

**UNIVERSITY OF WATERLOO  
INSTITUTIONAL QUALITY ASSURANCE FRAMEWORK**

**Effective July 1 2011**

**Office of the Associate Vice President, Academic Programs  
And Graduate Studies Office  
University of Waterloo  
Waterloo, Ontario N2L 3G1**

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## A. Purpose and Scope of Reviews

Consistent with good educational practice, the University of Waterloo (UW) regularly reviews its academic programs. This Institutional Quality Assurance framework is consistent with recommendations of the Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance (the Quality Council), and are effective July 1 2011. This framework replaces the previous guidelines, namely guidelines for undergraduate programs (originally approved by Senate February 1997), and those for graduate programs (the Ontario Council for Graduate Studies – OCGS – guidelines originally implemented in 1982). Any changes to this framework are subject to approval by Senate and by the Quality Council.

The review processes are subject to regular audit by the Quality Council, on a schedule determined by the Quality Council. The threshold framework for degree expectations are the UW Guidelines for University Undergraduate Degree Level Expectations (UUDLES: adopted by Senate 2008), and the UW Guidelines for University Graduate Degree Level Expectations (adopted by Senate 2010). These in turn conform to the OCAV Guidelines for Degree Level Expectations (adopted by OCAV in 2005: Manual 1).

In addition to the UUDLEs, the University of Waterloo intends its graduating students at the Bachelor's level to be able to articulate their learning from experiential or applied opportunities, and to demonstrate an understanding of the intellectual, social, cultural, and political diversity of the world in which we live.

The OCAV framework for degree expectations, together with the University of Waterloo enhancements, will support departments and academic units in planning or revising curricula and in communicating program goals and outcomes to students and stakeholders. As of July 2011, departments and faculties engaged in program review shall use these guidelines as base expectations while retaining the flexibility to add objectives unique to their specialties.

The Quality Council *Framework* (2010) defines a degree program as “(a)n identified set and sequence of courses, and/or other units of study, research and practice within an area of disciplinary or interdisciplinary study, which is completed in full or partial fulfilment of the requirements for the awarding of a degree, and is recorded on the graduate's academic record”. Programs are not necessarily congruent with academic organizational units, and provision should be made to include joint programs and multi- or inter-disciplinary programs in a way appropriate for the institution. (Note that while University of Waterloo student information system often uses the term “plan” to refer to a program, the term “program” will be used throughout this document to avoid confusion).

Following the Quality Council *Framework* (2010), the scope of academic reviews at University of Waterloo covers “new and continuing undergraduate and graduate degree/diploma programs whether offered in full, in part, or conjointly by any institutions federated and affiliated with the university.” This also extends “to programs offered in partnership, collaboration or other such arrangement with other postsecondary institutions including colleges, universities, or institutes, including Institutes of Technology and Advanced Learning...”

At UW, the fundamental purposes of the review process are to help (1) 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; (2) assess the quality of the program relative to counterpart programs in Ontario, Canada and internationally, and (3) meet public accountability expectations through a credible, transparent, and action-oriented review process.

Another key purpose is to create an institutional culture which understands and values the benefits of program reviews, while recognizing the significant workload implications of preparing a Self Study, hosting a site visit, and providing a Two-year Progress Report.

At the University of Waterloo, the responsibility for undergraduate academic reviews rests with the position of Associate Vice President Academic Programs, created in 1998. The responsibility for graduate academic reviews rests with the Associate Provost, Graduate Studies. Responsibility for specific augmented reviews is allocated to one of these two individuals. These are the sole contacts with the Quality Council.

Policy since 1998 has been that: (1) the reviews would be treated as “whole of Program reviews” in the belief that undergraduate and graduate programs should be considered together, (2) Interdisciplinary Options and Minors are reviewed under the same arrangement as for single-discipline reviews except for the composition of the Review Committee (which consists of three reviewers from other Faculties, but internal to the university; there can also be a student from another program as a fourth member of the panel), and (3) review processes for professional accreditation would be examined to determine if they met the UW and the Quality Council requirements for a Program Review. The design of the Program Review process is intended to be as streamlined as possible, while ensuring its accessibility and transparency to the UW community.

At the University of Waterloo, many students complete their degrees in the Faculty rather than in a Department or School. Faculty-based programs are treated similarly to Department or unit-based reviews.

A schedule for Undergraduate Program Reviews based on a seven year cycle is being used, and has been organized to place undergraduate program reviews in the same year as, or one year before or after, the scheduled Graduate Program Reviews, in order to allow information from one review to be used in the other review. Units are also encouraged where desired and appropriate to undertake combined undergraduate and graduate reviews (i.e. augmented reviews). However, it also is recognized that accreditation for professional programs more often occurs on a five year cycle. In the latter case, the UW schedule of reviews has been modified to allow the UW Program Review to occur simultaneously with the professional accreditation review. The schedule for Undergraduate and Graduate Program Reviews 2011/12 to 2017/18 can be found in the University’s “Manual for Academic Reviews” (hereafter, the Manual). Units are encouraged to combine reviews of undergraduate and graduate programs, and may do so by moving the dates for review, subject to the interval between reviews of individual programs not exceeding eight years.

The Self Study process is started during the preceding academic year with a joint meeting called by the Associate Vice President Academic Programs – AVPA - (undergraduate reviews) and the Associate Provost Graduate Studies – APGS - (graduate reviews). The AVPA and APGS meet with the chairs/directors and administrative assistants of the Programs scheduled to submit their Self Study the following June, so that the Site Visit could be scheduled for either the following fall or winter term. In cases where the academic unit chooses to submit an augmented review, either the AVPA or APGS is assigned primary responsibility for overseeing the particular review (allocation is made in such a way as to share workload appropriately). At the first meeting, the nature of the review process is discussed, and opportunity is provided for questions. After that first meeting, the AVPA/APGS is available to meet with faculty and staff in each Program beginning its Self Study, to discuss matters particular to that Program. Data for the review are provided primarily by Institutional Analysis and Planning, which is responsible for the integrity of the data. These data are not publicly available. For details of data to be provided, and timelines, see the Manual.

