

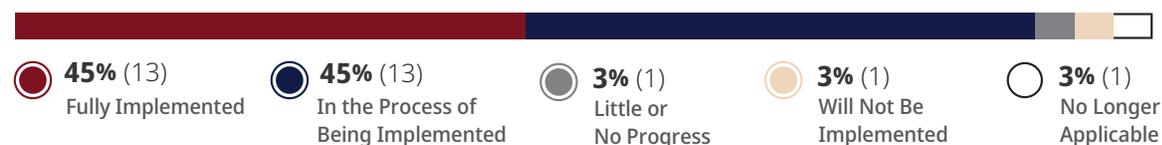
Follow-Up on the 2023 Performance Audit:

York University

York University Operations and Capital

// Overall Conclusion

29 Recommended Actions¹



York University, as of November 26, 2025, has fully implemented 45% of actions we recommended in our 2023 audit, **York University Operations and Capital**. York University has made progress in implementing an additional 45% of the recommendations.

The University has fully implemented recommendations such as developing a comprehensive plan to ensure it meets the obligations of all debentures when due and completing an analysis of profitability at the academic program and department level. It has also established faculty-level targets for optimal international student enrolment. Additionally, the University is now completing comprehensive business cases to guide decisions on major capital projects and is regularly comparing capital project budgeted amounts against actual expenditures to identify variances early. It has also prioritized preventative facility maintenance. Cybersecurity awareness training has been made mandatory for all employees with York University accounts, a whistle-blower policy has been established, and more extensive work plans have been developed to incorporate all duties and responsibilities of the Board of Governors (Board) and committees.

1. Due to rounding, percentages presented do not add to 100%.

However, the University has made little progress on 3% of the recommendations, including adopting a comprehensive charter for the Board to clearly define its mandate, governance responsibilities and expectations for member conduct. The University will not be implementing 3% of the recommended actions, including revising the Terms of Reference of the Board of Governors' Executive Committee to have the ability to make decisions on behalf of the full Board only when matters are so time-sensitive that it is not feasible to convene a special Board meeting.

The Office of the Auditor General of Ontario continues to support the implementation of this recommended action.

The status of actions taken on each of our recommendations is found in the **Appendix**.

// Status of Actions Taken on Recommendations

We conducted assurance work between April 2025 and September 2025. We obtained written representation from York University that effective November 26, 2025, it has provided us with a complete update of the status of the recommendations we made in the original audit two years ago.

1. Financial Sustainability and Debt Levels

In our original audit, we found that, although York University generated net income consistently over the five fiscal years, 2018/19–2022/23, its annual net income had continuously decreased by a total of 87% from \$164.2 million in 2018/19 to \$20.8 million in 2022/23. In addition, by 2022/23 York had acquired a significant amount of debt (\$600 million), but had a repayment plan for only half of its long-term debt. Also, over the same five-year period, York University did not consistently meet three of the eight key Financial Health Indicators established for Ontario universities by the Ministry of Colleges and Universities, namely the debt ratio, debt-to-revenue ratio and interest burden ratio.

Recommendation 1: Action Item 1

To reduce the University's financial risk and to ensure the University's ability to repay its debt at time of maturity, we recommend that York University:

- develop and implement a strategy to be compliant with the Ministry of Colleges and Universities' Financial Health Indicator low-risk thresholds, including for the debt ratio, debt-to-revenue ratio and interest burden ratio;

Status:  **In the process of being implemented by December 2026.**

Details

The University indicated to us that its ability to increase its revenue and assets depends largely on factors over which the University has limited control. These include, for example, the provincial government's decision to continue its tuition freeze for domestic in-province students for the 2024/25, 2025/26 and 2026/27 academic years; and the federal government's decision in 2024 to reduce the number of visas available to international students. In addition, in 2024, the University experienced a labour disruption due to a strike by CUPE 3903, representing about 3,300 academic employees, which lasted for eight weeks from February 26 to April 19, 2024. The University informed us that it missed its fall 2024 undergraduate enrolment targets by 54% for international students and 13% for domestic students and that, in fall 2025, it was expecting to meet undergraduate domestic intake targets and be 36% below international student targets. The University expects this shortfall to negatively impact its financial results.

We noted that between the time of the audit in 2022/23 and 2023/24 (2024/25 results were not available at the time of our follow-up), York's performance against the Ministry of Colleges, Universities, Research Excellence and Security's (formerly the Ministry of Colleges and Universities) Financial Health Indicators did not show improvement, except for the interest burden ratio, which decreased below the low-risk threshold. In 2023/24, York failed to meet the low-risk threshold for five of the eight indicators, and remained at medium risk with respect to the debt ratio, debt-to-revenue ratio and net operating revenue ratio. The University surpassed the medium-risk threshold on the working capital ratio and the high-risk threshold on the surplus (deficit) ratio.

