ONTARIO UNIVERSITIES
COUNCIL on QUALITY ASSURANCE

SUMMARY OF AUDITORS' REPORT ON THE SCOPE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF WATERLOO'S RESPONSE TO THE QUALITY ASSURANCE AUDIT

DECEMBER 2020

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Audit Team's Summary Report on the University of Waterloo's One-Year Response to its Quality Assurance Audit

The Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance undertook an Audit of Quality Assurance at the University of Waterloo in 2018. As with all such audits, the purpose was to assess the extent to which University of Waterloo is in compliance with its own Institutional Quality Assurance Processes (IQAP) and to affirm that institutional practices are consistent with the Quality Assurance Framework that governs all Ontario Universities.

The 2018 Audit Report of the University of Waterloo contained nine recommendations and 15 suggestions. Under the Quality Assurance Framework, universities must satisfy audit recommendations, as they identify institutional practices that are not compliant with the university's IQAP. Suggestions are made by the audit team in the spirit of encouraging reflection on how practice might be improved, however compliance is not mandatory.

The Quality Assurance Framework requires that each institution submit a one-year follow-up response to the Quality Council. The University of Waterloo submitted its One-year Response and supporting documents on September 24, 2019.

On October 1, 2019, the University of Waterloo Audit Team convened to consider the institution's One-year Response to the Report on the Quality Assurance Audit, which was dated September 24, 2019. Clarification concerning the University of Waterloo's response to Recommendation 4 was sought and on October 29, 2019, the University of Waterloo Audit team considered the University's revised Response, dated October 28, 2019. In addition, a draft revised IQAP was then submitted on November 23, 2020. These two documents serve as the basis for this response.

The Audit Team has concluded that the University of Waterloo's Revised One-year Response satisfactorily addresses the Audit Report's nine recommendations.

> **Recommendation 1:** Ensure that all processes required by the IQAP are fully documented.
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> **Recommendation 2:** Develop a sign off procedure to ensure the preparation and completeness of self-studies for Cyclical Program Reviews, of new program proposals, and the report from the Review Committee for Cyclical Program reviews and new program proposals.
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> **Recommendation 3:** Ensure that all evaluation criteria are fully discussed in the self-study, especially those connected with Degree-Level Expectations, course learning outcomes, and program-level learning outcomes.
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> **Recommendation 4:** Revise its IQAP to include the requirement for a separate response from the relevant dean(s) or academic administrator(s) response to the recommendations in the Review Committee's report for New Program Approvals and Cyclical Program Reviews.
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> **Recommendation 5:** Ensure that the programs on the Cyclical Program Review Schedule have a period of review of no more than seven years, as per the University's IQAP, and that all programs are listed on the schedule.

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Recommendation 6: Ensure that Final Assessment Reports and Implementation Plans contain all of the required elements, as identified in the IQAP. The Executive Summary does not appear to be included in the FAR.

Recommendation 7: Revise the IQAP and institutional practice to include a stage indicating that the Final Assessment Report and Implementation Plan for Cyclical Program Reviews are distributed to the academic unit responsible for the program and then document this stage.

Recommendation 8: Ensure that a two-year progress report is produced to address the requirement to monitor new programs.

Recommendation 9: Identify whether an undergraduate curricular change is a major or minor modification prior to the creation of the documentation.

The University of Waterloo is to be commended for its careful consideration of the recommendations and suggestions, as reflected in the institution's One-year Response. The University clearly takes quality assurance seriously. The One-year Response is thorough and effective in documenting the measures taken to address the recommendations and in cross-referencing new processes with the revised IQAP. The University also addressed the fifteen suggestions in three major areas: revisions to the IQAP, improvements to record keeping and documentation, and increased communication, education and engagement with campus community and external partners. The revisions outlined in the One-year Response further strengthen an already thorough and effective set of quality assurance procedures.

UNIVERSITY OF WATERLOO

ONE-YEAR FOLLOW-UP RESPONSE TO THE

REPORT ON THE QUALITY ASSURANCE AUDIT

OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF WATERLOO

Revised October 2019

INTRODUCTION

The Report on the Quality Assurance Audit of the University of Waterloo was received on September 24, 2018, and there were nine recommendations with no causes for concern. Of the nine recommendations, a number highlight areas that the University of Waterloo's Quality Assurance Office had previously identified, and were either in the midst of resolving or were prepared to address.

Many of the systemic issues that were identified in the programs selected for audit (from 2013-2015) were rectified with the establishment of a central Quality Assurance Office in 2016. This Office implemented a systematic process for documenting and monitoring IQAP processes, as well as created a number of templates to support the cohesion and quality of IQAP submissions.

Although the University of Waterloo's Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP) document was ratified by the Quality Council in 2011, the auditors found it to be out of alignment with the Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) in two instances. Following the audit, the IQAP has undergone significant revision, not only to comply with the QAF, but to become a leaner, more agile and user-friendly document for the members of the Waterloo campus as well as external readers.

Finalization of the IQAP revisions is contingent on anticipated changes to the QAF. Once the QAF and IQAP changes are complete, Senate will review and approve the revised IQAP, and then it will be submitted to the Quality Council for ratification.

The following report speaks to actions taken to address each recommendation. There is also commentary in regards to the fifteen suggestions put forth by the auditors.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1: Ensure that all processes required by the IQAP are fully documented.

Response: As a result of the desk audit, gaps in IQAP documentation processes were identified. To ensure accurate record keeping, a standardized format for saving documents was implemented for cyclical reviews and a systematic process for tracking each step in the academic program review process has been implemented.

A SharePoint site was set up for new programs and major modifications that mimics the monitoring process for the cyclical review. A SharePoint site was used so that multiple stakeholders (e.g., Institutional Analysis and Planning, Secretariat, Co-operative Education and

the Library) in the new program approval process could access the site and review up-to-date information as needed.

It was noted that Waterloo had not clearly documented the following: how Review Committees were selected, how arm's length distance was determined for each reviewer, and what materials were supplied to reviewers. Moreover, there was no record of the materials that were sent to the reviewers or the briefings they were given. To rectify each of these issues the following actions were taken:

- Notations on the ranking of suggested reviewers by the QA Office and the AVPA/AVPGSPA are clearly outlined in our records and email correspondence in regards to the ranking and decision-making is saved on file.
- Conflicts of interest are noted by the QA Office and AVPA/AVPGSPA during the vetting process. Any candidates identified as having a potential conflict of interest are removed from consideration. In addition, we have added a check box to our Volume III template, where the Chair must confirm that there is *no* professional or personal conflict of interest with the proposed reviewer.
- Email communications sent to the reviewers as well as a record of the materials supplied to reviewers are saved in each program file in a *Site Visit* folder. Moreover, we have recorded the content of the introductory and exit briefings for reviewers into procedural documents that supplement our IQAP.

Recommendation 2: Develop a sign off procedure to ensure the preparation and completeness of self-studies for Cyclical Program Reviews, of new program proposals, and the report from the Review Committee for Cyclical Program reviews and new program proposals.

Response: Since 2016, the QA Office's process has been to email the draft and the final version of the self-study documents, as well as new program proposal briefs, to the AVPA/AVPGSPA for review and approval. Any suggested revisions from the AVPA/AVPGSPA are recorded within the documents using track changes and comments. The revisions and the approvals are received back by email from the AVPA/AVPGSPA. These responses are saved in each program review file in a *Self-Study* folder.

The same process is followed for Reviewers' Reports for both cyclical program reviews and new programs.

Recommendation 3: Ensure that all evaluation criteria are fully discussed in the self-study, especially those connected with Degree-Level Expectations, course learning outcomes, and program-level learning outcomes.