The following Sections outline the expectations for Program Reviews, and indicate how the University of Waterloo deals with them. Throughout the UW guidelines, summaries/explanations/suggestions are written in *italics*.

## **B. Cyclical Reviews of Existing Academic Programs**

### **1. Reviews of Existing Academic Programs not related to Professional Accreditation**

The Quality Council Framework (2010) specifies the key elements for the Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP). These are identified below, followed by the UW approach to each. After discussing the basic process, information is provided regarding the processes for the Self Study and Site Visits.

According to the Quality Council, the institutional review policy should:

- (1) include a self-appraisal by professors, staff and students participating in the program. (*UW: A Self Study for an undergraduate program will be reviewed and approved by the Associate Vice President Academic Programs. A Self Study for a graduate program will be reviewed and approved by the Associate Provost, Graduate Studies. A Self Study for an augmented program will be reviewed and approved by either the Associate Vice President Academic Programs or the Associate Provost, Graduate Studies. The guidelines for those reports are provided in the Manual.*)
- (2) have an evaluation, including a site visit by at least two external reviewers including one from universities outside Ontario. One internal reviewer is also mandated, from outside the discipline under review (*UW: each Site Visit involves two external reviewers, at arm's length [not collaborators from the past seven years, supervisors or supervisees, relatives, etc.] from the program under review, normally with one from a university in Ontario and one from a university from outside Ontario. Reviewers should be Associate*

*or Full Professors or equivalent, preferably with some experience of program management). Each Site Visit Team also involves one internal UW reviewer, chosen by the AVPA/APGS from a different Faculty than the one in which the program under review is located). Guidelines for Site Visits are provided below.*

- (3) describe the process of assessment of the Self Study and review within the university, and describe how a Final Assessment Report will be drafted, including an implementation plan for recommendations. *(UW: the Program Chair/Director, in collaboration with the Faculty Dean, submits a Chair/Director's Report to the AVPA/APGS, indicating actions to be taken as a result of what has been learned from the Self Study and the Site Visit. The AVPA/APGS writes a Final Assessment Report, summarizing information from the Self Study, the Review Team Report, and the response from the Program and the Dean as well as the implementation plan. Two years after the entire review process is complete, a Two-year Progress Report is submitted to the AVPA/APGS in which progress is documented regarding actions taken by the Program, the Faculty and the University. Both the Final Assessment Report and the Two-year Progress Report are commented on and evaluated by Senate Undergraduate Council (undergraduate reviews) or Senate Graduate and Research Council (graduate reviews). Any comments and/or concerns raised by Senate Undergraduate Council/Senate Graduate and Research Council, together with the program's response, will be incorporated into the Final Assessment Report or the Two-year Progress Report prior to it being presented to Senate. The AVPA/APGS subsequently reports to Senate, and provides a one-page summary for all programs which the Provost uses for reporting to the Board. At the time of the next Program Review, the Program is accountable for commitments made in response to the previous Program Review).*
- (4) describe reporting requirements *(UW: the Final Assessment Report is presented at Senate, and hence available publicly on the web in the Senate Minutes; a copy is also sent to the Quality Council. Similarly the Two-year Progress Report is presented to Senate and hence available publicly in the Senate Minutes: links to these documents are also available from <http://www.uwaterloo.ca/accountability>)*
- (5) Provide an institutional manual *(UW: Manual for Academic Reviews. Maintained by AVPA/APGS: individual items are updated regularly and sent to Senate Undergraduate Council/Senate Graduate and Research Council for information; available online at <http://grad.uwaterloo.ca/faculty/review.html>)*

### **The Quality Council Evaluation Criteria**

The curricular content, admission requirements, mode of delivery, bases of evaluation of student performance, commitment of resources and overall quality of any program and its courses are all necessarily related to its goals, learning objectives and learning outcomes. Goals provide an overview for students, instructors and program/course evaluators of what the program

or course aims to accomplish. Learning objectives are an expression of what the instructor(s) intends that the student should have learned or achieved by the end of the program or course. Learning outcomes are what the student has actually learned or achieved in the program or course.

The Quality Assurance Framework (2010) specifies that the review of existing programs should use the following criteria (quoted directly from Quality Council, 2010, pp 23-24):

### **1 Objectives**

- a) Program is consistent with the institution's mission and academic plans.
- b) Program requirements and learning outcomes are clear, appropriate and align with the institutions's statement of the undergraduate and/or graduate Degree Level Expectations.

### **2 Admission requirements**

Admission requirements are appropriately aligned with the learning outcomes established for completion of the program.

### **3 Curriculum**

- a) The curriculum reflects the current state of the discipline or area of study.
- b) Evidence of any significant innovation or creativity in the content and/or delivery of the program relative to other such programs.
- c) Mode(s) of delivery to meet the program's identified learning outcomes are appropriate and effective.

### **4 Teaching and assessment**

- a) Methods for assessing student achievement of the defined learning outcomes and degree learning expectations are appropriate and effective.
- b) Appropriateness and effectiveness of the means of assessment, especially in the students' final year of the program, in clearly demonstrating achievement of the program learning objectives and the institution's statement of Degree Level Expectations.

### **5 Resources**

Appropriateness and effectiveness of the academic unit's use of existing human, physical and financial resources in delivering its program(s). In making this assessment, reviewers must recognize the institution's autonomy to determine priorities for funding, space, and faculty allocation.

