

2018/19 QUALITY ASSURANCE PROCESS AUDIT THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

The Summary was prepared by the Degree Quality Assessment Board Secretariat using the Institutional Report, the Expert Panel Report, and the Response to the Expert Panel Report. The University of British Columbia, Vancouver campus was one of three public post-secondary institutions to undertake the Quality Assurance Process Audit in 2018/19. The UBC Okanagan campus will undergo a QAPA in 2021.

Introduction

The Terms of Reference for the Degree Quality Assessment Board establish that audits will be based on information provided by public post-secondary institutions to ensure that rigorous, ongoing program and institutional quality assessment processes have been implemented.

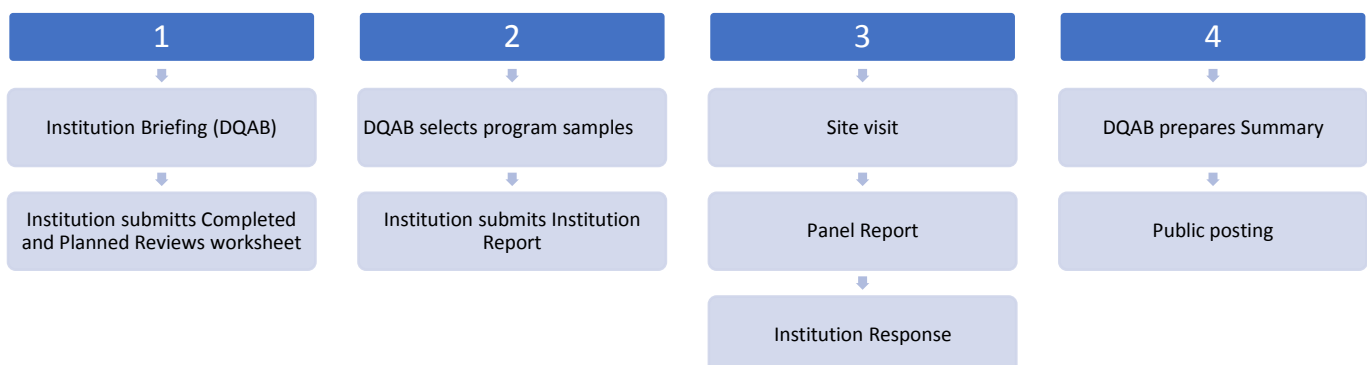
The main objectives of the quality assurance process audit (QAPA) are to ascertain that the institution:

- a) Continues to meet the program review policy requirements outlined in the DQAB's *Exempt Status Criteria and Guidelines* and the *Degree Program Review Criteria and Guidelines*, as applicable to the institution;
- b) Has and continues to meet appropriate program review processes and policies for all credential programs; and
- c) Applies its quality assurance process in relation to those requirements and responds to review findings appropriately.

The QAPA assessment is focused on answering questions in two categories:

1. Overall process
 - a. Does the process reflect the institution's mandate, mission, and values?
 - b. Is the scope of the process appropriate?
 - 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?
 - d. Does the process promote quality improvement?
2. Review findings
 - a. Were the responses to the sample program review findings adequate?
 - b. Does the process inform future decision making?
 - c. Are the review findings appropriately disseminated?

Figure 1: QAPA Process



The University of British Columbia – Institutional Context

The University of British Columbia (UBC) is the oldest public postsecondary university in BC. UBC has two major campuses – in Vancouver and Kelowna – with a division of powers among four bodies: a single Board of Governors, a Council of Senates for matters of academic governance of a cross-campus nature, and the Vancouver and Okanagan Senates, which are responsible for the academic governance of their respective campuses. The facts and figures in this summary deal only with the Vancouver campus.

UBC's Vancouver campus houses a complex learning community in which a large number of fields of inquiry are represented. Each one of these disciplinary areas and interdisciplinary collaborations carries with it its own norms, aims, and best practices. Some of these fields of study are centuries old, while others are at the cutting edge of technology. As a result of this diversity, UBC has adopted a decentralized model of policy and governance. Centrally, UBC's policies are designed to be broadly enabling, allowing for adaptations to fit the practices of various disciplines and fields. While there are umbrella policies and strategic priorities at the highest level, each of the academic units have different strengths, different priorities, and have adopted different means toward achieving common ends.