Between January and May 2025, the University developed the **York U Forward Action Plan** to help it achieve financial sustainability and to ultimately help achieve the Ministry's Financial Health Indicators low-risk thresholds. The plan consists of 17 projects divided into three streams: Program Enhancement and Sustainability, Enrolment Recovery, and Administrative Projects. The Program Enhancement and Sustainability stream includes optimizing course enrolment by, for example, increasing the minimum and average size of course sections, reducing duplication of curriculum, and collaborating across faculties and academic units. This stream will also include a program sustainability review that aims to develop a framework for the ongoing review of degree programs to ensure an early identification of, and supportive interventions for, programs with diminishing enrolment. The University expects the majority of these actions to be implemented by December 2026. The University told us that the actual time it would take for all metrics to turn around to the low-risk threshold may span over a longer time horizon; potentially three to five years due to the time lag associated with those actions taking effect.

The University also introduced a voluntary exit program for various employee groups, resulting in 173 employees exiting the University in 2024/25.

Recommendation 1: Action Item 2

- develop a plan to ensure it is able to meet the obligations of all debentures when they come due.

Status:  Fully implemented.

Details

In February 2024, the University's long-term debt policy was revised to require the University to maintain an internally restricted sinking fund to repay all long-term debt when it comes due, compared to the previous policy in place at the time of our audit, which only required the University to repay debt at a minimum 50% of the total balance of the long-term debt. The plan, as approved by the Board, includes investing the sinking fund alongside the University's unrestricted endowment fund to ensure funds are available for repayment for the first two debt payments totalling \$300 million when they come due in 2042 and 2044. Investment transaction and fund balance reports show that the University had begun the transfers according to policy amounts. In line with the revised debt policy, the investment strategy will continue for repayment of debt due beyond 2044, and the Finance and Audit Committee of the Board is to review the value of the sinking fund relative to its projected target every two years and adjust investments to ensure sufficiency of funds.

2. Many of York's Faculties Operate at a Deficit

Our audit found that six of York's 10 faculties in 2022/23 had an in-year deficit ranging from a low of \$1.4 million (at the Lassonde School of Engineering) to a high of \$14.5 million (at the Faculty of Arts, Media, Performance and Design). Four faculties (Arts, Media, Performance and Design; Glendon College; Environmental and Urban Change; and Education) had run in-year deficits in each of the five fiscal years, 2018/19–2022/23. A major contributing factor to the poor financial performance of some faculties was the large number of programs with low demand and low enrolment that continued to be offered. In 2022/23, for all of York's faculties combined, 37% (50/135) of undergraduate programs had 50 or fewer students enrolled, and 23% (31/135) of undergraduate programs had 20 or fewer students enrolled. The activity-based budgeting/costing model used provided York with information about the financial contribution of each of its faculties, but did not track costs by individual departments or programs within the faculties. As a result, York did not know which departments or programs were running losses and which were profitable or breaking even.

Recommendation 2: Action Item 1

To strive for better financial sustainability across all faculties, combined as well as individually, we recommend that York University:

- complete an analysis of profitability at the academic program and department level;

Status:  Fully implemented.

Details

Between September 2024 and February 2025 York conducted an analysis of the financial health of its faculties by department and enrolment by program. This analysis included the 50 programs identified during the original audit with low enrolment (50 or fewer students). Following this analysis, in February 2025, the University announced that it was pausing new fall 2025 admissions to 18 programs that have shown low enrolment. These included 12 programs at the Faculty of Liberal Arts and Professional Studies, four programs at Glendon College, and two programs at the Faculty of Science. Students currently enrolled in affected programs can continue their studies and will be supported to meet graduation requirements. The University stated that the temporary suspension of admission to these programs is to allow faculties time to review program offerings with the goal of improving enrolment and finding ways of increasing the programs' sustainability.

Recommendation 2: Action Item 2

- regularly analyze and monitor department and program enrolment and profitability trends within all faculties;

Status:  In the process of being implemented by February 2026.

Details

In February 2025, York University initiated the Program Sustainability Review, a project to develop a framework for the ongoing review of degree programs to ensure an early identification of, and supportive interventions for, programs experiencing a decrease in enrolment.

Once finalized, the framework is expected to:

- » develop a process for the regular production of reports on key program health metrics that would identify programs whose sustainability is in jeopardy;

- » develop a methodology for diagnosing causes of declining sustainability and measuring its financial impacts; and
- » develop a course of action/intervention for programs with declining sustainability or programs determined to be unsustainable. At the time of our follow-up, the framework for the Program Sustainability Review was expected to be finalized by December 2025.

On July 1, 2025, the University also approved a policy framework for temporary suspension of admissions to programs. The framework contains criteria that Deans are to use to assess the ongoing sustainability of programs, and whether a program is a candidate for pausing intakes of new students. Criteria include low and/or declining enrolment or applications, ability to maintain a positive budget, insufficient human or physical resources, and concerns about quality of the student experience or outcomes. At the time of our follow-up, the University was planning to develop operating procedures to support the consistent application of the framework on an annual cycle, expected to be implemented by February 2026.