### **6 Quality indicators**

- a) **Faculty:** qualifications, research and scholarly record; class sizes; percentage of classes taught by permanent or non-permanent (contractual) faculty; numbers, assignments and qualifications of part-time or temporary faculty;
- b) **Students:** applications and registrations; attrition rates; time-to-completion; final-year academic achievement; graduation rates; academic awards; student in-course reports on teaching; and

c) **Graduates:** rates of graduation, employment six months and two years after graduation, post-graduate study, "skills match" and alumni reports on program quality when available and when permitted by the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA). Auditors will be instructed that these items may not be available and applicable to all programs.

## **7 Quality enhancement**

Initiatives taken to enhance the quality of the program and the associated learning and teaching environment.

## **8 Additional graduate program criteria**

- a) Evidence that students' time-to-completion is both monitored and managed in relation to the program's defined length and program requirements.
- b) Quality and availability of graduate supervision.
- c) Definition and application of indicators that provide evidence of faculty, student and program quality, for example:
  - i) Faculty: funding, honours and awards, and commitment to student mentoring;
  - ii) Students: grade-level for admission, scholarly output, success rates in provincial and national scholarships, competitions, awards and commitment to professional and transferable skills;
  - iii) Program: evidence of a program structure and faculty research that will ensure the intellectual quality of the student experience;
  - iv) Sufficient graduate level courses that students will be able to meet the requirement that two-thirds of their course requirements be met through courses at this level.

The templates at UW for the Self Study (see Manual) have been arranged to reflect the points identified by the Quality Council Framework. The UW templates note major headings involving self assessment, of the past and the future, the organization and the people involved, research, service, teaching (with special attention to co-operative education and online learning), the students and the support available (human, physical and financial).

The UW guidelines are broad in scope, so that each Program can emphasize those aspects which are most relevant. The review will cover the last seven fiscal years (spring/fall/winter), with emphasis on the last several. The UW Office of Institutional Analysis and Planning (IAP) will provide most of the historical data to each Program and ensure its integrity.

Under each heading in the UW guidelines are suggested areas that could be discussed and critically examined. In some cases, a topic may fit just as well under another heading. It is not necessary to repeat information in several sections, and generally it will be up to the Program to decide where information should be included in the Self Study. The self-study should be broad-based, reflective, forward-looking and include critical analysis.

The self-study should address and document the:

1. Consistency of the program's learning outcomes with the institution's mission and Degree Level Expectations, and how its graduates achieve those outcomes;
2. Program-related data and measures of performance, including applicable provincial, national and professional standards (where available);
3. Integrity of the data;

4. Review criteria and quality indicators identified above;
5. Concerns and recommendations raised in previous reviews;
6. Areas identified through the conduct of the self-study as requiring improvement;
7. Areas that hold promise for enhancement;
8. Academic services that directly contribute to the academic quality of each program under review;
9. Participation of program faculty, staff, and students in the self-study

All faculty members should be provided the opportunity to participate in the self-appraisal process and to comment on the Self Study. Faculty from the UW Colleges and part-time faculty who regularly teach in the program are to be given this opportunity. If there are differing views among the faculty these should be noted. Also all faculty members should have the opportunity to participate in the program's response to the Review Team Report. Again the response should note differing views if there is no consensus among faculty. It is also essential to include staff and student participation in the self-appraisal process, and to inform staff and students (for example at a Town Hall meeting) of the Review Team's findings.

### **Guidelines for Site Visits**

The following guidelines have been prepared to assist Departments/Schools in making arrangements for the Site Visit related to their Program Reviews.

The Program under review will have the lead role in making arrangements for the schedule for the Site Visit. However, arrangements should be prepared in consultation with the Office of the AVPA or the Graduate Studies Office as appropriate. For augmented reviews (reviews combining both undergraduate and graduate offices), one Office will be assigned primary responsibility, and consultation with the other will occur as needed. Contact the relevant Administrative Assistant.

The schedule for the Site Visit should be prepared at least one month in advance of the visit, so that the Review Team can see the schedule, and have an opportunity to suggest changes.

#### **1. Prior to the Site Visit**

- 1.1 The Chair/Director of the Program under review arranges for completion of a Self Study with input from the Dean, faculty members, staff and students, and in consultation with the Dean of the Faculty, develops a proposed list of reviewers (including phone numbers and email addresses and a brief biography) which is submitted to the AVPA/APGS. Two External Reviewers and one Internal Reviewer are required. Five names should be proposed, and ranked in order of preference, for each of (1) an External Reviewer who will normally come from a university in Ontario; (2) an External Reviewer who will normally come from a university outside Ontario but at the undergraduate level usually within Canada. One External Reviewer may be a non-university appointee (e.g. someone from government or the private sector), provided that she/he has appropriate qualifications to fulfill the Reviewer

- role. An Internal Reviewer, who will come from UW but from outside the home Faculty, will be selected by the AVPA/APGS.
- 1.2 The proposed Reviewers should be at arm's length from the program, meaning not relatives, collaborators, supervisors/supervisees, etc. The AVPA/APGS will make the final choice of members for the Review Team.
  - 1.3 The Chair/Director identifies several two-day blocks suitable to the Program under review for the Site Visit, and provides those to the AVPA/APGS.
  - 1.4 The Office of the AVPA/the Graduate Studies Office contacts the proposed External and Internal Reviewers, to invite them to serve as Reviewers.
  - 1.5 The Office of the AVPA/the Graduate Studies Office confirms the time and arrangements for the Site Visit with the Reviewers, and obtains the Social Insurance Numbers from the External Reviewers.
  - 1.6 The Office of the AVPA/Graduate Studies Office co-ordinates arrangements for travel and accommodation for the External Reviewers.
  - 1.7 The Office of the AVPA/Graduate Studies Office sends a copy of the Self Study to the External Reviewers at least one month prior to the visit.