Table 1: Student enrollment (2017-2018)

	Undergraduate	Graduate	Degree Programs	Non-Degree Programs
Full-time equivalent (FTE)	40,922*	8,108	49,392	4,927

* Includes residents in Medicine, Dentistry and Pharmacy

UBC offers undergraduate and graduate students a wide choice of degree programs in applied science, arts (creative and performing arts, humanities, and social sciences), business, dentistry, education, forestry, land and food systems, law, medicine, pharmacy and science at the Point Grey campus and at other locations throughout the province (see Table 2). UBC educates physicians in the province with 3 other institutions through a distributed model, and is the sole provider of training in 6 other health professions. UBC operates the largest co-operative learning program in western Canada.

Institution Self-Study

The UBC QAPA review was initiated with an Institution Briefing on April 20, 2018 at the Vancouver campus. The Institution Briefing provides an overview of the QAPA process and the documentation institutions are requested to submit.

At its meeting on June 4, 2018, the Quality Assurance Audit Committee reviewed the Completed and Planned Review worksheet submitted by UBC and selected three reviews for sampling. The selected samples are those that the DQAB consider are representative of various areas of the institution's educational activities. The reviews selected were: Department of Asian Studies; Department of Botany; and Department of Mechanical Engineering. On September 7, 2018, UBC submitted its Institution Report.

Table 2: Program offerings (2017-2018)

Credential Type	# of Programs
Baccalaureate	21
Certificate	11
Combined Doctorate /Diploma	3
Combined Masters /Diploma	5
Diploma	8
Doctoral	4
Dual Masters	1
Dual Masters/Doctoral	1
Masters	53
Professional Undergraduate /Post-Baccalaureate	10
Vantage*	4
Dual Professional Undergraduate/Masters	1
Dual Professional Undergraduate /Doctoral	1

*UBC's Vantage College is home to the Vantage One program, a specially designed pathway for international students that supports the transition from high school to second-year university.

Self-Evaluation Approach

An early commitment to ensuring good governance over the QAPA process was made by the Provost's Office and developed through a project structure. Membership on the project team included the: Vice-Provost and Associate Vice-President, Academic Affairs; Senate Secretariat; Associate-Provost, Academic Innovation; Senior Advisor on Teaching and Learning and Academic Director Centre for Teaching, Learning and Technology; and Associate Vice-President, Government Relations and Community Engagement. Interactions with stakeholders included Deans, Associate Deans, Academic, Senate committees, including student representation, Senate, and Board of Governors.

An additional time-limited advisory group, the Quality Enhancement Advisory Team, provided feedback to the project team and updates to their respective Senate committees. This group was actively engaged with the Institution Report and with planning the next steps in the development of quality assurance processes at UBC. Membership included chairs or members from the Senate committees for Academic Policy, Curriculum, Teaching & Learning, as well from among the Associate Deans, Academic and students. This group will develop UBC's response to the site visit report, and for subsequent development of improvements of quality assurance processes at UBC.

Development of the Institution Report was managed by the Vice-Provost and Associate Vice-President, Academic Affairs with support from the project team and other units including Government Relations, Planning and Institutional Research, Faculty Relations, and the Faculties. Throughout the development of the Institution Report the project team focused on surfacing any gaps within the current processes. The Provost's Office and Senate committees

committed to reviewing the current policies and processes for external reviews with a view toward collaborating with Faculties to further enhance quality assurance across UBC.

The draft report was developed and discussed formally with the Quality Enhancement Advisory Team, Government Relations and at the Senate committees for Teaching & Learning, Academic Policy and Curriculum. Comments and suggestions, including gaps in information, were updated prior to the final draft being presented to Senate. The Senate Curriculum Committee approved the final draft, before final review and signoff by the Provost and submission to the Ministry.

Quality Assurance Policy and Practices

UBC's approach to quality assurance and quality improvement is a mixture of policy, principles, and prescribed processes. There are strategic plans with annual accountability in place across all levels of UBC. In addition, UBC has a government mandate to report annually using agreed upon metrics. Collectively, this mixture of policy, strategy, process, and accountability results in measurable and verifiable progress in improving many aspects of educational provision at UBC.

UBC's decentralized structure presents many administrative challenges, but it also allows the many constituent units to be nimble and adaptive. Over the past seven years, UBC has adopted a budget model that allocates resources to Faculties, thus allowing Deans greater discretion in meeting the changing requirements of students and society. The Faculties determine which programs of study they offer (subject to approvals by the Senate and Board), while Deans of Faculties determine which research directions to prioritize, the balance of research and teaching faculty, and the allocation of resources.