Recommendation 2: Action Item 3

- for programs that are not profitable, develop strategies for improvements in program design, course planning and resource allocation or assess whether to stop program intake and phase out the program.

Status:  **In the process of being implemented by February 2026.**

Details

To inform academic restructuring, in September 2024, the University initiated the Faculties of the Future, one of 17 projects currently underway as part of the **York U Forward Action Plan** (see **Recommendation 1, Action Item 1**). In its development, the University solicited input from departments, faculties, students and staff through several consultation sessions held through late 2024 and early 2025. The final project report, released in September 2025, provides a framework for outlining five themes for change: a forward-looking academic vision; prioritizing student success through accessible, high-quality and experiential learning; renewing curricula to streamline programs and foster collaboration; aligning financial strategies by supporting high-cost and high-demand areas; and tailoring organizational changes to the unique needs of each faculty and department to maximize impact and efficiency.

Additionally, York undertook course optimization at the faculty level by directing Deans to confirm course offerings between June and September 2024 with a focus on efficient delivery that supports student progression and graduation. They were asked to monitor course fill rates, reduce underfilled sections, cancel low-enrolment courses where appropriate and co-ordinate delivery across programs, for example, by cross-listing courses for more than one major. As a result, 2024/25 course offerings were reduced by 292 Full Course Equivalents (6.0 credits) compared to the previous year. By February 2026, the University expects to have implemented operating procedures for the consistent implementation of criteria to assess ongoing program sustainability, as described in **Recommendation 2, Action Item 2**.

3. Enrolment Trends and Reliance on International Students

Our audit found that in 2022/23, international students accounted for 18% of York's enrolment and almost half of its revenue. For the University's largest faculty, Liberal Arts and Professional Studies, 61% of tuition revenue came from international students. Further, students from India and China together represented 57% of international student enrolment, exposing the University to the risk that external factors, like a shift in foreign policy, could suddenly and significantly impact the University's financial health if student enrolment from these countries were to decrease.

Recommendation 3: Action Item 1

To reduce the risk to the financial sustainability of the University as a whole, in the event that international enrolment from one nation or region were to suddenly decline, we recommend that York University:

- develop faculty-level targets for an optimal level of international student enrolment;

Status:  **Fully implemented.**

Details

At the time of our follow-up, York University had set faculty and program level targets totalling approximately 1,300 new international student admissions across all faculties and degree levels for fall 2025, representing 12% of targeted new student admissions. As of April 2025, preliminary estimates for fall 2025 indicate that international students (new and continuing) are expected to represent 11% of total enrolment and contribute 38% of tuition revenue in 2025/26. In comparison, at the time of our audit, in 2022/23, international students (new and continuing) made up 18% of the total enrolment and contributed 49% of total tuition revenue.

To determine faculty target levels York completed an assessment of historical trends, including enrolment levels and retention rates, to understand where recruitment has been most successful in the past. The University explained to us during our follow-up that application volumes, rates of accepted offers, student demand, labour market outcomes and competitive positioning are also considered in determining which programs are most likely to attract applicants, to further inform the setting of realistic faculty targets.

Recommendation 3: Action Item 2

- develop a contingency plan for faculties found to be overly dependent on international student tuition revenue;

Status:  **Fully implemented.**

Details

We found, that York University had not developed a contingency plan for faculties overly dependent on international student tuition revenue that outlines specific activities that can be taken by the faculties to address the risk of external factors impacting enrolment and tuition. However, the University has developed strategies to increase domestic and inter-provincial enrolment to offset the financial impacts of lower international enrolment. The strategies are university-wide and are intended to diversify recruitment efforts overall, which will help address dependency on international student tuition revenue, and in achieving its international student faculty targets, described in **Recommendation 3, Action Item 1**.

York created the Out of Province Working Group in June 2024 to analyze data related to the choices and preferences of out-of-province students, and with that information, to be able to design a new three-year (2025–2028) out-of-province recruitment strategy. The intent is to increase York's profile in other provinces, where growth in persons aged 15-19 and 20-25 years old is projected to increase over the next decade, and, as a result, to increase out-of-province student enrolment by 3% in each year of the strategy. The strategy identified three priority markets (British Columbia, Alberta and Quebec) and two emerging markets (Manitoba and Nova Scotia) for targeted recruitment through marketing and outreach beginning in fall 2026.

In March 2024, the University also began a project aimed at identifying and expanding capacity in programs with unmet demand. During the spring and summer of 2024, University faculties identified opportunities for expanding programs with unmet demand beginning in fall 2025, through initiatives such as increasing domestic and international student admissions in existing programs, and developing new undergraduate and Masters programs where faculty expertise and student demand exist.

York University, along with all other Canadian universities, was required to reduce dependency on international student tuition through limits placed on the number of international students it admitted based on provincial limits set by the federal government on new study permit applications, with provinces then allocating these caps to institutions.