## **2. The Site Visit**

- 2.1 The External Reviewers arrive by not later than the evening before the Site Visit activities are to begin.
- 2.2 An initial meeting with the AVPA/APGS is held at the start of the visit. The AVPA typically hosts a meeting on the evening before the Site Visit activities begin, for the two External Reviewers and the Internal Reviewer, as well as the Undergraduate Chair/Director of the Program under review and the Dean of the Faculty (or his or her delegate) in which the Program is based. The APGS similarly has an initial meeting with Reviewers at the beginning of the site visit. The purpose of the meeting is (quoting the Quality Council 2010 p21) to ensure that the reviewers:
  - Understand their role and obligations;
  - Identify and commend the program's notably strong and creative attributes;
  - Describe the program's respective strengths, areas for improvement, and opportunities for enhancement;
  - Recommend specific steps to be taken to improve the program, distinguishing between those the program can itself take and those that require external action;
  - Recognize the institution's autonomy to determine priorities for funding, space, and faculty allocation;
  - Respect the confidentiality required for all aspects of the review process.
- 2.3 The Review Team will have two days to meet with key participants in the Program under review. The Chair/Director should make arrangements for the Review Team to meet at a minimum with the:
  - 2.3.1 Dean and Associate Dean(s) (subject to availability) relevant to the Program under review.
  - 2.3.2 Chair/Director and Associate Chairs.

- 2.3.3 Faculty (including adjuncts and Federated University and Affiliated University Colleges' faculty where applicable), in groups, or, if feasible, individuals when that is requested.
- 2.3.4 Staff.
- 2.3.5 The relevant Librarian.
- 2.3.6 Department of Co-operative Education and Career Services (if there is a Co-op stream).
- 2.3.7 Undergraduate students (recommended more than one time slot be identified for undergraduates to ensure that adequate opportunity is provided to meet with the Review Team). These meetings should be arranged without faculty present, to facilitate frank and open discussion. It is good practice to ask the Departmental/School Undergraduate Student Association (where one exists) to invite students to participate in this meeting.
- 2.3.8 Graduate students, with particular attention to ensuring Teaching Assistants are well represented. As with the undergraduates, these meetings should be arranged without faculty present, and it is good practice to ask the Departmental/School Graduate Student Association (where one exists) to invite students to participate in this meeting.
- 2.3.9 Vice President Academic and Provost (subject to his/her availability).
- 2.3.10 Graduate reviews will conclude with a second meeting with the Associate Provost Graduate Studies; undergraduate reviews will include the Associate Vice President Academic.
- 2.4 If possible, the Review Team should be provided by the Program under review with an office in which the Reviewers can leave their belongings, and have discussions among themselves.
- 2.5 The host Program should discuss with the Review Team if, over lunch periods, the Review Team would like to be by itself, in order to discuss what has been learned, or whether it would appreciate the opportunity to meet with other people.
- 2.6 The Program should allocate time in the evening after the first day of the Site Visit, and in the latter part of the second day, for the Review Team members to discuss among themselves what they have been learning, how they will structure their report, and how they will divide the tasks for writing the report. UW expects that the Review Team will submit its report within two weeks of the Site Visit. Thus, the Review Team members must be given sufficient time to make arrangements for the preparation of the report before they finish the Site Visit and depart from UW.

### **3. Guidelines for the Report from the Review Team**

1. The Review Team will prepare a report with separate sections for each program (undergraduate and graduate) evaluated, which should be submitted to the AVPA/APGS within two weeks of the completion of the Site Visit. There is no fixed format for the report, provided that it covers the evaluation criteria identified in the Quality Council (2010) Framework, listed above. A suggested template is provided in the Manual. It is recommended that the report should include at least the following:

### **Part 1: The Review Process**

- time of visit.
- documents reviewed.
- individuals and groups met.
- adequacy of Site Visit arrangements.

### **Part 2: Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations**

In preparing its report, the Review Team should be aware that the Quality Council (2010) Framework specifies that a review of Programs should address the review criteria 1 through 8, reproduced on pages 7-8 previously. The Review Team is welcome to add other topics as long as attention is given to the points highlighted above.

The most useful report for UW will be one which is “constructively critical”, identifying strengths which should be protected and enhanced, weaknesses that deserve attention, and new opportunities. When weaknesses are identified, the report will be more helpful if suggestions are presented regarding how the weaknesses could be addressed.

The Review Team Report will lose credibility within UW if it is perceived primarily to be a “booster report” for a discipline or profession, and only recommends providing more funding to the Program. A more helpful report will consider what could be done by the Program, by itself or in collaboration with its Faculty and UW, in using limited resources more efficiently and effectively, along with considering where new resources would represent a strategic investment to allow a Program to grow with quality.

The Review Team Report, if necessary, may include a confidential letter of transmittal to cover personnel issues. This letter would only be available to the Dean, AVPA/APGS, and the Vice President Academic and Provost.

## **4 After the Site Visit**

1. The Review Team Report is submitted to the AVPA/APGS, and then copies are distributed to the Vice President Academic and Provost, the Dean of the Faculty, and the Chair/Director of the Program.
2. The external Review Team members submit their travel and accommodation expense claims to the Office of the Associate Vice President Academic/Office of Graduate Studies. The honoraria for the External Reviewers will be paid after the final report from the Review Team has been received.
3. The Program under review is invited to provide comments, verbally or in writing, regarding the experience with the Site Visit, and especially to identify aspects of the Site Visit which could be modified to make the experience more productive. It is important that students also have an opportunity to provide comments related to the Site Visit. Such comments should be sent to the AVPA/APGS.
4. The Chair/Director and the faculty members of the Department/School have an opportunity to provide comments on factual errors in the Review Team Report.

