

Chapter 3

Section 3.08

University Undergraduate Teaching Quality

Standing Committee on Public Accounts Follow-Up on Section 4.11, 2014 Annual Report

In April 2015, the Committee held a public hearing on our 2014 follow-up to our 2012 audit of University Undergraduate Teaching Quality. The Committee tabled a report on this hearing in the Legislature in June 2015. The full report can be found at www.ontla.on.ca/committee-proceedings/committee-reports/UniversityUndergraduateTeachingQuality.

The Committee made five recommendations and asked for a report back by the beginning of October 2015 from the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (now the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development), and the three universities we examined in our audit and follow-up: the University of Toronto, the University of Ontario

Institute of Technology, and Brock University. The Ministry formally reported back to the Committee on October 1, 2015, and included responses from the three universities. The Committee raised a number of issues similar to observations we made in our audit and follow-up. In February 2016, our Office asked the Ministry and the three universities to provide an update on the status of actions taken to address the Committee's recommendations. The updated status of the Committee's recommendations is shown in **Figure 1**.

Figure 2 shows the recommendations and the status details that are based on responses from the Ministry and the three universities, and our review of the information they provided.

Figure 1: Status of Actions Recommended in the Committee's Report

Prepared by the Office of the Auditor General of Ontario

	# of Actions Recommended	Status of Actions Recommended			
		Fully Implemented	In Process of Being Implemented	Little or No Progress	Will Not Be Implemented
Recommendation 1	1		1/3	1/3	1/3
Recommendation 2a	1			2/3	1/3
Recommendation 2b	1	1/3	1/3		1/3
Recommendation 3	1	1			
Recommendation 4	1		1		
Recommendation 5	1	1			
Total	6	2 1/3	12/3	1	1
%	100	39	27	17	17

At the time of our follow-up, two-thirds of the Committee's recommended actions had either been implemented or were in the process of being implemented. This included recommendations made to the Ministry to identify effective tools for measuring employment and education outcomes for university graduates, and making employment outcome data by program and university publicly available. All three universities were providing feedback to full-time faculty on their teaching performance. Both the University of Toronto and the University of Ontario Institute of Technology had made progress in implementing 75% of the recommended actions, while Brock University had made progress in implementing only 25%.

Three of the recommended actions will not be implemented by all three universities. The University of Ontario Institute of Technology would not be making the results of student course evaluations available to other students because the collective agreements with faculty would not permit it. In addition, the university believes the publication of student course evaluations would damage faculty relations while failing to improve teaching quality. Brock University did not intend to implement mandatory performance appraisals of sessional instructors because they had few sessional instructors (less than 14%), nor to examine the impact of sessional instructors on teaching because course evaluations were the property of faculty.

Figure 2: Committee Recommendations and Detailed Status of Actions Taken

Prepared by the Office of the Auditor General of Ontario

Committee Recommendation	Status Details
<p>Recommendation 1 Universities continue to take steps to make the results of course evaluations available to students to assist them in making their course selections. Status: University 1 In the process of being implemented by 2019/20; University 2 will not be implemented; University 3 little or no progress.</p>	<p>University of Toronto The university developed a new online system used by the majority of faculties to share their course-evaluation results. The university advised that 84% of all undergraduate and graduate students are enrolled in a faculty that has implemented the system, and so can access the course evaluations online. One campus at this university continues to post its course-evaluation results online through its student website, as it did under a previous course-evaluation system. The projected timeline for implementation across all faculties is the end of the 2019/20 academic year.</p> <p>University of Ontario Institute of Technology The university advised that this recommendation would not be implemented because almost 98% of courses have positive reviews, 40% of courses are offered only once per year, and only 20% of courses have more than one instructor. In addition, the university believes publication of student course evaluations would damage faculty relations while failing to improve teaching. In addition, changes in the availability of student evaluations would have to be negotiated with faculty unions.</p> <p>Brock University The university is not able to provide the results of student evaluations to students because the current collective agreement between faculty and the university stipulates that course evaluations are the property of faculty members. The current collective agreement expires in June 2017, and the university said it may then consider renegotiating this provision.</p>

