Curriculum Workshop

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Agenda

- Introductions and overview
- Undergraduate curriculum and governance
- Submissions
- Ideas being worked on
- Questions
Overview

Various related sorts of problems we're trying to solve:

- Curriculum changes are approved with errors in them, or don't go to the right body for approval, or ... and we then blame it on "human error"

- A lot of people spend a lot of time and effort reading through mountains of material, much of it not relevant to the decision they are actually supposed to be making

- Programs who want to make a change have little idea where to start or what to do, and are often puzzled by why the steps are what they are

Better processes can solve all of these things ... things will be easier, more rational, and more comprehensible. And decisions will be made by people whose eyes haven't glazed over, so errors will be reduced.
Approach

The strategy for today is:

**First:** to look at the issue from the top down, in terms of governance (i.e., what decisions are being made at what level has implications for who needs to see what)

**Second:** to look, so to speak, from the bottom up; what seems practical and implementable, and what would make things easier for the people currently charged with producing the hundreds of pages we work with now

*We hope that keeping both kinds of considerations in mind, we will arrive at some ideas that are both efficient and principled*
Undergraduate Curriculum and Governance

- **Senate** – Section 22 of the *University of Waterloo Act, 1972*; in particular, preamble re: educational policy, (b) re: curriculum, (d) re: admission standards, (e) conduct and results of examinations, and (m) to create councils and committees.

- **Undergraduate Council** – is a creature of Senate (By-law 2); generally, considers all questions relating to the academic quality of undergraduate studies; specifically, makes recommendations to Senate on rules, regulations, new programs/plans, deleted programs/plans and major changes to programs/plans; approves other curriculum matters on behalf of Senate.
Undergraduate Curriculum and Governance

- **Faculty Councils** – are creatures of Senate (By-law 1); make recommendations to SUC re: faculty specific rules, regulations, curriculum matters and other undergraduate academic matters; operational and editorial matters may be decided here as well.

- **Registrar** - responsible for the production of the Undergraduate Studies Academic Calendar
  - Not all changes to the Calendar require approval – a lot is considered editorial or operational (delegated from SUC)
  - See Registrar Resources website: https://uwaterloo.ca/registrar-resources-staff-and-faculty/undergraduate-calendar/curriculum-resources#submission
Review of SUC’s mandate

- What SUC does: the focus is on academic quality of UG studies
  - **Recommendations** to Senate: rules, regulations, new programs/plans, deleted programs/plans and major changes to programs/plans.
  - **Approvals on behalf of Senate:** minor changes to programs/plans; creation of new, deletion of existing, reactivation of inactivated, and changes to existing courses; final assessment and 2-year review reports.
  - Again, some powers have been delegated to other bodies or support units to do on behalf of SUC.

- What SUC does not do:
  - Not a channel to communicate or have recorded operational or editorial matters
  - Does not approve addition/removal of UG Calendar pages, or any other similar editorial/communication activities
  - Does not consider the operation of particular programs, e.g. recommended sequence of courses
SUC – how we all play a part

- Chair’s role:
  - Analogous to a cabinet minister: Responsible to Senate, and officially to blame when things go wrong
  - Oversight of processes, high-level review of materials, chair SUC meetings, etc.

- Secretariat’s role:
  - Providing logistical support and record keeping for Council, Senate Executive and Senate
  - Co-ordinating agenda creation and distribution to Council and community
  - Reporting relevant Council recommendations/information to Senate
  - Providing governance and policy advice during meetings
SUC – how we all play a part

- Quality Assurance Office's role:
  - Shepherding New Program Proposals and submitting proposals to SUC and the Quality Council (QC) for approval;
  - Assisting with and identifying Major Modifications and reporting these annually to the QC;
  - Co-ordinating reviews of Final Assessment Reports and Two-Year Progress Reports by members of SUC. Final Assessment Reports are also reported annually to the QC.
SUC – how we all play a part