UBC's overall approach to quality assurance has evolved over time and will continue to do so. However, at every level, quality assurance is animated and underpinned by a number of key academic principles:

Peer Review – This principle has been applied to the assessment of academic units, which must be reviewed regularly by a team of external and internal faculty reviewers. The overall process is overseen by the Vice-Provost Academic Affairs. This office provides guidance on the composition of review teams, the remit of the reviewers, preparation of self-study documents, and reports to Senate annually on all external reviews. All academic units ensure that their members contribute to the self-study and have the opportunity to meet the reviewers. Moreover, the units make the review reports and their response to reviews available to their members. Some units make the reviews and responses publicly available while a summary of the recommendations and responses are publicly available in the annual report to Senate. Administrative units use the same principles of peer review by external experts and publish the results of the reviews on the website of the Vice-President Academic.

Performance Metrics – Over time, closer connections have been established between the overall UBC planning process and the development of metrics to monitor performance and progress, and to identify gaps for both academic and administrative units.

Student Surveys – UBC routinely surveys faculty, staff, and students, using the internal Students Evaluation of Teaching Survey and the external National Survey of Student

Engagement Survey. Student evaluation of teaching is mandatory for all courses. The results are communicated to the appropriate unit Head and Dean, and are used in reappointment, promotion, and tenure decisions. Both formative and summative peer assessments of teaching are well-established in all academic units. Summative peer reviews of teaching are required in all academic units for consideration of cases for promotion, reappointment, and tenure. Common institutional principles have been developed to guide the process, but specific operationalization is left to individual Faculties to design processes that best fit the local context. A strong culture of formative peer review (as one component of a broader set of mentorship activities) to enhance and develop faculty as educators supports the formal evaluations.

UBC is committed to developing learning outcomes for all of its academic programs. This goal is one of the key strategies outlined in its new strategic plan “Shaping UBC’s next Century” and being further articulated in the current draft Indigenous Strategic Plan, which specifies that resource allocations will follow strategic priorities. Accordingly, UBC committed to resourcing the administrative- and cultural-change processes necessary to achieve the goal of having all its programs become competency-based – as many already are. UBC is now working towards including assessment of program-level outcomes into regular program reviews and follow-up actions. UBC now requires that intended learning outcomes should be included in the sample syllabus submitted to Senate as part of the curriculum approval process, or for any new course submitted as part of a new program proposal.

The UBC Centre for Teaching, Learning and Technology (CTLT) supports faculty members and academic units in pedagogy, curriculum design, and learning technology. Central support from CTLT is complemented by faculty-based learning support units that offer local resources and domain expertise. UBC faculty members have made major contributions to the development of methods that assess teaching practices and students’ abilities to learn and solve problems, although this is easier in some disciplines than others. In particular, the large scale adoption of blended learning at UBC allows students to spend more time in active learning.

At UBC, a range of academic policies, agreements and approaches are in place to influence, support and enhance the quality of teaching and learning including:

- Faculty appointment, review and promotion;
- Faculty scholarship and professional development; and
- Student progress and assessment.

Program Development

The process for approval of curriculum proposals is outlined in the Senate Curriculum Committee’s Guide for Curriculum Submissions (SCCGCS). This guide covers proposals for new programs and majors, new courses, and substantive editorial revisions to any element of UBC curriculum. As part of the SCCGCS for the new program approvals process, a summary of any new program proposal is provided to external post-secondary institutions and industry experts for review and comment. The level of support required is aligned to the type of program being developed. Previously, an external review of any new program proposal was not explicitly required within the process outlined in the SCCGCS. However, with the implementation of the Ministry of Advanced Education, Skills and Training (AEST) Stage 1

form, the opportunity for external review of all programs within a unit is undertaken as part of the external review process.

The processes for the development of a new program begin at the Faculty level, then flows through multiple stages of review, consultation and approval across UBC Faculties, Senate and Board of Governors. This University-wide support continues through to submission of the application to AEST.