Response: The level of discussion in self-studies connected to Degree-Level Expectations (DLEs), course learning outcomes, and program-level outcomes has evolved over time, particularly as the emphasis on DLEs by the Quality Council grew. We will continue our efforts and encourage

programs to add more discussion and depth of the DLEs with regards to: program requirements and learning outcomes (IQAP section 1b, pg. 6); admission requirements (IQAP section 2, pg. 6); appropriate modes of delivery to meet learning outcomes (IQAP section 3c, pg. 6); and the appropriateness and effectiveness of the methods for assessing student achievement of the learning outcomes (IQAP section 4a, pg. 6). In addition, careful attention to curriculum is an effort not only of the Quality Assurance Office, nor does it only occur during the QA process, but is encouraged by the Centre for Teaching Excellence in its programs and workshops, in our Teaching Fellows program, and in discussions that are part of our Academic Leadership Program.

Recommendation 4: Revise its IQAP to include the requirement for a separate response from the relevant dean(s) or academic administrator(s) response to the recommendations in the Review Committee's report for New Program Approvals and Cyclical Program Reviews.

Response: Upon further discussion with the Quality Council (Oct 9th), in regards to our original one-year response submitted on September 24th, we have modified our plans pertaining to recommendation 4. Going forward, for cyclical reviews Deans will be responsible for providing a decanal response that: takes into account plans in the self-study, the external reviewers' recommendations, and the program's response; and provides a credible implementation plan. For new programs, the Dean will also now be responsible for preparing a response to address the external reviewers' recommendations.

Recommendation 5: Ensure that the programs on the Cyclical Program Review Schedule have a period of review of no more than seven years, as per the University's IQAP, and that all programs are listed on the schedule.

Response: Specific examples pertaining to this recommendation (i.e., Master of Environmental Studies in Sustainability Management, Bachelor of Health Promotion) were removed in the factual corrections to the report. All academic programs are scheduled for review every seven years at Waterloo; however, given that the QAF requirement is a maximum of eight years, on occasion some programs have been allowed to defer to an eight year cycle, depending on their circumstance. We believe that in doing so that we are still in compliance with the QAF. Our program review schedule does not have any 'planned' program reviews that fall beyond a seven-year cycle.

Recommendation 6: Ensure that Final Assessment Reports and Implementation Plans contain all of the required elements, as identified in the IQAP. The Executive Summary does not appear to be included in the FAR.

Response: Our QC-approved IQAP did not require the inclusion of an Executive Summary. Final Assessment Reports have always been made available to the public in their full form without any redaction. We have always maintained transparency in these reports; hence, an Executive

Summary has never been necessary. However, in order to comply with the QAF we have now adopted an Executive Summary into our Final Assessment Report template, and our IQAP will be rewritten to reflect this change.

Recommendation 7: Revise the IQAP and institutional practice to include a stage indicating that the Final Assessment Report and Implementation Plan for Cyclical Program Reviews are distributed to the academic unit responsible for the program and then document this stage.

Response: We have been following this in practice over the past few years and will revise our IQAP to reflect this.

Recommendation 8: Ensure that a two-year progress report is produced to address the requirement to monitor new programs.

Response: We recognize that in the past we have bundled new program two year reports with cyclical program reviews if they happened to coincide in the review schedule. At the time, it seemed logical to have one report that covered both areas; however, we now realize that not enough attention was given to the new program within the self-study. Going forward we will not combine these two reports — we will monitor two-year new program reports and ensure they are completed separately with appropriate detail and within the stated timeline. At present, the IQAP specifies the report is due two years after the site visit— which is not applicable to programs with expedited approvals that did not require a site visit. Therefore, language in our IQAP will be updated to specify that the new program reports are due two years from the first intake of students.

Recommendation 9: Identify whether an undergraduate curricular change is a major or minor modification prior to the creation of the documentation.

Response: Waterloo's process for managing minor and major modifications is reliant on the undergraduate committee in each Faculty to properly prepare and vet submissions prior to submission at Senate Undergraduate Council. The terms minor and major modification are not currently engrained in our undergraduate system. Thus, identification of a major modification has historically been determined by the AVPA and QA Office staff when they review the agenda for the Senate Undergraduate Council. Any issues that arise with such modifications are addressed by the AVPA and QA Office staff in coordination with the Secretary of Senate Undergraduate Council in advance of the Council meeting. All major modifications, once they have received Senate approval, are then recorded by QA staff into a tracking sheet (using the QC template for major modifications), which is submitted annually to the QC at the end of July.

We recognize that our major modification process should be more definitive and have been discussing ways to address this over the past few years. A working group has been struck to

create a guide for curricular submissions to Senate Undergraduate Council. This group aims to implement a template for major modification submissions and to work with each faculty to educate them about major modifications and how to submit them for approval, and to ensure that modifications are appropriately classified as major or minor prior to documentation being produced. Major modification criterion will be available and anything that is not substantial enough to be considered a major modification against this criteria will be by default considered a minor modification. The working group intends to have these initiatives completed by December 2019.

SUGGESTIONS

We have addressed all fifteen suggestions from the auditors and have taken action in the following areas:

Revisions to the IQAP
A number of steps we follow in practice were not documented in our current IQAP, such as our protocol for internal reviewers; the Statement of Interest template used for new programs; identifying who is responsible for evaluating the completeness of the external reviewers' report; and a step for the review and approval of new program proposals. Our IQAP has been rewritten to address the suggestions raised by the auditors. As soon as the QAF is finalized we will seek internal approval of our revised IQAP and submit it to the Quality Council for their review and ratification.

Improvements to record keeping and documentation
As our QA Office grew – so did the streamlining of our recordkeeping and documentation. A number of templates were introduced over the past two years to increase consistency and improve turn-around time. We have redeveloped a Statement of Interest template and created a New Program Approval flow chart. Moreover, new resource materials are being developed with the Registrar's Office and Secretariat for curricular submissions, including major modifications. We have also updated our review schedule to include the date of the last program review.

Increased communication, education and engagement with campus community and external partners
Internally, we have made an effort to bring together non-academic and academic stakeholders involved in cyclical reviews and new program proposals. This has enhanced people's understanding of our IQAP and the function of the Quality Council. The QA Office will continue efforts to promote the value and utility of cyclical reviews and provide added support to programs undergoing review and new programs under development.

In 2018, a working group clarified a number of our academic definitions such as what constitutes a Type 2 Graduate Diploma, the use of the term field, as well as what is considered a minor, option or certificate. Senate approved these terms and a number of programs have made changes over the past year to align themselves with these definitions.

A Senior Instructional Developer in Curriculum & Quality Enhancement from our Centre for Teaching Excellence provided hands-on training on learning outcomes and curriculum mapping to the AVPA, AVPGSPA and the QA Office. This strengthened our knowledge in this area, which will be useful as we review learning outcomes in self-study reports and new program proposals.

Externally, we have worked to improve our interactions and the level of support provided to reviewers coming from outside of Waterloo. In addition, we have been working more closely with other institutions with whom we offer joint programs. Work is in process to fine-tune communication and IQAP processes amongst institutions.