- **Office of the Registrar’ role:**
  - Editor, Calendar
    - Acting as a resource for SUC members before and during meetings
    - Setting Effective Dates schedule
    - Ensuring all approved academic pieces are properly entered in the Undergraduate Calendar
    - Ensuring editorial changes are made
  - Supervisor, Systems Operations
    - Ensuring all approved academic requirements are coded for the Academic Requirements tool
    - Create and maintains program codes (and reviews motions for impacts on existing codes)
  - Associate Registrar, Enrolment Services & Academic Policy
    - Acting as a resource for the Registrar
    - Linking proposals to processes within the RO and advises what is feasible
    - Leads the policy group
  - Registrar
    - Voting member
Submissions: Incremental Improvements

- Work we’ve accomplished so far
  - Located on Registrar Resources for Staff and Faculty website:
    - Effective Dates charts
    - Submission guidelines (what needs approval vs what is considered editorial)
    - Curriculum development guidelines (what is a minor, option, etc.)
  - New program proposal resources
Types of Submissions at SUC/Senate

- New plans/programs
- Major modifications
- Minor modifications
- Regulations
- Courses
- Non-faculty: awards, academic program reviews, academic dates....
Types of Submissions: New Programs

What is a new program?

“a ‘new program’ is brand-new ... [it] has substantially different program requirements and substantially different learning outcomes from those of any existing approved programs offered by the institution”

- University of Waterloo IQAP

- All new programs must follow the approval process as outlined in the IQAP and in the New Program Approval Flowchart.

- The QA Office shepherds this process.

https://uwaterloo.ca/academic-program-reviews/new-program-proposals
Examples of New Programs

- A university has a major program in Spanish that focuses on language, and wishes to create a program in Spanish Studies that focuses on cultural studies. The Spanish Studies program would be viewed as a new program.

- A university has a minor program in X and wishes to create a major. The new major would be viewed as a new program.

- A university offers a BA in Linguistics. It now wishes to offer a BSc in order to draw on its growing research strength in Neurolinguistics. The BSc would be viewed as a new program.

- A university has a Business program (BComm) for which it is seeking accreditation. It must have X number of courses taught by faculty with a PhD. A significant number of new hires are therefore required. This would not be viewed as a new program.

https://oucqa.ca/guide/examples-of-new-programs/
Types of Submissions: Major Modifications

Criteria for identify major modifications to existing programs/plans include:

• Changes to requirements which mean they differ significantly from those existing at the time of the previous cyclical program review

• Significant changes to the learning outcomes

• Significant changes to the faculty engaged in delivering the program and/or to the essential resources associated with the program
Examples of Major Modifications

- The creation or deletion of a minor, option, specialization, diploma, or certificate
- The renaming of a program, major, minor, option, specialization, diploma, or certificate
- The introduction or deletion of a work experience, co-op option, internship or practicum, or portfolio
- Major changes to courses comprising a significant proportion of the program, where significant is defined as more than one-third of the courses
- Significant changes to admissions requirements where it affects learning outcomes
- The establishment of an existing degree program at another institution or location (e.g., 2+2 and 3+2 partners)
- The offering of an existing program substantially online where it had previously been offered in face-to-face mode, or vice versa
- etc...

https://uwaterloo.ca/academic-program-reviews/major-modifications
Types of Submissions: Other

Minor modifications include:

- Changes to courses comprising the program (less than one-third of the courses)
- Adding/modifying/removing non-academic requirements that require tracking for degree completion (e.g., milestones)
- Changes to admission requirements (unless they have significant impact on the learning outcomes of the program)

Regulations changes include:

- Creating/changing/inactivating University- or Faculty-level regulations

Course changes include:

- Creating, reactivating, inactivating courses
- Changing subject code/rubric, number, unit weight, title, description, etc.
Submissions: Documents

- Since we are asking SUC/Senate to make a decision, all submissions should clearly indicate what the committees need to know. That includes:
  - Statement of approval from faculty council (or equivalent) -- specific meeting dates are not needed
  - Effective date of the proposal
  - Indication if it is a major modification, minor modification, etc. (to determine approval flow)
  - Rationales that explain why changes are being made and any helpful useful background information
Submissions: Review process