- Comments should be sent to the AVPA/APGS within four weeks of receiving a copy of the Report. If no comments are received within that time period, unless other arrangements have been made it will be concluded that the Program has no initial comments to make about the Report.
5. The Chair/Director, in consultation with the Faculty Dean, will submit a report to the AVPA/APGS outlining their responses to each of the following:
    - The plans and recommendations proposed in the Self Study report;
    - The recommendations advanced by the Review Team in its report;
    - The program's response to the Review Team's Report;And will describe;
    - Any changes in organization, policy or governance that would be necessary to meet the recommendations;
    - The resources, financial and otherwise, that would be provided in supporting the implementation of selected recommendations; and
    - A proposed timeline for the implementation of any of those recommendations.The Chair's/Director's Report should be submitted within 10 weeks of the Program receiving its copy of the Review Team Report.
  6. The AVPA/APGS will provide a Final Assessment Report to the Vice President Academic and Provost, outlining the nature of the review process, the main findings, conclusions and recommendations from the Review Team Report, and the main conclusions and proposed actions proposed and prioritized by the Program. These actions will include any changes in organization, policy or governance that are necessary, the resources (financial or otherwise) that would be needed, and a proposed timeline. This report will be submitted within four weeks of receiving the Chair's/Director's Report described in 4.5 above. The Final Assessment Report will be presented to Senate Undergraduate Council/Senate Graduate and Research Council for approval.
  7. The AVPA/APGS will report to Senate that the Program Review has been completed, and highlight main findings and conclusions. The AVPA/APGS will submit a copy of the Final Assessment Report to the Quality Council. The Provost will report to the Board once a year as to which programs were reviewed the previous academic year. The Final Assessment Report referred to in Section 4.6 above is made available publicly in the Minutes of Senate as well as in an academic review website (reachable from <http://uwaterloo.ca/accountability>). Note that other documents (Self Study, Review Team Report, Chair/Director's Report) are not public.
  8. The Vice President Academic and Provost, or designate, will have responsibility for ensuring that all recommendations and issues arising from the reviews are dealt with in a manner that brings closure to the process, including provision of necessary resources.
  9. It is good practice for the Chair/Director to arrange a town hall meeting with staff and students to provide feedback on the review findings.
  10. The Chair/Director is responsible for a Two-year Progress Report which is presented to Senate Undergraduate Council/Senate Graduate and Research Council (for approval) and Senate (for information), on steps taken to follow up from the Review.
  11. The AVPA/APGS will submit a copy of the Two-year Progress Report to the Quality Council.

**Table 1. Summary of timelines for reviews of current programs**

|  |  |
|--|--|
| Fall, previous academic year                   | Meeting of those responsible in Department/School, with AVPA, APGS and resource persons; final decision as to whether review will be augmented or only undergraduate/only graduate   |
| July 1   | Self Study submitted   |
| Fall/Winter                                    | Site Visit occurs  |
| 2 weeks after visit                            | Review Team submits Report   |
| 4 weeks after Review Team Report received      | Chair/Director submits comments on factual errors/issues in Review Team Report to AVPA/APGS  |
| 10 weeks after Review Team Report received     | Chair/Director's Report submitted on what was learned from Self Study and Review Team Report, and plans for future   |
| 4 weeks after Chair/Director's Report received | AVPA/APGS submits Final Assessment Report to Senate Undergraduate Council/Senate Graduate and Research Council for approval, and then to Senate for information. Copy of Final Assessment Report sent to the Quality Council |
| February of subsequent academic year           | Provost reports to Board names of all programs reviewed in previous academic year cycle  |
| 2 years after Site Visit                       | Two-year Progress Report submitted by Department/School to Senate Undergraduate Council/Senate Graduate and Research Council for approval, and Senate for information  |

## **2. Reviews of Existing Academic Programs Relative to Professional Accreditation**

The Quality Council (2010) Framework (section 4.2.7) states that “The Institutional Quality Assurance Process may allow for and specify the substitution or addition of documents or processes associated with the accreditation of a program, for components of the institutional program review process, when it is fully consistent with the requirements established in this framework. A record of substitution or addition, and the grounds on which it was made, will be eligible for audit by the Quality Council.”

The AVPA/APGS as relevant reviews the guidelines for the accreditation process, meets with the person(s) at UW responsible for the professional accreditation together with the Director of the Program, to review the guidelines for the accreditation and UW reviews, and to determine what additional information, if any, is required for the UW review. Such discussions occur at the time when work begins by a Program to prepare for the accreditation process, and a memo is filed determining the decision taken. If necessary, the Program under review will be asked to provide supplemental information to meet the needs of the UW review process.

When the Review Team is appointed by an accreditation organization, UW will seek to have a UW faculty member included as a member of the Review Team. If this is not possible, then UW may arrange to have a UW faculty member conduct interviews and examine documents

related to the UW program review process to provide his or her perspective, and prepare a written report to supplement the accreditation Review Team Report. For master's programs which are subject to accreditation reviews, it is usually necessary to review the research components of the program. These aspects can be reviewed in conjunction with a review of the PhD program (if one exists) or research master's in the same unit (if one exists). If the only graduate program in the unit is a professional master's subject to accreditation, then a separate review of the research components is required.

### **3. Combined Reviews of Undergraduate and Graduate Programs**

UW encourages combined reviews (augmented reviews). Augmented reviews can be more efficient and also have academic merit, since there are frequently interactions between the undergraduate and graduate programs. Academic units proposing an augmented review should indicate their intention to the AVPA/APGS in good time (prior to the end of the previous calendar year). The AVPA/APGS will then allocate one of their two Offices as having primary responsibility for the logistics of the review. The review will then follow the normal process appropriate to that Office. Augmented reviews will be presented both at Senate Undergraduate and Senate Graduate and Research Councils. The Chair/Director will be invited to both meetings to respond to questions, the AVPA will be invited to Senate Graduate and Research Council, and the APGS to Senate Undergraduate Council, to ensure coherence in the response to the reviews of the undergraduate and graduate components.