University of Waterloo

Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP)

Approved by University of Waterloo Senate MONTH, DAY, YEAR
Ratified by the Quality Council MONTH, DAY, YEAR

Table of Contents

1. INTRODUCTION

In 2010, the Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance (the Quality Council) was established by the Ontario Council of Academic Vice-Presidents (OCAV), to provide oversight of a unified undergraduate and graduate quality assurance process under one framework.[1]

The Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) follows "international quality assurance standards" to "… facilitate greater international acceptance of our degrees and improve our graduates' access to university programs and employment worldwide."[2] The QAF summarizes Undergraduate Degree Level Expectations (UDLES) and Graduate Degree Level Expectations (GDLES) to which all academic programs must align.[3]

This Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP) is consistent with the QAF.[4] Any significant changes to the IQAP are subject to approval by the University of Waterloo Senate and must be ratified by the Quality Council. Furthermore, the IQAP and associated procedures are subject to regular audit by the Quality Council to ensure that the University of Waterloo adheres to the standards of the Quality Assurance Framework.

While consistent with the QAF, the processes described below are understood to advance additional purposes beyond quality assurance. The University of Waterloo is dedicated to the provision of outstanding academic programming. The Quality Assurance process ensures that those who lead the design and delivery of the University's programs are supported as they carry out a systematic review of their programs. The process also provides opportunities for all stakeholders – students, staff and faculty – to provide meaningful input on a program's academics and the conditions that facilitate their delivery.

Throughout the QA process, program stakeholders are encouraged to reflect on both the strengths of their offerings as well as opportunities to improve. These reflections, when coupled with assessments from arm's-length experts, regularly affirm our programs' high quality while identifying pathways by which various aspects may be enhanced. For programs, the process results in a set of well-articulated recommended actions that help set the direction for continuous improvement of our academic programming with appropriate transparency to the University and scholarly community.

1.1 Authority

The University of Waterloo Senate is the final authority (QAF 2.2.1 / 4.2.1) for ensuring the quality of all academic programs, including cyclical program reviews, new program proposals and major

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[2] https://oucqa.ca/framework/quality-assurance-the-international-context/
[3] Note: Waterloo has added two UDLES to the list created by OCAV: 1) Experiential Learning; 2) Diversity.
[4] The Quality Assurance Framework will form the standard, should one not be specifically listed within this IQAP.

modifications to existing programs.

The Vice-President, Academic and Provost has responsibility for the IQAP and is the authoritative contact with the Quality Council (QAF 2.2.2 / 4.2.2). The Associate Vice-President, Academic (AVPA) and the Associate Vice-President, Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs (AVPGSPA) have delegated authority for the IQAP on behalf of the Vice-President, Academic and Provost.

Oversight of undergraduate program reviews, new undergraduate programs and major modifications to existing undergraduate programs rests with the AVPA. Responsibility for graduate program reviews, new graduate programs and major modifications to existing graduate programs rests with the Associate Vice-President, Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs (AVPGSPA). Responsibility for combined (or augmented) reviews of undergraduate and graduate programs is shared between the respective portfolios.

In 2016, the Quality Assurance (QA) Office was established to support the AVPA and AVPGSPA in the oversight and monitoring of the IQAP. The QA Office is the primary contact for campus stakeholders in regard to cyclical program reviews, new program proposals, and major modifications to existing programs. The Office operationalizes the IQAP and provides timely support to programs undergoing cyclical review, developing new programs and proposing academic program changes.

Detailed explanations and procedures for cyclical program reviews, new program proposals and major modifications, as well as contacts in the QA Office are listed on the Academic Program Reviews website. The information on this website constitutes the University of Waterloo's institutional manual as required by the Quality Council (QAF 4.2.8).

> **Commented [AV1]:** Procedures in draft format have been supplied alongside this IQAP, but will be hyperlinked upon approval and implementation. Highlights represent areas where links will be added.

IQAP documentation (e.g., Self-Studies, External Reviewers' Reports, Final Assessment Reports etc.) is retained in accordance with the University of Waterloo's institutional records retention schedule and Quality Council guidelines.

1.2 Scope of the Quality Assurance Framework

The QAF guides quality assurance processes in the following four areas:

Cyclical Reviews of Existing Programs (QAF 4)
The purpose of cyclical program reviews is "to secure the academic standards of existing undergraduate programs of specialization and graduate degree programs and for-credit graduate diploma programs, and to assure their ongoing improvement."[5] Cyclical program reviews culminate with a Final Assessment Report (FAR) – a concise synthesis of the program's overall quality and recommendations to improve or maintain its status – submitted for evaluation and approval by Senate Undergraduate Council or Senate Graduate and Research Council and then Senate. A list of programs that underwent cyclical review and their Final Assessment Reports are

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[5] https://oucqa.ca/framework/1-3-quality-assurance-framework/

submitted annually to the Quality Council for their review.

New Program Approvals (QAF 2) **& Expedited Approvals of New Programs** (QAF 3)
Proposals for new degree programs and graduate diplomas are required to follow the QAF protocol for proposing new for-credit programs. New program proposals are submitted for evaluation and approval at Senate Undergraduate Council or Senate Graduate and Research Council and then Senate. Following Senate approval, new programs are submitted to the Quality Council's Appraisal Committee for their review and approval. The Appraisal Committee has the authority to approve or decline new program proposals. In addition, new programs, where applicable, are submitted to the Ministry of Colleges and Universities (MCU) for approval of tuition rates and grant funding.

Major Modifications to Existing Programs (QAF 3.3)
To assure program quality of existing programs, any major substantive change made to an existing program (such that the changes are not significant enough to constitute a new program), is considered a major modification to the program. Major modifications are vetted within the program's home Faculty prior to submission to Senate Undergraduate Council or Senate Graduate and Research Council and Senate for approval. A list of major modifications is submitted annually to the Quality Council for their review.

Audit of the Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP) (QAF 5)
The University of Waterloo is subject to regular audit, which is "… conducted through a panel of auditors that reports to the Audit Committee of the Quality Council. The panel examines each institution's compliance with its own Institutional Quality Assurance Process […] ratified by the Quality Council."[6] The audit is to be conducted every eight years and the auditor's report and subsequent institutional response is posted on the Quality Council website.

See Appendix A for a full listing of programs and levels of approval and reporting.

1.3 Definitions

Quality Council Definitions
The terms listed below receive specific definitions by the Quality Council, and are used in this IQAP as so defined:

- Academic Services
- Collaborative Specialization
- Degree
- Degree Level Expectations
- Degree Program
- Diploma Program (Graduate Type 1, 2, 3)
- Emphasis, Option, Minor Program
- Expedited Approvals

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[6] https://oucqa.ca/framework/1-3-quality-assurance-framework/

- Field
- Graduate Level Course
- Inter-Institutional Program Categories (Conjoint Degree, Cotutelle, Dual credential, Joint degree programs)
- Major Modification
- Mode of Delivery
- New Program
- Program of Specialization (major, honours program, concentration or similar)

University of Waterloo Definitions

The University of Waterloo also maintains a list of commonly used terms and their definitions. In some cases, terms may be defined by both the QC and the University. In these cases, the University takes steps to ensure that these definitions while not always exactly the same, are consistent in their intentions and interpretations. Waterloo definitions can be found in the following academic calendars:

- [Undergraduate Academic Calendar Glossary of Terms](#)
- [Graduate Academic Calendar Glossary of Terms](#)

2. CYCLICAL REVIEWS OF EXISTING PROGRAMS

2.1 Purpose of Cyclical Reviews

Cyclical reviews of academic programs are conducted to:

- help each program to achieve and maintain the highest possible standards of academic excellence, through systematically reflecting on its strengths and weaknesses, and looking forward to determine what actions would further enhance quality in the program;
- assess the quality of the program relative to counterpart programs in Ontario, Canada and internationally;
- meet public accountability expectations through a credible, transparent, and action-oriented review process;
- create an institutional culture that values continuous improvement, while recognizing the significant workload implications such proactive steps require.