- New process as of Oct 2019:
- After submission deadline, being reviewed by: Chair, Editor-Calendar, QA
  - Editor: Reviewing for proper effective date usage, readability of Calendar content, missing content
  - QA: Reviewing to assist in major/minor modification analysis
Submissions: Desired future state

- 1 report per faculty per SUC meeting
- "Motions": Leave them off documents

**Background and Rationales:**

- Should explain why changes are being made
  - All of what we approve are ultimately Senate decisions, so the rationale needs to explain why the change is a worthwhile one **from an academic point of view.**
  - What counts as a good reason will depend on the type of change (e.g., a new course will usually be justified because it helps achieve a program learning objective). We hope to produce guidelines.
  - Are they routine? Is there a pedagogical reason? Is it to benefit students? Does it relate to the strategic plan or important themes?
  - What are the intentions or impacts for current students?
  - Statement about consultation with appropriate partners
Submissions: Desired future state

- Rationales for courses:
  - Include a brief statement indicating what is being changed (e.g., To change component.)
  - Add any extra changes that aren’t visible in the current report (e.g., information about changes to fee structure of the course, or list current/existing requisites when a number changes)
  - New courses - what else is germane to its creation (e.g., intended size of offering, learning outcomes, etc.)
Submissions: Desired future state

- **Table of Contents:** Helpful for quick glance to know what went to each meeting
  - No need to repeat what is listed in the course reports, but can list by subject
  - No need to list headings that don't have any content for that meeting
  - Numbered
  - List by plans (not department/unit)

- **Order:** Courses should come first
  - If a new course isn’t approved, it can’t then be added to the plans

- **Course reports:**
  - 1 combined report, with groupings of new courses/reactivations/changes/inactivations, is easier to process than if separated out department or several report #s.
Submissions: Desired future state

- **Headings**: Only helpful if used, and interpreted, in the same way.

- Consider the following as standard headings for Table of Contents and within submission document:
  - Courses
  - New academic plans and/or programs
  - Academic plans (major modifications)
  - Academic plans (minor modifications)
  - Academic plan inactivations
  - Regulations
  - Other business (e.g., articulation agreements, admission requirements, etc...)
Submissions: Desired future state

- What to include regarding Calendar text for academic plans and regulations:
  - SUC doesn’t approve the Calendar text, but the academic requirement that is changing
  - Calendar text can be a helpful visual aid to demonstrate the change, but it can also distract from the actual changes to academic requirements/rules (e.g., get bogged down by commas)

- To make determination about how much to include, consider:
  - Audience: SUC and Senate
  - Context: could someone make a different decision if they had more information available?
  - Volume: 1 change within or many?
  - Applicability: What is germane to the motion?
Submissions: Desired future state

- Calendar text suggestions:
  - Shown with a snippet of the Calendar text, when context is needed
    - Example: If two lines of a program description are being changed, don't need to see the entire calendar description of the program ... only enough needs to be presented to understand the implications of the change
  - Summarized in a table/list format (e.g., what is being added, what is being removed)
  - New plans: show full Calendar text, but additional information could be added (e.g., course titles) so that the committees can make informed decisions
  - Plan inactivations: no Calendar text needed
Submissions: Desired future state

- Example list format:
  - The following changes are being made to the Peace and Conflict Studies academic plans (Three-Year General, Four-Year General, Honours, Minor, Diploma):
    - Adding to list of approved courses: BIOL XXX, GER YYY
    - Removing from list of approved courses: HIST 271, HIST 210, LS 222
    - CHEM 120 is being replaced by CHEM 121 in:
      - Honours Chemistry (Regular and Co-op)
      - Honours Chemistry, Biobased Specialization
      - Honours Biochemistry
Submissions: Desired future state

- Proposed order per plan/regulation "motion":
  - Effective Date
  - Background and Rationale
  - Calendar text to help visualize (if needed)
Ideas being worked on

- Curriculum/academic website/handbook
  - Submission templates
  - Submission process and guidelines – all the granular questions
- Calendar/curriculum management software update
- Others?
Questions, comments, and advice

What more would you like to know?
What else should we be thinking about?