Committee Recommendation	Status Details
<p>Recommendation 2a Universities conduct performance appraisals of sessional instructors; and Status: Universities 1 and 2 little or no progress; University 3 will not be implemented.</p>	<p>University of Toronto The collective agreement gives university departments the option to conduct performance appraisals of sessional instructors once per term for each course, using methods deemed appropriate by the Dean. These include a classroom visit after advance notice to the sessional instructor. Otherwise, only sessional instructors looking for advancement undergo a mandatory performance appraisal, which includes the Advancement Committee observing the instructor in the classroom. The university was unable to provide the number and percentage of sessional instructors given performance appraisals in the last year because the information was kept in the various departments and not tracked centrally.</p> <p>University of Ontario Institute of Technology The collective agreement includes provisions allowing Deans to conduct performance appraisals of sessional instructors during the instructor's first teaching term, and periodically thereafter, for the purpose of assessing performance, ensuring quality, and providing the instructor with constructive feedback. The university was unable to provide the number and percentage of sessional instructors receiving performance appraisals because it does not collect such data. It also indicated that the performance appraisal of sessional instructors is a process managed by Deans, who have discretion over the timing, nature, and frequency of evaluations.</p> <p>Brock University The university informed us that it has no formal process in place to evaluate sessional instructors. The collective agreement requires only faculty members holding tenured or tenure-track positions to undergo an annual performance appraisal. The university also informed us that, in evaluating an applicant's qualifications for a sessional appointment, it deems performance in a previous appointment at the university satisfactory if no written performance evaluation to the contrary exists, or if no performance evaluation has been conducted. The university was unable to provide the number and percentage of sessional instructors receiving performance appraisals because they do not keep this data centrally.</p> <p>The university does not intend to implement mandatory performance appraisals of sessional instructors or include them in the next round of negotiations with its faculty union. It argues that the majority of its instructors are evaluated since its collective agreement limits the percentage of courses that can be taught by non-tenured or tenure-track faculty to 14%.</p>

Committee Recommendation	Status Details
<p>Recommendation 2b Examine the impact on teaching quality of the use of sessional instructors. Status: University 1 in the process of being implemented by the end of 2016; University 2 fully implemented; University 3 will not be implemented.</p>	<p>University of Toronto The university advised that it believes an enhanced analysis of course-evaluation data would help faculties and departments assess the impact of different delivery options on student learning (including the use of sessional instructors). Thus, it plans to build upon its existing analytic capacity through improved data-management systems. The university is currently working to develop a suite of customizable reporting tools to support enhanced institutional analysis at the faculty, department, program, and instructor level, and enhance reporting functions for the purpose of making more informed assessments of teaching quality and curricular development. Access to the new system will be granted to senior administrators in all academic divisions, and to administrative and teaching support offices engaged in the evaluation and support of professional development for the university's teaching staff.</p> <p>University of Ontario Institute of Technology The university advised that the performance of sessional instructors is reported and reviewed by the Dean, who compares aggregated scores for the entire university and the home faculty. Data is arranged chronologically and by subject, and the Dean assesses changes over time and identifies potential issues requiring follow-up action. The university advised that the majority of courses receive positive evaluations, with only 2% of courses offered in 2015/16 receiving negative evaluations. According to the university, certain programs such as education, nursing, and commerce benefit from greater reliance on sessional instructors because contact with professionals in practice is a key feature of the teaching methodology. For these programs, the university found that instructors in 2014/15 and 2015/16 received consistently high ratings. The university also said it has no evidence that students are less satisfied with sessional instructors than full-time instructors.</p> <p>Brock University The university has no plans to address this part of the recommendation. It advised that, although the impact on teaching quality of the use of sessional instructors could be assessed by comparing student course evaluations of sessional instructors with those of full-time tenured faculty, the student course evaluations of full-time tenured faculty are the property of the instructor. The university therefore does not have access to those course evaluations.</p>