As directed by the Quality Assurance Framework (QAF), the scope of academic program reviews at Waterloo covers: "*… continuing undergraduate and graduate degree/diploma programs whether offered in full, in part, or conjointly by any institutions federated and affiliated with the university.*"[7] This also extends "*to programs offered in partnership, collaboration or other such arrangement with other postsecondary institutions including colleges, universities, or institutes,*

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[7] http://oucqa.ca/framework/1-4-scope-of-application-of-the-institutional-quality-assurance-process/

including Institutes of Technology and Advanced Learning".[8] ([QAF 4.2.2](#)).

Given its commitment to continuous improvement and excellence in academic programs, the University of Waterloo also reviews undergraduate diplomas, minors, options, and specializations, which exceeds the requirements of the QAF. Offerings that are excluded from a cyclical review are participation certifications and language diplomas.

Academic programs are typically, but not always, associated with an academic department. In cases where program administration spans multiple academic units, provisions are made to review these offerings (joint programs and multi- or inter-disciplinary programs) in a way that is appropriate for the University. Faculty-based programs – those administered through the Faculty Dean's Office – follow the same process as their counterparts housed in traditional academic departments.

Waterloo encourages combined or 'augmented' reviews (i.e., where related undergraduate and graduate are reviewed concurrently) where feasible. Such reviews tend to be more efficient. More importantly augmented reviews often have academic merit, as there are typically interactions between the undergraduate and graduate programs, so benefits of the program review process are greater when the programs are considered together.

2.2 Frequency of Reviews

Waterloo's cyclical program reviews are generally scheduled to take place every seven years. According to the QAF, program reviews must be reviewed in a cycle not to exceed eight years ([QAF 4.1](#)). To achieve alignment between the timing of reviews of undergraduate and graduate programs, the scheduling of the review can be adjusted, with approval from the AVPA or AVPGSPA, but the interval between reviews shall not exceed eight years. Failure to complete the review within the eight-year timeline would put the University of Waterloo out of compliance with the QAF. Every effort is made at all levels of the University to adhere to the QAF timelines.

[Flow chart of QAF Overview of Cyclical Program Review Process](#)

2.3 Cyclical Program Review Process

The cyclical review process typically takes between 18-22 months to complete. There are five components to complete the cyclical program review, as outlined in the QAF:

1. The **Self-Study** ([QAF 4.2.3](#)) is prepared by faculty and staff with input from students and alumni of the program (<mark>Procedures</mark>);
2. An **external evaluation** ([QAF 4.2.4](#)), including a site visit, is conducted by qualified, [arm's length](#) reviewers, who submit a report on their findings (<mark>Procedures</mark>);
3. The **Program Response, Implementation Plan & Dean's Response** ([QAF 4.2.4](#)) are submitted, summarizing the response to the External Reviewers' Report and plans for implementing the recommendations (<mark>Procedures</mark>);

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[8] http://oucqa.ca/framework/1-4-scope-of-application-of-the-institutional-quality-assurance-process/

4. A **Final Assessment Report (FAR)** (QAF 4.2.5), which is a synopsis of the Self-Study, reviewers' recommendations, Program and Dean's Responses, and the Implementation Plan is prepared by the Quality Assurance Office (Procedures);

5. **Approval and Reporting** (QAF 4.2.6) requires that the FAR is reviewed by the AVPA or AVPGSPA, then the Program Chair or Director and the Dean for factual corrections. The FAR is then reviewed and approved by Senate Undergraduate Council or Senate Graduate and Research Council. Upon approval, the FAR is sent to the Program Chair or Director, and then to Senate for information and is posted publicly on the University's website. The FARs approved by Senate are submitted annually to the Quality Council (Procedures);

In order to ensure the full quality improvement value of the cyclical review process is attained, the University of Waterloo has introduced two additional monitoring and reporting steps beyond those required in the QAF 4.2.6:

6. The **Two-Year Progress Report** provides an update on progress made on the Implementation Plan. The Report is reviewed and approved by Senate Undergraduate Council or Senate Graduate and Research Council, as appropriate, then sent to Senate for information, whereupon it is posted on the University's website. This report is not subject to QC reporting (Procedures);

7. The **Five-Year Progress Report** provides a reflection on the Implementation Plan from the Two-Year Progress Report and encourages programs to undertake preparation for their next cyclical review. The Five-Year Progress report is reviewed by the Quality Assurance Office, and (as appropriate) the AVPA or AVPGSPA. This report is for planning purposes and internal use; it is not subject to QC reporting (Procedures).

Detailed procedures for cyclical program reviews (steps 1-7) are hyperlinked outside of the IQAP as they are subject to slight changes (i.e., changes in timelines or revisions to the names of institutions or positions, etc.); however, all procedures adhere to the standards outlined within the Quality Assurance Framework. No substantial changes are made to the University's procedures without the approval of Senate and the Quality Council. (Note: Editorial changes, changes to deadlines, and similar minor changes do not require such approval.)

The Quality Assurance Office maintains the Academic Program Reviews website which includes many of resources for those involved in any stage of the cyclical review process, including comprehensive templates for the Self-Study (Volume I, II, III), External Reviewers' Report, Program Response and Implementation Plan, Dean's Response, and Final Assessment Report (FAR), as well as the Two-Year and Five-Year Progress Reports. Programs are encouraged to contact the Quality Assurance Office at any time for further clarification on matters pertaining to their cyclical program review.

2.3.1 Self-Study

As per Waterloo's schedule of cyclical program reviews, the Quality Assurance Office, on behalf of the AVPA/AVPGSPA, notifies the Chair/Director of the program of the upcoming review approximately a year and a half in advance of the deadline for submission of the Self-Study.

An orientation presentation is organized by the Quality Assurance Office, which covers the nature of the review process, an overview of the Self-Study template and the associated timelines. The preparation of the Self-Study, consisting of three volumes of documentation (Volume I, II, III), has typically required 8-10 months. This duration is a result of: the need for meaningful consultation with stakeholders including students, staff and alumni; receipt of partners' contributions (e.g., cooperative education, library, and others); the gathering of faculty data including complete CVs; and the allocation of time for program leaders to engage in a broad-based, reflective, forward-looking and critical analysis.

Each program receives a Self-Study (Volume I) template pre-populated with numerical data relevant to their program(s). These data quantify critical program attributes – student demand, enrollments, and retention; faculty teaching and students' perceptions of quality; research output and funding; and composition of the program's faculty and staff. The intention of providing these data is to allow the program to interpret the quantitative representation in ways that advance the goals of the review – identifying strengths and opportunities.

Data for the Self-Study are provided primarily by Institutional Analysis and Planning (IAP), reflecting centrally compiled institutional data, and ensuring consistency and integrity in definitions, sources and dates. These data are for internal uses and not publicly available. In cases where Programs have concerns with the data that are provided, opportunities exist in the Self-Study process to verify the validity of these data with IAP and other sources.

The cyclical review covers the seven previous fiscal years (spring/fall/winter), with emphasis on the most recent years.

The structure and content of the Self-Study follow the requirements of the Quality Assurance Framework (QAF 4.2.3). Programs and ultimately external reviewers are required to articulate and evaluate

- consistency of the program's learning outcomes with the institution's mission and Degree Level Expectations, and how graduates achieve those outcomes;
- program-related data and measures of performance, including applicable provincial, national and professional standards (where available)
- integrity of the data
- evaluation criteria and quality indicators (QAF 4.3);
- concerns and recommendations raised in previous reviews;
- areas identified through the conduct of the Self-Study as requiring improvement;
- areas that hold promise for enhancement;
- academic services that directly contribute to the academic quality of each program under review;
- participation of program faculty,[9] staff, students and alumni in the Self-Study

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[9] Faculty who regularly teach in the program, and faculty from the Affiliated and Federated Institutions of Waterloo (AFIW) are also to be given this opportunity.