### **4. Reviews of Multi- or Inter-disciplinary Programs**

Reviews of inter-disciplinary programs which lead to a degree should follow the same procedures as those for single discipline programs described above. The review of an inter-disciplinary program (including collaborative graduate programs) can be, where appropriate, combined with the review of a larger program. One of the considerations in such combined reviews is whether a Review Team can be assembled which has expertise in both disciplinary and inter-disciplinary programs. Separate report sections must also be written for each program.

Where the inter-disciplinary undergraduate program does not lead to a separate degree (for example undergraduate options), the composition of the Review Committee is different. The Committee is composed of two University of Waterloo faculty members and one external reviewer. The Director of the inter-disciplinary program and the Dean who provide oversight of the program will be invited to suggest individuals to serve on the review committee. The composition of the review committee will be determined by the AVPA.

The process of the Review follows the same arrangement as for single-discipline reviews.

### **5. Reviews of Programs Joint with other Universities**

For programs offered jointly with another/other Ontario universities, the procedure is that one individual (normally the Director or equivalent of the joint program) will prepare a Self Study following the template of his/her university, in consultation with faculty, staff and students at the other institution(s). The review team will be chosen in consultation with both/all partners, and the "internal" reviewer can come from each partner, or be chosen to represent all partners.

The review visit will include both/all campuses. The response to the review can be written by the Director of the joint program in consultation with the appropriate Chairs and Deans at both/all participating institutions, and then sent through the regular process at both/all universities. If deemed more appropriate, separate responses could be prepared, one for each participating institution, to follow the normal process at each university.

For programs joint with other universities outside Ontario, UW will follow the review process for Ontario universities. This would not necessarily require a site visit to the other university, provided that the Quality Council has determined that the partner university is also subject to an appropriate quality review process in its own jurisdiction. However UW would obtain information about the components of the program completed outside Ontario as appropriate, and include this in the review within Ontario.

If, in future, UW develops partnerships to offer degree or diploma programs with other institutions such as colleges or institutes, the present document will be modified to include such programs.

## **6. Reviews Involving Programs at the Federated or Affiliated Institutions**

The University of Waterloo has one Federated University (St. Jerome's) and three Affiliated University Colleges (Conrad Grebel, Renison, St. Paul's). UW has made arrangements with the colleges to ensure that Program reviews are completed in a coordinated manner. Two major considerations are being addressed. First, when a Program is primarily based within one of the university colleges, the lead role for the Program review is taken by the University College, with the Self Study submitted to the Associate Vice President Academic at UW. Second, during their Program reviews, academic departments at UW are directed to identify when there are complementary disciplinary or program activities at one or more of the University Colleges, to ensure that such activities are considered in the Self Study.

The Colleges may opt to have the program reviews considered at the relevant College Council, in parallel to consideration at Senate Undergraduate Council/Senate Graduate and Research Council.

## **7. Reviews of For-Credit Diploma and Certificate Programs**

Diplomas and certificates, where offered for credit, are reviewed on the same cycle as other programs. They will usually be reviewed in conjunction with a related degree program. Only graduate diplomas (certificates) are reported to the Quality Council.

## C. Reviews of New Programs

At University of Waterloo, reviews of new programs follow a similar procedure to reviews of existing programs, with appropriate modifications to the program proposal documentation and the external review (for example, there are no current students to interview or for whom to provide statistics). See Manual for a template.

For new undergraduate programs, the AVPA has responsibility for the review, while for new graduate programs it is the APGS.

The steps for approval for new programs are similar to those for review of current programs.

1. An initial proposal document is developed, addressing the topics outlined in the Quality Council criteria. This proposal goes to the appropriate Department/School and Faculty committees for discussion and approval. If the program includes co-op experience, a report from Co-operative Education and Career Services is required. The proposal specifies if the program is full cost-recovery or not.
2. If an external consultant review with site visit is required, this occurs following Faculty approval, and the unit concerned has the opportunity to respond to the review comments.
3. The proposal (modified if appropriate following the review) then goes to either Senate Undergraduate Council, or Senate Graduate and Research Council, and then Senate, for approval.
4. At this point the proposal is sent to the Quality Council for approval, if approval is required, or for information if required (new undergraduate minors and options do not require notification to the Quality Council).
5. The Board receives information once a year about programs approved to commence in the previous year (along with information on completed reviews of existing programs).
6. If MTCU approval of funding is required, a submission is made to MTCU.
7. As is the case for reviews of existing programs, a Two-year Progress Report is required also for new programs. The purpose of the Two-year Progress Report is to provide initial data on student progress and implementation of the program, and to respond to any issues raised by consultants. Copies of the Two-Year Progress Report are sent to the Quality Council for information (or, if required, for decision).
8. Thereafter the program enters into the regular review cycle.

### **Definition of a New Program:**

The Quality Council defines a new [degree] 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).” The Quality Council 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”.

Depending on the type of program, the levels at which approvals are required differ, as in Table 2 below. All new programs require internal approval (up to the Senate level), and depending on whether Quality Council and/or MTCU approval is also required, additional approval steps are needed.

**Table 2. Level of approval required for new programs and major modifications<sup>1</sup>**

| <b>Program Type</b>               | <b>Senate</b> | <b>External consultants</b>     | <b>Quality Council</b>          | <b>MTCU</b>            |
|-----------------------------------|---------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------|
| Undergrad minor or option         | Yes           | No                              | No                              | No                     |
| Undergrad major or specialization | Yes           | Yes if “brand-new” <sup>2</sup> | Yes if “brand-new” <sup>2</sup> | No                     |
| Undergraduate degree              | Yes           | Yes                             | Yes                             | Yes, in non-core areas |
| Undergrad certificate or diploma  | Yes           | No                              | No                              | No                     |
| Graduate field <sup>3</sup>       | Yes           | No                              | No                              | No                     |
| Graduate collab. program          | Yes           | No                              | Yes <sup>4</sup>                | Yes                    |
| New graduate degree               | Yes           | Yes                             | Yes                             | Yes                    |
| Graduate Diploma                  | Yes           | No                              | Yes <sup>4</sup>                | Yes, if stand-alone    |
| Major change to existing program  | Yes           | No                              | No (but notification required)  | No                     |
| Minor change to existing program  | No            | No                              | No                              | No                     |

<sup>1</sup>Major modifications are defined in section D below

<sup>2</sup>See definition of new program above table; notification is required if the change is a major modification but not “brand-new”

<sup>3</sup>If graduate programs wish to advertize that a field has been approved by the Quality Council, it must be submitted for Expedited Approval

<sup>4</sup>Follows Expedited Approval process defined by the Quality Council.