Committee Recommendation	Status Details
<p>Recommendation 3 Universities provide substantive feedback to full-time faculty on teaching performance, and encouragement to improve teaching performance where warranted. Status: All three universities fully implemented.</p>	<p>The process to provide substantive teaching-performance feedback to full-time faculty, and to encourage teaching improvement where warranted, is generally the same at all three universities. Each requires full-time faculty to submit an annual activity report to their Dean or Chair/Director that details their activities and accomplishments during the year, supported by evidence such as teaching portfolios, student course evaluations, curriculum development, and any other evidence of teaching effectiveness. The Dean or Chair/Director then reviews and evaluates these submissions, and provides feedback to faculty. The University of Toronto and the University of Ontario Institute of Technology stated that they provide written feedback to all assessed faculty, while Brock University provided written feedback only to those whose performance is not consistent with expectations of the collective agreement.</p> <p>Where issues are identified, each university can recommend remedial action to faculty members to help improve their performance. Remedial action generally consists of referral to the university's teaching support institution (such as the Centre for Teaching Support and Innovation at the University of Toronto, the Teaching and Learning Centre at the University of Ontario Institute of Technology, and the Centre for Pedagogical Innovation at Brock University) which provides observation and consultation of teaching performance, and workshops on curricular development and course design. In addition, Deans or Chairs/Directors can provide suggestions to faculty regarding reading material, online resources, and sharing of best practices from their own experience. They can also provide mentorship from a senior faculty member.</p>
<p>Recommendation 4 The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities identify effective tools for measuring employment and further education outcomes for graduates of Ontario universities. Status: In process of being implemented by the end of 2017.</p>	<p>The Ministry has pursued a number of initiatives to improve the measurement of student outcomes, and has taken steps to make more information available to students to help them make well-informed decisions about their education. These initiatives include:</p> <p>The Ontario University Graduate Survey Since our 2012 audit, the Ministry has expanded collection and publication of student outcome data through the Ontario University Graduate Survey. This survey publishes provincial results on salary, relatedness between field of study and employment, full-time versus part-time employment, and level of education required for employment. The Ministry expects to introduce a new pilot survey for those completing graduate programs, such as Masters and PhDs, in fall 2017. The survey will collect information on multiple graduating classes and include questions regarding employment outcomes, program and university satisfaction, occupation and salaries, career pathways, overall experience, and learning outcomes. The Ministry plans to release the results of the pilot survey by the end of 2017.</p> <p>The Ontario Education Number The Ministry advised that it continues to work with Ontario's publicly-assisted post-secondary institutions to implement the Ontario Education Number (OEN), a unique identifier assigned to each student by the Ministry of Education since 2003 to track students from junior kindergarten to grade 12. In 2012, publicly-funded post-secondary institutions began assigning OENs to their students who did not have one coming out of grade 12, such as students from out-of-province. Recent university enrolment reports have OENs for 99% of full- and part-time enrolment at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. The Ministry is now supporting the University Data Consultation Working Group, which is expected to help inform future directions on how this information can be used to measure employment and further education outcomes for university graduates.</p>

Committee Recommendation	Status Details
<p>Recommendation 5 The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities make data on graduate employment outcomes at the program and university level publicly available to assist students in making informed decisions on university and program selection. Status: Fully implemented.</p>	<p>Ontario University Graduate Survey In February 2015, the Ministry published additional graduate employment outcomes data from the Ontario University Graduate Survey conducted in spring 2014. The Ministry published new indicators with accompanying results and additional information not publicly available in prior years.</p> <p>New indicators and accompanying results published included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • part- and full-time employment rates by university; • salaries for part- and full-time employment; • relatedness of graduates' work to both skills acquired and subjects studied (for part- and full-time employment); • percentage of graduates in unpaid internships; and • graduate occupations by the National Occupational Classification coding for graduates' outcomes. <p>New information made available included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • question-by-question breakdown of responses to the survey; and • co-op and non-co-op graduate outcomes on employment status, full- or part-time employment, salary, and relatedness. <p>In addition, the public website for all university key performance indicator data was changed in April 2015 to www.ontario.ca/universityoutcomes to simplify public searches and increase access to posted Ministry information. All employment data is as of six months after graduation. At the time of our follow-up, the latest graduate employment rates were for the 2012 graduating class, who had been surveyed in 2014/15.</p>