The completed Self-Study is subject to review and approval of the Associate Vice-President, Academic, or Associate Vice-President, Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs (QAF 4.2.3).

All documentation associated with the Self-Study is confidential and not publicly available.

Procedures for Completing the Self-Study

2.3.2 External Evaluation

The Quality Assurance Framework specifies that the review of existing programs should be assessed by external academic reviewers guided by QAF 4.2.4, using the QAF's evaluation criteria in QAF 4.3. The Review Committee normally consists of two arm's length external reviewers, one from inside and one from outside the Province of Ontario, and an internal support person from within the institution but outside the discipline.

External reviewers are nominated by the program in Volume III. From the full list of nominees, the Review Committee will be selected, as appropriate, by the Associate Vice-President, Academic or Associate Vice-President, Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs. The criteria for selection of the reviewers include previous administrative leadership, evidence of current research and teaching, and similarity of the externals' academic discipline to the program(s) being reviewed.

The Review Committee will evaluate the program by reading the Self-Study and conducting a site visit to the campus where the program is offered. During the site visit, the AVPA or AVPGSPA ensure the reviewers understand their role and respect the confidentiality of the review process. During the site visit, the reviewers meet with faculty, staff, students, and administrators connected to the program(s) under review.

The reviewers are provided with an External Reviewers' Report template that includes the criteria outlined in the QAF 4.3. Reviewers are instructed to present their findings from the site visit in the External Reviewers' Report and submit it to the Quality Assurance Office. We request to receive this report within two weeks of the site visit.

Once received, the report is reviewed by the QA Office and AVPA or AVPGSPA to ensure proper completion. Any major issues or errors identified in this review are addressed with the reviewers by the QA Office or AVPA/AVPGSPA, if appropriate. Modifications to the report may be warranted, and when revisions are requested, both the original report and the revised report are kept on record for transparency. In the rare case that a report is received and is deemed inappropriate or the reviewers are unable to revise the report, the AVPA or AVPGSPA will review the report and make revisions with notations, as needed. In the unlikely case where a report does not provide sufficient value to the program under review, a new review team may be sought, and a second site visit conducted which would supersede the original External Reviewers' Report.

The External Reviewers' Report is not publicly available. The document is shared internally with the Vice-President Academic and Provost, Associate Vice-President, Academic or the Associate Vice-President, Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs, Faculty Dean(s), Associate Deans

Undergraduate or Graduate, AFIW Dean (if applicable), and the Chair/Director of the program.

2.3.3 Program Response, Implementation Plan and Dean's Response

Representatives from the program, typically those responsible for the development of the Self-Study, review the External Reviewers' Report and write a response to each of the reviewers' recommendations using a template provided by the QA Office. The program also drafts a plan for implementation of the recommendations. Once the QA Office receives the Program Response and Implementation Plan, the documents are shared with the relevant Faculty Dean(s) and, if applicable, AFIW Dean. The Dean(s) is provided with a template to complete the Dean's Response.

In their response, the Dean reflects upon the actions the program proposed in their Self-Study report, the recommendations put forward by the external reviewers, and the program's response to the external reviewers' recommendations. The Dean is asked to comment specifically on the consistency and alignment of the Program's intended actions with Faculty- and University-level priorities. Moreover, the Dean addresses any Faculty resource implications that may be necessary for the program to respond effectively to the recommendations.

Naturally (and appropriately), there may be instances where the Program's and Dean's assessments of future pathways may not be entirely aligned. In such cases, these stakeholders are encouraged to address any differences. Collectively, the Program Response and the Dean's Response should (as per QAF 4.2.4g) provide clarity to the program, the Faculty, and the University on:

- what actions will follow from specific recommendations;
- any changes in organization, policy or governance that would be necessary to follow the recommendations;
- resources – financial or otherwise – required to support the implementation of selected recommendations;
- who will be responsible for providing resources;
- a proposed timeline and responsibility for oversight for implementation of any of those recommendations;
- priorities for implementation and realistic timelines for initiating and monitoring actions.

The details, most of which are verbatim, from the Program Response, Implementation Plan, and Dean's Response are used by the Quality Assurance Office to prepare the Final Assessment Report (FAR); however, the Program Response and Dean's Response documents are not publicly available.

Procedures for Completing the Program Response, Implementation Plan and Dean's Response

2.3.4 Final Assessment Report

The Final Assessment Report (FAR) is prepared by the Quality Assurance Office and approved by the AVPA or AVPGSPA. The FAR is a synopsis of the entire cyclical review and is based on information extracted, in many cases verbatim, from the Self-Study, External Reviewers' Report, program response and Dean's Response. The FAR identifies strengths of the program, opportunities for program enhancement, and sets out plans for implementation of the recommendations.

The FAR includes an Executive Summary, and Implementation Plan, which outlines who is responsible for providing resources for the recommendations, who is responsible for acting on the recommendations, and timelines for acting on and monitoring the implementation of the recommendations (QAF 4.2.5).

Procedures for Completing the Final Assessment Report (FAR)

2.3.5 Approval and Reporting

The FAR is reviewed by the AVPA or AVPGSPA, then the Program Chair or Director and the Dean for factual corrections. The FAR is then reviewed and approved by members of Senate Undergraduate Council or Senate Graduate and Research Council. Upon approval, the FAR is sent to the Program Chair or Director, and then to Senate for information and is posted publicly on the University's website. The FARs approved by Senate are submitted annually to the Quality Council.

Procedures for Approval and Reporting

2.3.6 Two-Year Progress Report

Program representatives are responsible for the preparation and submission of a Two-Year Progress Report, submitted two years following the external reviewers' site visit. The intent of this report is to outline the progress that has been achieved to date with regards to the Implementation Plan from the last program review. The Two-Year report may also be an opportunity for the program to identify recommendations that are no longer being pursued as a result of revised priorities or academic directions.

The Two-Year Progress Report is reviewed by the AVPA or AVPGSPA, and subsequently approved by Senate Undergraduate Council or Senate Graduate and Research Council. Finally, the progress report is sent to Senate for information and posted publicly on the University's website.

Procedures for Completing the Two-Year Progress Report

2.3.7 Five-Year Progress Report

Five years following the external reviewers' site visit, the program is responsible for the preparation and submission of a Five-Year Progress Report. The intent of this report is to allow the program an opportunity to both reflect on the implementation of the previous recommendations, again concentrating on improvements realized, and begin to consider the

program's trajectory in advance of its next cyclical review. The template includes a focused checklist of tasks that Programs should consider completing in advance of the next cyclical program review. Completing these tasks in advance will spread out the program review workload and will prepare Programs to efficiently complete their Self-Study.

The Five-Year Progress Report aims to maintain the program's attention to the Quality Assurance process with modest effort requirements. The Five-Year Progress Report is internally reviewed by the Quality Assurance Office and the AVPA or AVPGSPA. This report is for planning purposes and internal use – it is not subject to Quality Council reporting and will not be publicly available.

