanding data sources,
 - suggestions for recommended self-study approaches and activities,
 - templates for self-study and final reports,
 - a list of people responsible for supporting the program review process.
- e. Develop a resource for external reviewers that provides information about the ECU context, outlines the process for the campus visit, and provides a template for external reports.
- f. Schedule briefing meetings prior to external review to ensure that those meeting with external reviewers are familiar with the self-study questions and the program review process.
- g. Create a role within the Academic Affairs office to coordinate the activities of program review to better support Program Review Teams
- h. Rethink how Faculty program assistants can better support institutional knowledge of program structures, processes and documentation; the collection and archiving of student work; and tracking ongoing curricular assessment and change.

3. Learning Outcomes and Curricular Mapping

- a. Equip the Teaching and Learning Centre to better support program areas with the work of curricular mapping and the development of learning outcomes.
- b. Develop program learning outcomes for all degree and certificate programs.
- c. Identify curriculum mapping tools that can help program areas identify missing course learning outcomes and align course-level outcomes with program outcomes.

- d. Ensure that, at minimum, all core and required curriculum in all degree and certificate programs have course learning outcomes prior to the beginning of program review.

4. Improvements to Institutional Data

- a. Implement a new course evaluation system to allow more timely and usable student feedback on curriculum.
- b. Centralize the collection and ensure the availability of graduate and alumni data.
- c. Determine a process to distill information about faculty research and professional development from the current PD reporting process.
- d. Provide financial and budgetary information re. program costing and annual program budget changes for the review period.
- e. Provide program-level data re. utilization of space, technology and other University resources.
- f. Implement an annual report template that requires academic and student support areas to track and report resource use by program area.
- g. Disaggregate program-level data on enrolment, progression and academic standing.
- h. Disaggregate program-level data on use of space, technical resources, academic supports.
- i. Collect samples of student work and/or reports from annual 3rd and 4th year review panels to assess progress and achievement of learning outcomes.

5. Improving Student Participation in Curricular Review

- a. Formalize activities (focus groups, town halls, student advisory committees) in which student voice and feedback is recorded and cumulatively represented in program review.
- b. Implement annual student satisfaction surveys across all degree and certificate programs.
- c. Ensure that valuable student feedback collected as part of routine course evaluations can become a tool to inform program and curricular review and renewal.

4.2. REVIEW FINDINGS

A. WERE THE RESPONSES TO THE SAMPLE PROGRAM REVIEW FINDINGS ADEQUATE?

New to this version of program review is the requirement for program review action plans to be submitted to Senate. In previous versions of the program review process, reports and action plans generated in response to external review were not shared with the wider University community, which created issues around transparency and accountability. To address this and to ensure that action plans remain central to the work of the program areas, Faculty Deans and program area Assistant Deans will be responsible for including updates on progress toward action plan goals in their annual reports to Senate. This accountability and reporting framework will be included in the policy and procedures governing program review which are currently in development.

B. DOES THE PROCESS INFORM FUTURE DECISION MAKING?

ECU's current program review process originated from our community values of reflection, critical review and creative problem-solving. Through this faculty-led and community-informed process, we engaged meaningfully with our students, our curriculum, our creative fields, and our communities of practice. As we continue along the path to formalize our processes in policy, we aim to strengthen and enrich those aspects of the process that are serving our community well, while continuing to incorporate more decolonial, anti-racist and inclusive priorities and practices to ensure that our curriculum and programs are accessible and equitable for all. This work will be guided by the new Strategic Plan for the University which is currently in development.

C. ARE THE REVIEW FINDINGS APPROPRIATELY DISSEMINATED?

Currently, final reports and action plans from the program review process are housed in the office of the VP Academic + Provost and included in a report to Senate. But community members who do not serve on Senate have no way of accessing review findings and action plans unless shared with them directly by members of the Program Review Team or a Faculty Dean. This lack of access was noted both by program review teams and by students who participated in the process.

INSTITUTION ASSESSMENT

STRENGTHS

Our new program review process now makes the work of program review visible to the wider academic community through presentation of action plans to Senate. The ongoing nature of program review is also affirmed through the introduction of annual reporting on action plans through Senate.

AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT

1. Articulate in the new program review policy a requirement to make key findings and action plans publicly accessible.
2. Include final reports in the program review resource hub so that they can act as a reference for future Program Review Teams.
3. Create a template for annual reports to be completed by program areas at the end of each academic year.
4. Schedule annual reports from the Deans/Assistant Deans to Senate and/or relevant sub-committees to ensure wider community awareness of progress toward action plan goals.
5. Develop a mechanism to document through Senate or relevant sub-committees any issues that emerge from program review that are beyond the scope of an individual program area to solve.



5. OTHER INSTITUTION COMMENTS

Our program review process has emerged from the culture of our institution and continues to evolve in response to feedback from our community as well as from our peer institutions. We acknowledge that there will be significant work ahead in relation to quality assurance, but we are, at the same time, proud and motivated by what we have accomplished in this last round of program reviews. Our recent changes to our program review process, combined with the work of this audit, positions us well to take on the next phase of improvements, which work is helped immeasurably by the palpable support and even enthusiasm among our community for quality assurance work.

We are still a young university and our quality assurance processes are in the early stages of development. But we are moving in a good direction. We have demonstrated, through our Strategic Plan and EDI Action Plan, that we can be forward-thinking, accountable and responsive to our students, which provides a useful model for how our quality assurance frameworks can evolve.



6. APPENDICES

LIST OF APPENDICES

APPENDIX A:

Program Review Guidelines

- a. Program Review Guidelines
- b. ECU Contextual Document
- c. ECU External Review Report Guidelines

APPENDIX B:

Sample Program Review MDES

- i. Self-Study
- ii. External Review Report
- iii. Schedule
- iv. Final Report and Action Plan

APPENDIX C:

Sample Program Review DDM

- i. Self-Study
- ii. External Review Report
- iii. Schedule
- iv. Final Report and Action Plan

APPENDIX D:

Sample Program Review ART

- i. Self-Study
- ii. External Review Report
- iii. Schedule
- iv. Final Report and Action Plan

APPENDIX E:

ECU Strategic Plan

APPENDIX F:

Relevant ECU Policies + Documents

- a) 4.3 Program and Curricular Change
- b) 8.7
- c) 8.9
- d) 8.9.1
- e) Relevant Section of the ECUFA Collective Agreement

6. Curriculum Planning and Review Committee Forms

- a) New Course Proposal Form
- b) Course Change Proposal Form
- c) Program Requirements Worksheet