Recommendation 3: Action Item 3

- regularly monitor whether recruitment strategies are resulting in the admission of international students from diverse countries.

Status:  **In the process of being implemented by September 2026.**

Details

York University established the International Strategic Enrolment Working Group in January 2024. The working group's mandate is to develop strategies for international student recruitment and conversion, and monitor and evaluate recruitment outcomes to inform future planning. As such, the University will use data-driven insights to refine strategies and enhance effectiveness; implement an early alert system through proactive data reporting; and foster communication and collaboration with faculties to align international recruitment efforts with departmental needs and goals.

The working group intends to collect data to monitor international student recruitment rates, conversion rates and diversification of international intake by country, faculty and program. In March 2025, the working group examined data to determine the best plan of action for upcoming recruitment and planning processes in light of caps on international enrolment mandated by government. This analysis included enrolment trends of international students by faculty, program and country of origin.

At the time of our follow-up, York was finalizing its draft International Recruitment Strategy for 2025–2030, intended to guide the recruitment and enrolment of both undergraduate and graduate international students. The strategy includes plans to expand recruitment efforts in emerging markets and indicates performance metrics for monitoring progress and success in the areas of outreach, growth and expanding access. The final strategy is expected to be approved in the 2025/26 academic year. Regular monitoring of outcomes, including whether diversity is being achieved, is anticipated to begin following the 2025/26 academic year, which ends in August 2026. Monitoring results are expected by September 2026.

4. Major Capital Projects and Deferred Maintenance

Our audit found that the financial viability of major capital projects had not been assessed for projects undertaken between 2017/18 and 2022/23. For many projects during that time period, a complete financial evaluation had not been undertaken to assess the expected income to be generated from the investments over the long term, or the length of time required to recoup the investments. Such an evaluation would help the Board of Governors determine whether projects warrant the financial investment.

Our audit also found that York's deferred maintenance backlog more than doubled from \$459 million to \$1.04 billion, between January 2019 and January 2023. Instead of spending \$56–\$93 million annually, as recommended by industry norms for institutions, the University spent on average only \$18.9 million on deferred maintenance between 2017/18 and 2022/23, which brought the University from fair to critical physical condition according to third-party assessors.

Recommendation 4: Action Items 1 and 2

To guide decisions on whether or not to proceed with major capital projects, we recommend that, for all future projects, York University:

- prepare a comprehensive business case for each major capital project to help management and the Board of Governors make fully informed decisions on whether or not to proceed with major capital projects; and
- include all key information and indicators in the business case, including the internal rate of return, return on investment and payback period, to assess the financial viability of major capital projects.

Status:  Fully implemented.

Details

We found that in January 2024, York University developed a Capital Project Business Case Guide that included a Business Case Template and a Financial Analysis Template to be used by all faculties submitting requests for capital projects. According to the guidance, the business case is to clearly articulate the need for the project, including both qualitative benefits (for example, improving the student experience) and quantitative benefits (for example, cost savings); provide a thorough financial analysis, including capital and operating costs, return on investment, and payback period; and identify potential risks and challenges and outline strategies to mitigate the risks.

In October 2024, York also developed a sample business case for faculties to refer to when submitting proposals for major capital projects. At the time of the launch of the business case guide and templates, email communication was sent to all stakeholders involved in the capital planning process that included the guide, templates and associated resources. Additionally, all information and instructions are made available on the University's capital planning website, accessible by staff.

Since our audit, the University has not initiated or proposed any major capital projects, therefore, the new guidance and templates had not yet been used in that capacity, but we noted their use in the planning for a smaller project to establish a research hub in the Faculty of Health. York expects to propose its first new major capital project since we conducted our audit in 2023 using the business case and financial templates by December 2025.

Recommendation 5: Action Item 1

To improve financial planning for major capital projects, enhance the accuracy of budgets and prevent future cost/budget escalations on major capital projects, we recommend that York University:

- conduct a thorough analysis, including a risk assessment, during the project planning phase, in establishing a comprehensive budget that considers all potential costs, including appropriate contingencies and scoping requirements;

Status:  **In the process of being implemented by December 2025.**

Details

At the time of our follow-up, the University had not initiated or proposed any new major capital projects since the time of our original audit. Therefore, the University had not yet conducted a thorough analysis during the project planning phase to establish a comprehensive budget considering all potential costs, as recommended.

York indicated that it would update its business case guidance, templates and sample business cases developed in 2024 (see **Recommendation 4**). The update would include requirements for listing external data sources and comparable costs used to determine budget amounts using three milestone dates (schematic design, detailed design pricing and contract documents) to check costing and project scope. The University also noted that it would establish a dollar threshold for capital projects beyond which an independent cost estimator will be engaged. It will also require projects to be assigned a contingency budget ranging from 10% to 25% of estimated construction

costs, depending on the project's complexity and length of time needed for completion. The University expects to incorporate these updates and to conduct the recommended analysis, on any project planning expected on new major capital projects, by December 2025.