**Aims:**

The procedures for assessing proposals for new programs should ensure:

- the program achieves UW's academic excellence goals;
- the program name is appropriate to the content and recognizable to employers;
- the program reflects UW distinctiveness, is technologically current, is creative and innovative in its curriculum content and delivery, and entrepreneurial and appropriately inter-disciplinary in perspective;
- the program has the potential to be one of the best in Canada and at least among the top quarter of similar programs in North America;
- the program has the potential to attract excellent students;
- the program has sufficient resources committed to it.

### **Planning**

Wherever the origins of the idea of a new program, the detailed planning process takes place in the academic unit which will implement it. This planning is done in consultation with various groups, some of which are: the Registrar's Office; the Office of Institutional Analysis and Planning; other relevant academic Departments in the University; Co-operative Education and Career Services (CECS) (if a co-op plan is being proposed); the Offices of the Dean and Associate Dean (Undergraduate/Graduate as appropriate) of the Faculty. In addition it is the unit's responsibility to meet the degree level expectations approved by the University (see Manual) and by MTCU, for non-core programs undergraduate and all graduate programs which are requesting approval for specific funding for BIU entitlement (see Manual).

### **Program Proposal**

A program proposal document is required. A template for new graduate programs is provided in the Manual, and a similar template for new undergraduate programs will shortly be available also in the Manual.

### **Criteria:**

Any proposed new program will be reviewed using the Quality Council (2010) criteria for new programs, quoted directly from pp8-11, as follows:

#### **(1) Objectives**

- a) Consistency of the program with the institution's mission and academic plans.
- b) Clarity and appropriateness of the program's requirements and associated learning outcomes in addressing the institution's own undergraduate or graduate Degree Level Expectations.
- c) Appropriateness of degree nomenclature.

#### **(2) Admission requirements**

- a) Appropriateness of the program's admission requirements for the learning outcomes established for completion of the program.
- b) Sufficient explanation of alternative requirements, if any, for admission into a graduate, second-entry or undergraduate program, such as minimum grade point average, additional languages or portfolios, along with how the program recognizes prior work or learning experience.

**(3) Structure**

- a) Appropriateness of the program's structure and regulations to meet specified program learning outcomes and degree level expectations.
- b) For graduate programs, a clear rationale for program length that ensures that the program requirements can be reasonably completed within the proposed time period.

**(4) Program content**

- a) Ways in which the curriculum reflects the current state of the discipline or area of study.
- b) Identification of any unique curriculum or program innovations or creative components.
- c) For research-focused graduate programs, clear indication of the nature and suitability of the major research requirements for degree completion.
- d) Evidence that each graduate student in the program is required to take a minimum of two-thirds of the course requirements from among graduate level courses.

**(5) Mode of delivery.**

Appropriateness of the proposed methods for the assessment of student achievement of the intended program learning outcomes and Degree Level Expectations.

**(6) Assessment of teaching and learning**

- a) Appropriateness of the proposed methods for the assessment of student achievement of the intended program learning outcomes and Degree Level Expectations.
- b) Completeness of plans for documenting and demonstrating the level of performance of students, consistent with the institution's statement of its Degree Level Expectations.

**(7) Resources for all programs**

- a) Adequacy of the administrative unit's planned utilization of existing human, physical and financial resources, and any institutional commitment to supplement those resources, to support the program.
- b) Participation of a sufficient number and quality of faculty who are competent to teach and/or supervise in the program.
- c) Evidence that there are adequate resources to sustain the quality of scholarship produced by undergraduate students as well as graduate students' scholarship and research activities, including library support, information technology support, and laboratory access.

**(8) Resources for graduate programs only**

- a) Evidence that faculty have the recent research or professional/clinical expertise needed to sustain the program, promote innovation and foster an appropriate intellectual climate.

- b) Where appropriate to the program, evidence that financial assistance for students will be sufficient to ensure adequate quality and numbers of students.
- c) Evidence of how supervisory loads will be distributed, and the qualifications and appointment status of faculty who will provide instruction and supervision.

**(9) Resources for undergraduate programs only**

Evidence of and planning for adequate numbers and quality of: (a) faculty and staff to achieve the goals of the program; or (b) of plans and the commitment to provide the necessary resources in step with the implementation of the program; (c) planned/anticipated class sizes; (d) provision of supervision of experiential learning opportunities (if required); and (e) the role of adjunct and part-time faculty.

**(10) Quality and other indicators**

- a) Definition and use of indicators that provide evidence of quality of the faculty (e.g. qualifications, research, innovation and scholarly record; appropriateness of collective faculty expertise to contribute substantively to the proposed program).
- b) Evidence of a program structure and faculty research that will ensure the intellectual quality of the student experience.