==Procedures for Completing the Five-Year Progress Report==

2.4 Programs at Federated or Affiliated Institutions

The University of Waterloo has one federated university (St. Jerome's University) and three affiliated university colleges (Conrad Grebel University College, Renison University College, St. Paul's University College). All academic programs offered completely by, or in conjunction with, these Affiliated and Federated Institutions of Waterloo (AFIW) fall under the purview of the University of Waterloo's IQAP and follow the same quality assurance process and standards as other programs offered by the University of Waterloo. When a program is primarily based within one of the AFIW, the lead role for the program review is taken by the relevant institution. In situations where one or more of the AFIW have parallel departments to the Waterloo unit responsible for the program review, or when the AFIW are otherwise substantially involved in the delivery of the program, the Waterloo unit will ensure that there is substantial consultation with the AFIW units involved, and that the report accurately reflects the role of the AFIW in the delivery of the program

The Affiliated and Federated Institutions of Waterloo may opt to have their program reviews considered at their own councils, in parallel to their review and approval at Senate Undergraduate Council or Senate Graduate and Research Council. As they follow the University of Waterloo IQAP, the Final Assessment Reports ==(FARs)== and Two-Year Progress Reports for AFIW-based programs will be centrally posted on the Academic Program Reviews website.

2.5 Programs Joint with other Universities

The University of Waterloo partners with a number of other institutions to offer a variety of joint programs at both the undergraduate and graduate level; these joint programs result in the conferring of a single degree. Excluded from the notion of 'joint' in this context are collaborative programs connected solely at the administrative level in order to assist students to earn mutually independent degrees from each of the partner institutions (e.g., a double degree program - Bachelor of Business Administration from Wilfrid Laurier University and Bachelor of Computer Science from University of Waterloo).

The Quality Assurance Office collaborates with the partner university/universities to coordinate

the cyclical review process. The procedure for completing the cyclical review follows the IQAP of the institution where the Directorship (or equivalent) of the joint program is held at the time of the review; however, completion of the review is a shared responsibility between the institutions. The Director leads the cyclical review and prepares a Self-Study following the template of their home institution, in consultation with faculty, staff and students at the other institution(s).

The external review team is chosen in consultation with all partner institutions, and an 'internal' reviewer can come from each partner or be chosen to represent all partners. The site visit includes all campuses. The response to the External Reviewers' Report is prepared by the Director in consultation with the Associate Dean(s) Undergraduate or Graduate (or equivalent), and Deans at all participating institutions, and then follows the internal approval process at all universities. If deemed pertinent, separate responses can be prepared – one for each participating institution – in order to follow the IQAP process at each university.

For programs joint with universities outside Ontario, the quality of the program is subject to quality assurance processes in the respective jurisdictions; therefore, the review process must adhere to the procedures outlined in the QAF. It is the responsibility of the Quality Council to determine whether the out-of-province partner is subject to an appropriate quality review process in its own jurisdiction suitably comparable to the Quality Council's assurance processes (QAF 1.6). Waterloo includes information in the Self-Study relevant to the out-of-province offering. The review may not necessarily require a site visit to the other institution; however, the program includes information that would normally be gained during a site visit about the components of the program completed outside Ontario (e.g., photos, floor plans, etc.).

2.6 Accredited Programs

Beyond the Quality Assurance process, many academic programs are evaluated and accredited by organizations in their disciplines. Examples at the University of Waterloo include Engineering programs that are accredited by CEAB while the School of Planning is accredited at the Provincial and Federal levels. It is important to understand the similarities and differences between accreditation processes and the Institutional Quality Assurance Process.

According to the Quality Council, accreditation is described as "a process by which a program or institution is evaluated to determine if it meets certain pre-determined minimal criteria or standards." Quality assurance, on the other hand, is described as "on-going and continuous evaluation for the purpose of quality improvement."[10] Inherently, accreditation typically asks if a program is meeting the minimum requirements to ensure graduates have necessary attributes to engage professionally. The IQAP process, as articulated throughout this document, concentrates on continuous improvement with systematic, transparent monitoring by (internal) stakeholders.

Despite the differences in objectives, these two processes have overlapping elements. To support

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[10] https://oucqa.ca/guide/reviewing-academic-programs-that-also-are-subject-to-external-accreditation/

programs that have accreditation requirements, the University's IQAP, at the discretion of the AVPA or AVPGSPA may:

- allow programs' timelines for Quality Assurance to be modified to coincide with accreditation, provided that timeline does not exceed the maximum interval between cyclical reviews;

- allow external site visits by accreditation and program reviewers to occur concurrently; and

- allow content (data, analyses, or evaluations) developed for accreditation processes to be used for Quality Assurance when the accreditation materials directly satisfy the Quality Assurance requirements (QAF 4.2.7).

The Associate Vice Presidents and the Quality Assurance Office encourage open and frank conversations with programs about the opportunities to reduce workloads while still maintaining the integrity of the Quality Assurance process.

3. NEW PROGRAM APPROVALS & EXPEDITED APPROVALS OF NEW PROGRAMS

3.1 Aims of New Program Approvals

The procedures for assessing proposals for new programs should ensure that the program:

- meets or exceeds Waterloo's expectations of academic excellence;
- is appropriately named to align with program content and to be recognizable to students, scholars and employers;
- reflects Waterloo's distinctiveness and advances the University's strategic objectives;
- is at the forefront of the of contemporary thinking in the discipline(s);
- is creative and innovative in its curriculum content and delivery;
- encourages interdisciplinarity as appropriate;
- has the potential to advance the University's national and global recognition;
- will attract excellent students;
- is sufficiently resourced.

3.2 What Constitutes a New Program

The Quality Assurance Framework defines a new program as:

> "*Any degree, degree program, or program of specialization, currently approved by Senate or equivalent governing body, which has not been previously approved for that*

institution by the Quality Council, its predecessors, or any intra-institutional approval processes that previously applied. A change of name, only, does not constitute a new program; nor does the inclusion of a new program of specialization where another with the same designation already exists (e.g., a new honours program where a major with the same designation already exists)."[11]

The Quality Assurance Framework further clarifies that "a 'new program' is brand-new: that is to say, the program has substantially different program requirements and substantially different learning outcomes from those of any existing approved programs offered by the institution."[12]

Examples of new programs are made available by the Quality Council.

Flow chart of QAF Overview of the New Program Approval Process

3.3 New Program Approval Process

The following are the steps included in the development of new programs, as outlined in the QAF:

1. A **Statement of Interest** is completed by the new program proponent and submitted to the Quality Assurance Office (Procedures);
2. A **Program Proposal Brief** (QAF 2.2.5) is completed by the program proponent and approved by the Provost, relevant Faculty Undergraduate/Graduate Committee(s), and Faculty Council(s) (Procedures);
3. An **External Evaluation** (QAF 2.2.6), including a site visit, is conducted by qualified, arm's length reviewers, who submit a report on their findings (Procedures);
4. A **Program Response and Dean's Response** (QAF 2.2.8) are submitted, summarizing the response to the External Reviewers' Report, and plans for implementing the recommendations (Procedures);
5. **Institutional Approval** (QAF 2.2.9), including approval at Senate Undergraduate Council or Senate Graduate and Research Council, and then Senate takes place (Procedures);
6. **Submission to the Quality Council** (QAF 2.2.10) occurs; the Appraisal Committee has the ultimate authority to approve or decline new program proposals.
7. **Submission to the Ministry of Colleges and Universities, where applicable**, occurs, separately from the submission to the Quality Council, and coordinated by Institutional Analysis and Planning (IAP) (Procedures);
8. The **Two-Year Progress Report** will monitor the implementation of the program. The Two-Year Progress Report is internally reviewed and approved by Senate Undergraduate Council or Senate Graduate and Research Council. The report is subsequently sent to Senate for information (Procedures).

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[11] https://oucqa.ca/framework/1-6-definitions/
[12] https://oucqa.ca/framework/1-6-definitions/

A high-level overview of the University's new program approval process flow chart can be found on the [Academic Program Review website](#).