As evidence of York's intention to include appropriate contingencies and scoping requirements in future projects, we reviewed a preliminary third-party project scope document for an as-yet unapproved project being considered. The estimate included project scope inclusions, exclusions and assumptions under four uncosted project options, as well as the estimated needed contingency levels under each of the areas of general contingency, design and pricing contingency, construction cost escalation contingency, and contingencies for construction project changes.

Recommendation 5: Action Item 2

- regularly compare budgeted amounts against actual costs/expenditures to identify variances/discrepancies early to enable necessary corrective action;

Status:  **Fully implemented.**

Details

York maintains a schedule of capital projects and related construction costs and reports this to the Board's Land and Property Committee five times a year, along with the Statistics Canada Building Construction Cost Index, a quarterly update that provides regional data for trends to incorporate into ongoing and future projects. As of March 31, 2025, the current approved budget for all major capital projects on a cumulative basis was 4.3% higher than the original budgeted amounts. In addition, the current approved budget for all minor capital projects on a cumulative basis was 17.9% higher than the original budgeted amounts.

The Land and Property Committee documents corrective actions to be taken based on this information in its meeting minutes. For example, in April 2024, regarding one of the University's major capital projects, it noted that although currently on budget, estimated final costs were at risk due to concerns related to labour and materials escalation claims and scheduled extensions claims, which collectively presented a potential risk to the approved project budget. The University undertook a claims review and negotiation process to mitigate the potential budget increases. The project was completed on budget in September 2024.

Recommendation 5: Action Item 3

- review previous projects to understand factors and root causes contributing to budget increases, and incorporate lessons learned on future projects.

Status:  **In the process of being implemented by March 2026.**

Details

In September 2025, the University began development of a draft project risk register template for major capital projects, which includes a section to capture lessons learned based on the risks encountered on each project. By March 2026, upon the close-out of each major capital project, the University plans to incorporate those lessons learned when a new project is initiated.

As an example of incorporating lessons learned into project planning, the University noted that, in past renovations, it found project consultants had not spent sufficient time/effort reviewing existing and concealed conditions, resulting in excessive change orders from the contractor as the drawings did not reflect actual site conditions. We noted that, as a result, procurement documentation for the selection of consultants had been amended. According to the amended documentation, the University will not cover costs of addressing or remediating any scope and related information that is missed or omitted by the selected consultant as a result of not performing adequate and early site reviews.

Recommendation 6: Action Item 1

To maintain assets in good condition, reduce emergency repair costs, and avoid further deterioration of its buildings and the risk of serious health and safety issues, we recommend that York University:

- develop and implement a formal strategy to reduce its deferred maintenance backlog, including prioritizing capital resources toward deferred maintenance instead of new builds and expansion;

Status:  **In the process of being implemented by March 2026.**

Details

In September 2024, York University began development of a five-year deferred maintenance plan. The plan included updating building and infrastructure data through site audits completed in fall 2024; migrating and validating all data in a new database; and plans for auditing 25% of buildings annually and all linear infrastructure, for example, roads and sidewalks, every five years. In addition, the plan includes establishing a program to identify, model, monitor and report on metrics toward achieving an institutional Facility Condition Index target. The University expects to have this program in place by March 2026.

Recommendation 6: Action Item 2

- prioritize preventative maintenance.

Status:  Fully implemented.

Details

In September 2024, York began the preventative maintenance program whereby it would dedicate \$1.5 million of its annual deferred maintenance budget to preventative maintenance. The University has also added QR codes to 11,600 pieces of equipment to track and perform preventative maintenance based on regulatory and manufacturer recommendations. According to York University data, as of June 2025, of the total maintenance work performed, 26%, 23% and 27% of the work orders were for preventive maintenance in 2023, 2024 and 2025 respectively.

5. Increase in Size of Senior Administration Outpaced York's Enrolment and Tuition Revenue

Between 2018/19 and 2022/23, York University experienced minimal increases (0.3%) in full-time equivalent enrolment. However, the size and compensation of the senior administration team increased significantly, with the addition of a Vice-President position and 11 new Assistant Vice-President (AVP) positions. Seven of these positions were created or reclassified to take on expanded responsibilities in their current role, based on recommendations from the Vice-Presidents at the University. Four of the new positions received Board of Governors approval.

Recommendation 7: Action Item 1

To maintain a level of senior administrator compensation reflective of enrolment and revenue growth, and to ensure the Board of Governors has oversight of changes and impacts at senior levels that have an ongoing financial impact on the University, we recommend that York University provide to the Board of Governors information supporting the need for Associate/Assistant Vice President positions for re-assessment, including the nine most recently created and re-classified positions.

Status:  Fully implemented.