**Approval Process:**

The normal approval process is as follows (with some variations according to the organization of the academic unit, and whether one or more academic units are involved):

- approval by Departmental/School Curriculum Committee(s);
- approval by Department/School as a whole at a Department/School meeting;
- approval by the appropriate Faculty(ies) Undergraduate/Graduate Council(s);
- approval by the appropriate Faculty Council(s);
- site visit by external consultants (if required);
- Departments/School response to consultants and modifications of proposal (if required);
- approval by Senate Undergraduate Council or Senate Graduate and Research Council;
- approval by Senate; programs may be advertized once Senate approval has been granted and the proposal has been sent to the Quality Council, but should clearly state “subject to approval by the Quality Council”;
- reports sent to the Quality Council for approval or information, whichever is appropriate;
- approval of funding by MTCU, if required;
- after a new program is approved to commence by the Quality Council, the program will begin within 36 months of the date of approval, otherwise the approval will lapse;
- report to Board on new degrees/certificates/diplomas approved in previous year;
- Two-year Progress Report to Senate Undergraduate Council/Senate Graduate and Research Council and Senate, for new degrees, diplomas and certificates: should respond to any questions posed by initial reviewers and provide preliminary information on student numbers and progress;
- Two-year Progress Report to the Quality Council, if requested.

**Site Visit (if required):**

The guidelines for the site visit for current programs should be used. The main difference is that there are no existing students who can be interviewed. However, it may be appropriate (for some new programs) to invite current students who are interested in the new program, to meet with reviewers. This can include students who are interested in transferring into the new program (at the undergraduate level) or applying for the new program (current undergraduates interested in applying to a new graduate program).

**Table 3: Timelines for approval of new programs\***

|                            |  |
|----------------------------|--|
| Month 1                    | Approval by Department   |
| Month 2                    | Approval by Faculty <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Co-op report commissioned</li> <li>- Library report commissioned</li> <li>- List of consultants sent to GSO/Office of AVPA</li> <li>- Proposal brief prepared for consultants (allow 1 month for consultants to read document)</li> </ul> |
| Month 5-6                  | Consultant site visit; Review Report received within 2 weeks<br>Chair/Director ensures consultation and implementation of any changes recommended by consultants; submits revised brief  |
| Month 6-7                  | Approval by Senate Undergraduate Council/Senate Graduate and Research Council  |
| Month 7-8                  | Approval by Senate; advertizing permitted with qualification “subject to approval by the Quality Council”  |
| Month 10                   | Approval by the Quality Council  |
| Month 10                   | Submission to MTCU, if required  |
| Two years after Site Visit | Two-year Progress Report submitted, as for current programs  |

\*Note that not all new programs require consultant visits (for example, graduate collaborative programs, graduate diplomas); if so, timeline will be shorter: otherwise these represent the minimum time required.

## **D. Major modifications of existing programs**

### **Definition**

The Quality Council (2010) defines a major modification as one or more of the following program changes:

- a) Requirements for the program that differ significantly from those existing at the time of the previous cyclical program review;
- b) Significant changes to the learning outcomes;
- c) Significant changes to the faculty engaged in delivering the program and/or to the essential physical resources as may occur, for example, where there have been changes to the existing mode(s) of delivery.

And provides the following examples of major modifications, which University of Waterloo has adopted as follows:

a) **Requirements that differ significantly from those existing at the time of the previous cyclical program review**

- The merger of two or more programs
- New bridging options for college diploma graduates
- Significant change in the laboratory time of an undergraduate program
- The introduction or deletion of an undergraduate thesis or capstone project
- The introduction or deletion of a work experience, co-op option, internship or practicum, or portfolio
- At the master's level, the introduction or deletion of a research project, research essay or thesis, course-only, co-op, internship or practicum option
- The creation, deletion or re-naming of a field in a graduate program
- Any change to the requirements for graduate program candidacy examinations, field studies or residence requirements
- Major changes to courses comprising a significant proportion of the program, where significant is defined as more than one-third of the courses

b) **Significant changes to the learning outcomes**

Changes to program content, other than those listed in a) above, that affect the learning outcomes, but do not meet the threshold for a 'new program'

c) **Significant changes to the faculty engaged in delivering the program and/or to the essential resources as may occur, for example, when there have been changes to the existing mode(s) of delivery (e.g. different campus, online delivery, inter-institutional collaboration)**

- Changes to the faculty delivering the program: e.g. a large proportion of the faculty retires; new hires alter the areas of research and teaching interests
- A change in the language of program delivery
- The establishment of an existing degree program at another institution or location
- The offering of an existing program substantially online where it had previously been offered in face-to-face mode, or vice versa
- Change to full- or part-time program options, or vice versa
- Changes to the essential resources, where these changes impair the delivery of the approved program

If there is uncertainty as to whether a particular change is major or minor, the AVPA and APGS will be the arbiter for undergraduate and graduate programs respectively. The Provost has the final say in this decision. The Provost has the right to choose to send a particular major modification to the Quality Council for an expedited review, as per section 3.3 of the Quality Council Framework (2010), and if so would follow procedures similar to those for a new graduate field.

**Procedure**

Major modifications to existing programs require normal internal approval (approval at Department/School, Faculty, Senate Undergraduate Council or Senate Graduate and Research Council, and Senate). Minor modifications follow the same process, with the exception that Senate Undergraduate Council and Senate Graduate and Research Council are empowered to approve these changes on behalf of Senate, as per Senate Bylaw 8 & 9. If an existing program is

offered in a new location, this requires notification at the Department, Faculty and Senate Undergraduate/Senate Graduate and Research Council levels.

Major modifications require reporting to the Quality Council on an annual process.

## **E. Audit Process**

The Quality Council will audit each institution once every eight years. The objective of the audit is to determine whether or not the University, since the last review, has acted in compliance with the provisions of its Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP) for Cyclical Program reviews as ratified by the Quality Council. The Quality Council Framework (2010) indicates the means of selection of the auditors, together with the steps in the audit process.

## **F. References**

Council of Ontario Universities, Ontario Council of Academic Vice Presidents (2005) *Guidelines for University Undergraduate Degree Level Expectations*, Toronto, Council of Ontario Universities, December 16, 3pp.

Quality Council (Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance) (2010) *Quality Assurance Framework*. Council of Ontario Universities, April, 37pp.