Detailed procedures for new program proposals (steps 1-8) are hyperlinked outside of the IQAP as they are subject to slight changes (i.e., changes in timelines or revisions to the names of institutions or positions, etc.); however, all procedures adhere to the standards outlined within the Quality Assurance Framework. No substantial changes are made to the University's procedures without the approval of Senate and the Quality Council. (Note: Editorial changes, changes to deadlines, and similar minor changes do not require such approval.)

Waterloo has developed a website as well as comprehensive templates for the Statement of Interest, Program Proposal Brief (Volume I, II, III), the External Reviewers' Report, Program Response, Dean's Response, as well as the Two-Year Progress Report. Programs are encouraged to contact the [Quality Assurance Office](#) at any time for further clarification on matters pertaining to developing a new program.

3.3.1 Statement of Interest

The proponent of the new program, in consultation with the Dean(s) and Associate Dean(s) of the Faculty/Faculties, completes a Statement of Interest that provides an overview of the proposed program.

Once completed, the Statement of Interest is submitted to the QA Office, and reviewed and approved by the AVPA or AVPGSPA. The primary contact for the new program may then begin to prepare the Proposal Brief.

==Procedures for the Statement of Interest==

3.3.2 Program Proposal Brief

A Program Proposal Brief (Volumes I, II, III) is completed in consultation with faculty, staff and students and alumni of similar programs. The Proposal Brief must follow the template provided, and address the criteria outlined in the QAF Evaluation Criteria ([QAF 2.1](#)).

While crafting the proposal brief, proponents are encouraged to engage internal and external stakeholders in formative conversations relative to their portfolios. As examples, proponents should seek input from their Dean on the feasibility of resources that may be necessary; cooperative education should be consulted if the new program may include work integrated learning. It is best practice to have the Proposal Brief informed by potential resource or other limitations.

A critical element in the development of a new program proposal is a financial viability

assessment (FVA) conducted by Institutional Analysis and Planning (IAP). Through an FVA, the proposed program's costs – including faculty salaries, space requirements, and other resources (library, technology) – are compared to the potential revenues from student tuition and government grant. The outcome of the FVA is a report that accompanies the Brief which is then evaluated by the Faculty Dean and the Provost.

The Program Brief when complete is submitted to the <mark>Quality Assurance Office</mark>, which oversees an internal approval process that includes vetting by the Associate Vice-President, Academic or Associate Vice-President, Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs. The approved Brief and the FVA are presented to the Provost for review and potential approval. Once Provost approval has been obtained, the proponent may take the proposal for approval to the relevant Faculty Undergraduate or Graduate Committee, and then Faculty Council.

Procedures for the Program Proposal Brief

3.3.3 External Evaluation

The Quality Assurance Framework specifies new program proposals should be assessed by external academic reviewers (QAF 2.2.6) using the evaluation criteria (QAF 2.1). The Review Committee normally consists of two arm's length external reviewers, and an internal support person from within the institution but outside the discipline.

External reviewers will be nominated by the program in Volume III. The Review Committee is selected by the Associate Vice-President, Academic or Associate Vice-President, Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs.

The Review Committee evaluates the academic elements of the proposed program by reading the Proposal Brief and conducting a site visit to the campus where the program will be offered. While the reviewers may identify additional resources that are of value to the proposed program, a consideration of the financial elements (revenues and expenses) of the proposed program is normally beyond the scope of their assessment. The reviewers' findings from the site visit are presented in an External Reviewers' Report, submitted to the Quality Assurance Office within two weeks of the site visit. The reviewers are provided with a template for this report to ensure that the report meets the criteria outlined in QAF 2.2.7.

Once received, the report is reviewed by the QA Office and AVPA or AVPGSPA to ensure proper completion. Any major issues or errors raised in the report will be addressed with the reviewers by the QA Office or AVPA/AVPGSPA, if appropriate. Modifications to the report may be warranted, and when revisions are requested, both the original report and the revised report will be kept on record for transparency. In the rare case that a report is received and is deemed inappropriate or the reviewers are unable to revise the report, the AVPA or AVPGSPA will review the report and make revisions with notations, as needed. In exceptional cases where a report does not provide value to the proposed program, a new review team may be sought, and a second site visit conducted which would supersede the original External Reviewers' Report.

The External Reviewers' Report is not public. Internally, the report is shared with the Vice-President Academic and Provost, Associate Vice-President, Academic or the Associate Vice-President, Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs, Faculty Dean, Associate Deans Undergraduate or Graduate, AFIW Dean (if applicable), and the Chair/Director of the program.

3.3.4 Program Response and Dean's Response

Representatives from the unit proposing the program review the External Reviewers' Report, write a response to each of the reviewers' recommendations, and outline plans for implementing the recommendations. The Proposal Brief is modified, as needed.

Once the QA Office receives the Program Response, it is shared with the relevant Faculty Dean and AFIW Dean, if applicable. The Dean(s) are provided with a template to complete the Dean's Response, in which the Dean addresses the recommendations put forward by the external reviewers, and the program's response to the external reviewers' recommendations (QAF 2.2.8). The Dean's response should concentrate on those elements described in section 2.3.3.

3.3.5 Institutional Approval

Major or significant changes to the Proposal Brief require that the proposal return through the initial approval process (i.e., Departmental, Provost, and Faculty-level approvals) prior to institutional approvals. The AVPA or AVPGSPA have final authority over whether re-approval is necessary. A new Financial Viability Assessment may also be necessary if substantive changes to resources or revenues have arisen.

The Proposal Brief (Volumes I and II), Program Response, and Dean's Response are submitted to Senate Undergraduate Council or Senate Graduate and Research Council and Senate for approval (QAF 2.2.9). The Quality Assurance Framework states that "the institution may stop the whole process at this or any subsequent point"[13].

3.3.6 Submission to & Response from Quality Council

Following Senate approval, the Quality Assurance Office submits the Proposal Brief (Volumes I and II), Program Response, and Dean's Response to the Quality Council for approval by the Appraisal Committee (QAF 2.2.10).

Once the Quality Council acknowledges receipt of the proposal, the program may begin to advertise the program to prospective students. However, any announcements or ads must

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[13] https://oucqa.ca/framework/2-2-initial-institutional-process/

contain the following statement (QAF 2.2.11):

> *"Prospective students are advised that offers of admission to a new program may be made only after the university's own quality assurance processes have been completed and the Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance has approved the program."*

The Quality Council's Appraisal Committee assesses the proposed new program and provides one of the following recommendations (QAF 2.3.2):

a) Approval to commence;
b) Approval to commence, with report;
c) Deferral for up to one year during which time the university may address identified issues and report back; or
d) Against approval.

The QA Office notifies the department of the Quality Council's official decision.

Universities may consult/appeal a decision of b), c), or d) from the Appraisal Committee within 60 days (QAF 2.3.3). Should the result of this reconsideration be unsatisfactory, the University can appeal the Appraisal Committee's final recommendation to the Quality Council (QAF 2.3.4).

Programs may only make offers of admission to new students once the Quality Council and the University have posted the approval of the new program and a brief description of the program on their websites (QAF 2.3.5).

After a new program is approved to commence, the program launches with its first intake within 36 months of the date of approval (QAF 2.4.2). The new program enters into the cyclical program review cycle, with the first review taking place no later than eight years following implementation of the program (QAF 2.4.1).

==Procedures for Approval by Quality Council==

3.3.7 Submission to & Response from the Ministry

Once the proposal has been submitted to the Quality Council, IAP submits the program proposal to the MCU for approval.

Institutional Analysis and Planning (IAP) notifies the department about approval for tuition rate and grant funding from MCU.