Details

We found that York University had created two reports for the Governance and Human Resources Committee, a committee of the Board of Directors. One report identifies newly created or renamed AVP positions, and the second report identifies specific changes to AVP members such as whether the member is a new hire, departure or reclassification; the reason for a new hire or departure; and a change in salary. These reports were presented to the Governance and Human Resources Committee beginning in September 2024 and are expected to be provided to the Committee annually.

6. York Did Not Have a Comprehensive Whistle-Blower Policy for Disclosure of All Types of Wrongdoing

At the time of our audit, York University did not have a comprehensive whistle-blower policy. Its existing policy was limited to the theft, fraud and misappropriation of university assets. The policy did not include other forms of harmful wrongdoing and unethical behaviour such as sexual harassment, abuse of power, abuse of drugs and/or alcohol use. Other policies at the University, relating to the student code of conduct and workplace harassment and violence, did not offer protection against reprisal for the complainant.

Recommendation 8: Action Item 1

To promote integrity and detect misconduct, we recommend that York University:

- create and implement a whistle-blower policy that covers both the improper use and/or misuse of university assets, as well as other unethical behaviour, and includes a definition of what types of activities can be reported and how and to whom they can be reported;

Status:  Fully implemented.

Details

In September 2025, York's Board of Governors approved a whistle-blower policy, which takes effect on January 30, 2026. The University developed the policy by conducting an environmental scan of whistle-blower policies within the post-secondary sector and gathering current York policies and procedures to form part of its own policy.

Recommendation 8: Action Item 2

- create awareness of the policy amongst all students, staff and faculty.

Status:  In the process of being implemented by January 30, 2026.

Details

The University told us that in June 2025, it had engaged its communications team to develop a communications plan following the approval and publication of the whistle-blower policy. As well, the University informed us that it had engaged its labour relations team to solicit feedback on the rolling out of the new policy to unions and their members. At the time of our follow-up, the University had developed a draft webpage for the University website, including frequently asked questions and a disclosure portal that will be made available to staff, students and faculty. The University had also sent union leaders an announcement of the policy and told us an announcement to all staff would be sent. The University expects to roll out the whistle-blower policy communication prior to the policy taking effect on January 30, 2026.

7. York Has Achieved Lower Results than Other Ontario Universities in Graduation Rate, Employment and Earnings, and in Attracting Research Revenue

Our audit found that for 2022/23 York University performed below the provincial average and below the average of comparable Ontario universities in important indicators such as graduation rate, graduate employment rate in a related field, graduate employment earnings, experiential learning, community local impact on student enrolment, research funding and capacity, and attracting research revenue from private-sector sources. Further, we found that York did not have strategies and timelines to improve performance in areas where it had underperformed.

Recommendation 9: Action Item 1

To promote continuous improvement in the metrics contained in the University's Strategic Mandate Agreement and other performance measures tracked by the Ministry of Colleges and Universities, we recommend that York University:

- put in place strategies and timelines to improve performance in areas where it has underperformed;

Status:  In the process of being implemented by March 31, 2026.

Details

In April 2024, York developed the Strategic Mandate Agreement Action Plan, which provides an assessment of its performance of each indicator, as well as a comparison to the University sector and to comparable universities in the province. The action plan also provides recommendations for improvement for each metric. Planned actions had not yet been reflected in the action plan, however, the University has linked them to other institutional strategies where applicable. For example, to increase the metric of "graduate employment rate in a related field," the University has identified ongoing projects that are being conducted as part of its overall institutional strategy, the **York U Forward Action Plan** (see **Recommendation 1, Action Item 1**). Namely, projects aimed at expanding capacity in programs with unmet demand, a program sustainability review and a project to support program innovation.

The Ministry of Colleges, Universities, Research Excellence and Security updated the metrics contained in the Strategic Mandate Agreement (SMA) with the province's universities with the launch of new agreements in August 2024, covering the 2025–2030 period. York University will need to restructure its report to align with these updated guidelines. York expects to have a restructured report in place, including specific planned actions that include initiatives that are already underway, by March 31, 2026.

Recommendation 9: Action Item 2

- regularly evaluate the effectiveness of the strategies in improving performance in the metrics and adjust the strategies accordingly.

Status:  **In the process of being implemented by July 2026.**

Details

York University's process of evaluation of strategy effectiveness in improving SMA performance metrics is accomplished through the development of an annual SMA performance scorecard. The scorecard tracks progress on each metric, in conjunction with the monitoring of overall institutional goals through broader university strategic initiatives and frameworks.

We reviewed documentation supporting the analysis performed, including the 2024/25 performance scorecard for the SMA metrics for the University overall, as well as the performance metrics for each faculty individually. We also reviewed the University's 2024/25 reporting of performance measures, both qualitative and quantitative, to the Board of Governors regarding the academic and strategic initiatives included in the University's institutional strategic plan. SMA metrics are included in the performance measurement of the actions outlined in the strategic plan.

The University had not yet fully completed actions or projects to support the metric improvement to be included in its Strategic Mandate Agreement Action Plan (see **Recommendation 9, Action Item 1**) but expects the impact and effectiveness of those improvement strategies will start to be seen on the 2026 performance scorecard, in July 2026, and thereafter.