New program approval has many steps that are coordinated between multiple offices, units and authorities at UBC:

1. Proponents in an academic unit start to develop a new program (or a major change to an existing program). They advise both their unit's leadership and their Dean's office of this development and provide both parties with preliminary conceptual material.
2. Proponents then advise the Senate Secretariat and the Provost's Office that a proposal for a new program is being developed.
3. Early in the development process, proponents consult with academic units or Faculties offering related programs, with any individuals or units (Departments, Faculties, Libraries) who might contribute to or be affected by the new program, and with student groups in a position to provide a learner's perspective on the proposed program. External consultations with other post-secondary institutions are carried out to understand the extent of any duplication with existing programs.
4. Proponents also seek support from several offices including the Centre for Teaching, Learning and Technology in curriculum development, Extended Learning for applied graduate programs, and the Provost's Office for assistance in budget development and financial projections. For programs involving international collaboration and partnerships, support is available through the Vice-Provost, International.
5. Proponents complete the Stage 1 Application for Approval Process which will be submitted to the Ministry along with the program proposal, once approved by Senate and the Board.
6. The proposal is presented to the relevant unit committees (Curriculum, Teaching & Learning, or their equivalents) for review and approval.
7. After making any recommended changes, the proposal is submitted to the relevant Faculty committees for approval. A final proposal is prepared, taking into consideration any feedback received. The proposal includes all Senate-required program and course information as well as budget and fee information.
8. The proposal is then presented to Faculty Council for approval.
9. Following Faculty approval, proponents contact the VP Students Office to initiate the process of formal student consultations as required under UBC Policy #71. The Faculty must respond, in writing, to any significant issues raised in the Student Consultation Report.
10. Following Faculty approval, the proposal moves through the required Senate committees and subcommittees before being presented to Senate.
11. After Senate approval, the proposal moves to the Board for approval as the Board has joint powers regarding curriculum approval. In addition to the proposal, the Board also reviews the student consultation report, tuition information and faculty response.
12. Upon Board of Governors approval, the Provost's Office forwards the proposal for approval by the Ministry.

The Guide for Curriculum Submissions is edited each year over the summer months, with changes being approved by the Senate Curriculum Committee to guide the work in the next academic year.

Program Review

The UBC Senate Policy for Reviews of Administrative Units was passed in 1977 and amended in 1983. The document sets out principles that have proven robust and flexible for over 40 years; however, some no longer meet current best practices. An important goal for the 2018/19 Senate will be to update the policy.

This policy has been supplemented by Principles, Procedures and Guidelines for External Reviews of Academic Units issued by the Vice-Provost, Academic Affairs in March 2013 and updated in 2014. This document – PPG 2013/14 for short – states that “academic units engaged in teaching, professional training and/or scholarly work at the university shall undergo academic review” and defines these units as Faculties, Schools, Departments, Colleges, Institutes, Centres, and Research Units. At UBC, it is at the level of units, not programs, that external reviews take place.

The introduction to PPG 2013/14 states that the major goals of an external review are to provide the unit with an opportunity to reflect on its programs and performance, and to obtain outside advice to guide continuing improvement in academic and operational quality. In addition, external reviews contribute to public accountability by communicating the quality of the unit’s academic and professional activities to all interested parties (including responsible administrators and members of Senate).

PPG 2013/14 continues with the observation that “while there is no rigid periodicity for reviews, reviews are normally conducted every 5 years and the time interval between reviews must not exceed 10 years.” UBC Heads, Directors, and Deans are typically appointed for 5 years and these appointments can be renewed only once. In practice, reviews nearly always occur before or after leadership transition, and sometimes after the first term of a leader who is being considered for reappointment. Reviews may also be triggered when issues arise in a unit that would benefit from an external assessment.

To accommodate the variety of norms, practices, and ideals that exist among different disciplinary areas, the review process varies to some extent among academic units. However, each review must adhere to the following requirements: involvement of external assessors, engagement with appropriate members of the academic unit, assembly of comprehensive documentation appropriate to the terms of reference, a site visit, and the opportunity for all interested faculty, students, post-doctoral fellows, and staff to provide confidential feedback to the review team.

The PPG 2013/14 encourages units to concentrate their self-studies on the critical analysis of their strengths, areas for improvement, opportunities and threats, benchmarks used to assess programs and activities, comparison with appropriate peer academic units, reflections on progress achieved since the last review, current priorities, best practices, plans for the future, and ways in which the unit’s attainment of their goals and objectives will be assessed.