==Procedures for Approval by the Ministry==

3.3.8 Two-Year Progress Report

Two years following the program's first intake, a Two-Year Progress Report is submitted to the QA Office and reviewed and approved by the AVPA or AVPGSPA. This report satisfies the QAF requirement to ensure the monitoring of new programs (QAF 2.4.3). The purpose of the report is to provide initial data on student progress and implementation of the program, and to respond

to any issues raised in the External Reviewers' Report.

The Two-Year Progress Report is internally reviewed and approved by Senate Undergraduate Council or Senate Graduate and Research Council, and subsequently sent to Senate for information. This report is not subject to Quality Council reporting, unless the program received 'approval to commence, with report' (QAF 2.3.7).

<mark>Procedures for the</mark> Two-Year Progress Report

3.4 Expedited Approvals of New Programs

Proposals for new collaborative graduate programs and new for-credit graduate diplomas follow an expedited approval process (QAF 3). These proposals have the same required steps as a New Program Proposal with the exception of the external evaluation and subsequent responses (QAF 2.2.6 to 2.2.8) are not required. New collaborative programs and graduate diplomas are required to submit a Proposal Brief that addresses the relevant QAF Evaluation Criteria (QAF 3.1).

The Quality Council's Appraisal Committee conducts an appraisal and approval process, and the QA Office notifies the program proponent of the Quality Council's official decision (QAF 3.2). See Section 3.3.6.

The expedited approval process may also be used if the institution requests Quality Council endorsement of a graduate field, or if the institution requests an expedited approval for a major modification to an existing program.

Flow chart of QAF Overview of the Expedited Approval Process

<mark>Procedures for Expedited Approvals of New Programs</mark>

3.5 Proposals for New Undergraduate Minors, Options, Specializations, Certificates and Diplomas

Proposals for a new for-credit undergraduate minor, option, specialization, certificate, or diploma require, at minimum, Faculty-level approval, Senate Undergraduate Council or Senate Graduate and Research Council approval, and Senate approval (Appendix A).

Proposals for new for-credit undergraduate diplomas may be subject to approval by the Ministry of Colleges and Universities for tuition and grant funding.

4. MAJOR MODIFICATIONS TO EXISTING PROGRAMS

4.1 Definition of a Major Modification

According to the Quality Assurance Framework, the "fundamental purpose of the identification

of major modifications to existing programs, and their submission through a robust quality assurance process which does not require but may include the Quality Council, is to assure the institution, and the public, of the ongoing quality of all of the institution's academic programs"[14]

A major modification is defined as one or more of the following program changes:

- **Requirements for the program that differ significantly** from those existing at the time of the previous cyclical program review such as:
    - major changes to courses comprising a significant proportion of the program, where significant is defined as more than one-third of the courses
    - introduction or deletion of a work experience, co-op option, internship or practicum, or portfolio
    - introduction or deletion of an undergraduate thesis or capstone project
- Significant **changes to the learning outcomes** such as:
    - changes to program content, that affect the learning outcomes, but do not meet the threshold for a "new program".
- Significant **changes to the faculty engaged in delivering the program or to the essential resources**, such as:
    - changes to the faculty delivering the program; for example, a large proportion of the faculty retires; new hires alter the areas of research and teaching interests
    - establishment of an existing degree program at another institution or location
    - offering of an existing program substantially online where it had previously been offered in face-to-face mode, or vice versa

All major modifications to existing programs require internal approvals. Changes that impact collaborations with other courses, programs, departments and Faculties require consultation in advance of bringing the change forward for approval. In addition, academic support units such as Institutional Analysis and Planning (IAP), Co-operative and Experiential Education, and the Library may be consulted to assess any impact of the proposed changes.

Major modifications are approved initially at the department/school level and Faculty level (including relevant Faculty Undergraduate or Graduate Committee, and Faculty Council). Subsequently, the major modification is approved at Senate Undergraduate Council or Senate Graduate and Research Council and, finally, by Senate. Major modifications are not subject to Quality Council approval; however, all major modifications are submitted and subject to review by the Quality Council on an annual basis (QAF 3.4).

Level of approval and reporting for major modifications is listed in Appendix A.

If there is uncertainty as to whether a particular change is major or minor, the program should contact the Quality Assurance Office. The AVPA or AVPGSPA will be the final arbiter for decisions with regards to major modifications for undergraduate and graduate programs, respectively.

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[14] https://oucqa.ca/framework/3-3-institutional-identification-of-major-modifications-to-existing-programs/

4.2 Minor Modifications

Modifications that do not meet the threshold of a major modification are considered to be minor.

Minor modifications are approved at the department/school level, Faculty level (including relevant Faculty Undergraduate or Graduate Committee, and Faculty Council), and then subsequently approved at Senate Undergraduate Council or Senate Graduate and Research Council. Undergraduate Council or Senate Graduate and Research Council are empowered to approve minor changes on behalf of Senate, as per Senate Bylaw 2. Minor modifications are not subject to Quality Council review or reporting.

Level of approval and reporting for minor modifications is listed in Appendix A.

5. AUDIT PROCESS

The Quality Council will audit each university once every eight years. As the QAF states, "the objective of the audit is to determine whether the institution, since the last audit review, has acted in compliance with the provisions of its IQAP as ratified by the Quality Council"[15] and that IQAP processes are well documented (QAF 5).

The Quality Council's Quality Assurance Framework indicates the means of selection of the auditors (QAF 5.1) and the steps in the audit process (QAF 5.2). The results of the audit report as well as the University's one-year follow up response to the auditors recommendations are posted publicly on the Quality Council's website.

A lack of compliance with concerns raised from an audit can result in the Quality Council suspending enrolment in a particular program(s), or delaying or suspending new program approvals (Part One: QAF Principles).

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[15] https://oucqa.ca/framework/5-audit-process/

[Appendix A](#): Levels of Approval and Reporting

IQAP Item	Faculty-Level	Externally Reviewed	SUC/SGRC	Senate	Quality Council	Ministry
Cyclical Program Reviews						
Final Assessment Report (FAR)	Dean's Signature	Yes	Approval on behalf of Senate	Information	Information	N/A
Two-Year Progress Report	Dean's Signature	No	Approval on behalf of Senate	Information	No	N/A
Five-Year Progress Report	Dean's Signature	No	No	No	No	N/A
New Program Proposals						
Undergraduate Minor, Option, or Certificate	Approval	No	Approval	Approval	Information	No
Undergraduate Diploma	Approval	No	Approval	Approval	No	Yes, in non-core areas[16]
Undergraduate Major	Approval	Yes, if 'brand-new'[17]	Approval	Approval	Yes, if 'brand-new'	Yes, in non-core areas
Undergraduate Degree	Approval	Yes	Approval	Approval	Approval	Yes, in non-core areas
Graduate Field	Approval	No	Approval	Approval	Information	No
Graduate Specialization	Approval	No	Approval	Approval	Information	No
Graduate Collaborative Program	Approval	No	Approval	Approval	Approval	Yes
Graduate Diploma	Approval	No	Approval	Approval	Approval	Yes, if stand-alone
Graduate Degree	Approval	Yes	Approval	Approval	Approval	Yes
Two-Year Progress Report	Dean's Signature	No	Approval	Information	Yes, if 'approved to commence, with report'	No
Major Modifications						
Major Modification to Existing Program	Approval	No	Approval	Approval	Information	Information
Minor Modification to Existing Program	Approval	No	Approval	No	No	No

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[16] If there is question of whether a proposed program is considered a core or non-core area, please contact Institutional Analysis and Planning.
[17] https://oucqa.ca/framework/1-6-definitions/