8. York Has Been Proactive in Preventing Cyberattacks, but Further Employee Awareness Is Needed

Our audit found that cybersecurity incidents at the University had decreased with the implementation in 2021 of two-factor authentication controls for all staff, faculty and student users. However, we further noted that although cybersecurity training was available to all York employees through its employee learning portal, the training was not mandatory and hence on average only 3% of full-time salaried employees had taken the cybersecurity training between 2019 and 2023.

Recommendation 10: Action Item 1

To reduce the risk of exposure of its systems and to protect student and faculty data from external attackers, we recommend that York University make cybersecurity awareness training mandatory for all employees with York University accounts.

Status:  Fully implemented.

Details

In our follow-up, we found that York University launched a new required training module, “Cybersecurity Awareness Training,” on March 31, 2025. The training has been integrated into the employee onboarding process, ensuring that all new staff complete it. Department Managers and Academic Administrators were asked to ensure that all staff, faculty and instructors on their team completed this training before June 21, 2025. As of that date, only 39% of active employees had completed the training as required. At the end of July 2025, email communication was sent to Senior Executive Officers and Department Managers in each university division. The emails included the employee completion status and reminded the leaders and managers to ensure that all employees complete the training. Managers were also directed to monitor the status of completion through the University’s internal training dashboard. As of the end of July 2025, 58% of employees had completed the required training. York told us that its information security team will continue to reach out to non-compliant staff monthly to remind them to complete the mandated training, as well as send monthly reminder emails to managers. The University also noted that it plans to meet with the Human Resources department in fall 2025 to determine appropriate actions for non-compliant staff to ensure completion.

9. Overall Governance Could Be Enhanced by Improved Policies and Procedures

Our audit found that the Executive Committee's responsibilities, as outlined in its Terms of Reference, were broad and vague, giving it the ability to make decisions on behalf of the full Board without consulting with, or providing pertinent information to, the other governors prior to decisions being made. The audit reported that in 2022, the Executive Committee exercised special authority on behalf of the full Board, and in all those occasions the rationale for exercising special authority was not documented.

Recommendation 11: Action Item 1

To allow for decision-making and accountability to reside with the full Board, as opposed to only the Executive Committee, in all instances other than emergencies, we recommend that York University:

- revise the Terms of Reference of the Board of Governors' Executive Committee to have the ability to make decisions on behalf of the full Board only when matters are so time-sensitive that it is not feasible to convene a special Board meeting;

Status:  Will not be implemented.

Details

At the time of our follow-up, we found that the Board's Governance and Human Resources Committee had reviewed and revised the Terms of Reference of the Executive Committee, that were approved by the Board in June 2025. The revised Terms of Reference removed vague language that previously allowed the Board to give the Executive Committee power to act in its place, such as for "urgent matters," which was not defined, and for "such other matters" as the Board thought it expedient to delegate its authority. The Terms of Reference provided the addition of specific circumstances for which the Executive Committee could act on behalf of the Board. These circumstances included, for example, labour relations, considering the renewal of a presidential term, the President's performance and succession planning.

Despite these changes, the University has not addressed the recommendation, as the revised Terms of Reference retained that “the Executive Committee may review any matters relating to the property, revenue, business and affairs of the University prior to the submission of such matters to the Board, and shall prepare or cause to be prepared and submitted to the Board such information and data as the Executive Committee considers pertinent to assist in the consideration of such matters by the Board, and the Executive Committee may make such recommendations to the Board with respect to such matters as it may deem appropriate.”

We also found that no change had been made to the power and authority of the Executive Committee, in the General By-law of York University, dated June 25, 2024, which still stated that “the Board may appoint an executive committee and delegate to any such committee any of the powers of the Board.” The University told us no further changes to the Terms of Reference will be made.

The Office of the Auditor General of Ontario continues to support the implementation of this recommended action.

Recommendation 11: Action Item 2

- in these instances, fully document the rationale for making such an exception.

Status:  Fully implemented.

Details

We found that York University had included in its Board of Governors Transitional Terms of Reference, approved in June 2025, the responsibility for Board committees to provide rationale for any decision taken on behalf of the Board. Specifically, that a record is to be kept of every Board committee meeting, and the chair of the committee must submit a report of the proceedings of every meeting of the committee, which includes any actions that committees have taken on behalf of the Board, to the Board at the next Board meeting.

For example, we noted additional language had been added to the minutes of the October 2024 meeting of the Board to describe decisions that had been made by the Executive Committee on behalf of the Board, including appointments of senior staff and approval of the negotiated settlement for renewal of collective agreements. The rationale provided was that the Executive Committee was providing duties specific to those outlined in the Terms of Reference of the Executive Committee as approved by the Board and that the Board expected to be carried out.