Self-study documents are required and their composition varies among units. However, all self-study documents must include an executive summary, an overview of the unit being reviewed, and a response to the previous review. In addition, the unit must provide material that would allow reviewers to comment on the unit's performance, plans, further opportunities, and alignment with the unit's and UBC's strategic plans in areas relevant to research, Aboriginal engagement, undergraduate instruction and learning, graduate and post-doctoral studies, scholarly and professional activity, service and community partnerships, and resources, administration and governance.

The PPG 2013/14 recognizes that units offering externally accredited programs may have existing documentation relating to accreditation (e.g., a separate self-study), and encourages those units to refer to or include this material as appropriate, thus allowing the unit to align UBC and external requirements while minimizing duplication of effort.

For undergraduate instruction, units must provide enrolment and recruitment statistics, along with past trends, and projections to assess continuing demand and relevance. These data are provided by the Planning and Institutional Research unit at UBC. It is expected that curriculum and potential for its reform will be critically evaluated, and that this evaluation will include attributes of graduates, learning outcomes, interdisciplinarity, curriculum integration, benchmarks or outcome indicators, service and work-based learning, and engagement of diverse student populations. Units must also include a review of degree programs and course offerings, justification of relevance, and evidence that they provide suitable depth and breadth for undergraduate education. The document must evaluate program requirements, pre-requisites and electives. Finally, the self-study must discuss how student learning is assessed.

For graduate instruction, the Dean and Vice-Provost, Graduate and Post-Doctoral Studies has included separate guidelines within PPG 2013/14 that are broadly similar to undergraduate guidelines but place more emphasis on supervision, mentoring, and student financial support. The Dean's office provides data to units on all graduate programs to assist in the preparation of their self-studies. There is less focus on assessment and curricula, but more emphasis on student completion rates, time to completion, research output, professional development, and participation in academic meetings and research conferences.

PPG 2013/14 stipulates that at least two external reviewers who are leading academics from peer institutions must participate in the external review, although in practice there are usually three. The review team must reflect gender and equity balance. The list of reviewers must be submitted to the Provost's Office for approval prior to inviting the reviewers.

PPG 2013/14 states that the leadership of the unit under review, the appropriate Dean, and senior administration bear responsibility for responding in ways that consolidate strengths and address the weaknesses of the unit and its programs disclosed by the review process. The unit and Dean will normally respond to the review in writing within several weeks after receiving it, and discuss follow-up actions with the Provost. The Provost's Office prepares a summary of all external reviews carried out in a given year. This summary contains key findings of the reviewers, their key recommendations, and responses of the unit and Dean with plans to implement changes arising from the review. A summary report with key findings, recommendations and departmental responses is submitted to Senate and is publicly accessible.

The Provost's Office plans to recommend to Senate that the 1977/1983 policy be revised to strengthen the requirement for follow-up and action on recommendations from external reviews. The objective is to obtain feedback from students, faculty, and senior administrators on every external review.

While the assessment of academic programs is part-and-parcel of every external review, UBC has also reviewed its course offerings to ensure the currency of its Academic Calendar. During the 2015/16 academic year, Senate and Curriculum Services sought to identify courses no longer being offered, and to remove them from the Academic Calendar. Each of the 8,631 courses in the Academic Calendar was cross-referenced against recent scheduling data, and 1,632 courses that had not been scheduled since the 2011/12 academic year were flagged as potentially inactive. Lists of potentially inactive courses were compiled and distributed to the appropriate Faculties, which reviewed the lists and identified those that were genuinely inactive and could be discontinued. This process led to the removal of 416 defunct courses from the Academic Calendar.

QAPA Review

The QAPA panel conducting the assessment were Dr. Art Quinney, panel chair, and panel members Dr. Carol Stuart and Dr. Carolyn Watters. The site visit was held on December 6 and 7, 2018. In addition to the panel, Ms. Dao Luu, a member of the DQAB Secretariat, also attended the site visit.

The QAPA panel submitted its report on December 18, 2018. UBC provided a response on April 10, 2019.

The panel concluded that UBC has a demonstrated record of strong commitment to quality assurance and quality enhancement over a long period of time. The new strategic plan, "Shaping UBC's Next Century", is aspirational and inspirational and will provide sound direction for the institution for many years to come. The audit team also appreciated the consistent linking of quality assurance and quality enhancement which demonstrates a commitment to continuous improvement. Another observation was the many undergraduate teaching and learning innovations that have been introduced at UBC and the Carl Weiman Science Education Program is a good example of the willingness of the institution to make significant changes to enhance student learning. It is also important to recognize that UBC is also an outstanding research university which has contributed to undergraduate and graduate program excellence. The panel report provided commendations, affirmations and recommendations.

Commendations are areas where the institution has shown exemplary practice. Areas of exemplary practice:

- UBC has made significant progress in implementing experiential learning across many programs which speaks to the commitment to engaged and competency-based learning.
- UBC has undertaken a variety of processes to support and implement program learning outcomes (PLO) and course learning outcomes (LO) across all programs. Some have been top-down and others have been bottom-up with a more gradual approach and both appear to be effective in moving this agenda forward.
- The Centre for Teaching, Learning and Technology (CTLT) is an excellent support system for undergraduate and graduate programs. The scope and quality of services is highly

appreciated. The embedding of CTLT staff in faculties has also been shown to be very effective.

- The process of identification and selection of external reviewers has worked very well with a strong record of credible academics providing peer review of units and programs.
- The Faculty of Arts uses learning analytics for pilot projects which enhance recommendations that are generated by the review process. This ensures continuous quality enhancement based on evidence.
- The concept of continuous improvement in annual planning appears to be embedded generally across the campus which is seen as very positive.

Affirmations are areas where the institution has identified weaknesses and intends to correct it. Areas the institution identified for improvement:

- UBC has embarked on the development and implementation of a new data system which is intended to provide much enhanced access to academic program information which will support quality assurance processes. This system will support the evidence-based approach to quality assurance and quality enhancement.
- UBC has committed to the review and renewal of the 1983 Senate Policy on Review of Administrative Units and the Principles, Procedures and Guidelines for External Academic Unit Reviews (2014) which will provide important updates to procedures for quality assurance and quality enhancement. Two specific areas that have been identified in this updating are enhancing the accountability processes to ensure that action plans are completed and reported and providing better coordination of reviews across the campus.
- The new program development process (HUB model) will provide a one-door, single-entry point for new program development and for review of new programs during implementation (phase V). It is also suggested that for all new programs that a formal program review take place after two cohorts have graduated to assess student outcomes and related evidence.

Recommendations are areas needing improvement. Areas for the panel identified for improvement:

- The decentralized and flexible process of unit reviews at UBC allows the University to account for individual disciplinary and professional orientations to take ownership of the process. Enhanced coordination of the quality assurance processes through tracking by the Deans' and Provost's Offices is recommended. It will be important that all faculties have a schedule of the timing of all reviews on a faculty level and these schedules should be rolled-up to the Provost's Office to provide an institutional map of the quality assurance processes that are anticipated over the next 3-5 years.
- It is also suggested that CTLT could play a role in this coordination process through the enhancement of their role in the further development of Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs) across campus and in ensuring that mapping of outcomes to the curriculum takes place.
- The university should develop a set of principles for quality assurance at UBC to guide the quality assurance process (e.g., focus on student learning outcomes and the centrality of peer review).
- Transparency of the nature of the process is defined in the current policy, however, consideration should be given in the new policy and procedures to enhanced transparency of the outcomes and dissemination of the self-study as well as the summary of outcomes of the external review process.

- A great deal of progress has been made at UBC on the development of PLOs and their assessment in undergraduate programs and this should now be emphasized within graduate programs as well.
- UBC should consider adding to the criteria for external reviewers a competency in understanding concepts of Learning Outcomes (LOs) and their assessment in competency-based education rather than only discipline expertise.
- Consideration should be given to incorporating an orientation for all peer reviewers focused on the Canadian, British Columbia, and institutional contexts, including relevant budget models.
- More direction should be provided in the preparation and vetting of self-studies to ensure self-reflection, better analysis of evidence and a future looking orientation. Self-studies should be shorter and more focused. A maximum of 30-40 pages plus appendices might be a reasonable guideline.
- The response to a unit review should include an action plan which aligns with the Faculty Strategic Plan and the UBC Strategic Plan. The action plan should include specific actions, timelines and accountability for carrying out the actions as well including possible resource implications. This plan should be approved by the Dean and be presented for discussion to the appropriate Senate Committee.
- The maximum time between reviews should be no more than eight years with a target of five to seven years.¹
- The new Senate Policy and Guidelines for academic reviews should be subject to external review and feedback prior to moving to Senate approval.

UBC acknowledged the recommendations in its response to the panel's report and provided an action plan addressing each of the recommendations.

¹ The Degree Program Review Criteria and Guidelines state that external reviews should normally occur every five years.