Recommendation 12: Action Items 1 and 2

To track and identify gaps in the necessary competencies of the Board of Governors (Board), and to have a more explicit, transparent and robust competencies-based selection process for Board members (both new and the renewal of incumbents), we recommend that York University's Board of Governors:

- annually identify the desired level of competency in each governance area, and complete a gap analysis of skills and competencies of the Board and all Board committees;
- develop a strategy to address identified gaps in the skills matrix of the Board;

Status:  **In the process of being implemented by the end of December 2025.**

Details

We found that, in March 2025, York University established a new protocol on the recruitment, selection and appointment of members of the Board, which includes the requirement for an annual review of the skills matrix to identify skills gaps that should be resolved through recruitment. The new protocol lists eligibility and selection criteria for prospective candidates. Selection criteria require, among other things, that the skills of the candidate align with the needs of the Board. The University expects the establishment and periodic renewal of a Board Skills Matrix to be in place by the end of December 2025. At the time of our follow-up, we noted that each committee had prepared and presented to the Board in April 2025 a review of its skills matrix and anticipated vacancies and skills gaps, to be used in the development of the overall skills matrix of the Board.

The protocol also outlines possible strategies to identify prospective candidates, such as conducting a search of the Institute of Corporate Directors roster and consulting with the University's alumni association. The University expects to be using these strategies by the end of December 2025.

Recommendation 12: Action Item 3

- allow internal Board members with the requisite expertise and demonstrated character to serve on any committee where they would add the most value. Where a conflict of interest arises, they may recuse themselves from the agenda item.

Status:  **No longer applicable.**

Details

As was the case at the time of our audit, our follow-up found no internal Board members were serving on the Executive Committee, the Finance and Audit Committee, or the Governance, People and Culture Committee (formerly the Governance and Human Resources Committee).

We reviewed the Terms of Reference of the Finance and Audit Committee, the Governance, People and Culture Committee, and the Executive Committee, which were revised by each respective committee and approved by the Board in June 2025. We noted that the revised terms did not include reference to consideration of internal members. However, the recommendation is no longer applicable as the University has compensating measures in place, including the inclusion of the University President as an internal voting member on all Board Committees, and input in a non-voting capacity from internal senior administrators on the various committees.

Recommendation 13: Action Item 1

To strengthen its Board's policies and procedures, we recommend that, before the end of 2024, York University:

- adopt an explicit and comprehensive charter for the Board, going beyond the bylaws to outline its core roles and responsibilities and what is expected of members of the Board (mandate, duties and responsibilities, governance, functioning, culture);

Status:  Little or no progress.

Details

Our audit in 2023 found that the Board did not have a charter/terms of reference, but rather relied on the *York University Act* and its bylaws to articulate its duties and responsibilities, such as terms around appointments, borrowing money, establishing faculties, and the structure of the Board and its committees.

In June 2024, York's Board approved a Transitional Terms of Reference to assist the Board in clarifying the functions, duties, responsibilities and powers of the Board and Board committees. Although the Transitional Terms of Reference outlined protocols for meeting agendas and procedures, it omitted other relevant procedures such as for appointments, borrowing money, establishing faculties, and the structure and composition of the Board. York maintains that the Transitional Terms of Reference will continue to evolve, including with the review of the inclusion of the recommended areas. The University expects to present a final Board of Governors Terms of Reference to the Board for approval in December 2025.

Recommendation 13: Action Item 2

- adopt a Board-specific code of conduct, including confidentiality, conflicts of interest and attendance expectations, along with a remedial process and compliance monitoring;

Status:  In the process of being implemented by December 2025.

Details

We found that, beginning in March 2025, the University conducted and compiled research on the Codes of Conduct for Boards of other Canadian universities, to draw on best practices. In September 2025, York prepared a draft Code of Conduct. The University expects to present a final draft to the Board by December 2025.

Recommendation 13: Action Item 3

- develop more extensive workplans incorporating all duties and responsibilities of the Board and committees and outlining when in the fiscal year they will be addressed.

Status:  Fully implemented.

Details

At the time of our follow-up, the University had developed more extensive workplans that included the duties and responsibilities of the Board and committees, outlining when in the fiscal year they would be addressed.

// Appendix

Recommendation Status Overview

	# of Action Items	Fully Implemented 	In the Process of Being Implemented 	Little or No Progress 	Will Not Be Implemented 	No Longer Applicable 
Recommendation 1	2	1	1			
Recommendation 2	3	1	2			
Recommendation 3	3	2	1			
Recommendation 4	2	2				
Recommendation 5	3	1	2			
Recommendation 6	2	1	1			
Recommendation 7	1	1				
Recommendation 8	2	1	1			
Recommendation 9	2		2			
Recommendation 10	1	1				
Recommendation 11	2	1			1	
Recommendation 12	3		2			1
Recommendation 13	3	1	1	1		
Total	29	13	13	1	1	1
%	100 ¹	45	45	3	3	3

1. Due to rounding, percentages presented do not add to 100%.