Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP)

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INTRODUCTION

In 2010, the Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance (Quality Council or QC) 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 was updated in 2020, and includes 15 principles to which the Quality Council and universities commit to follow. The QAF also 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 QAF.

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, faculty, and alumni – 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.

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[1] Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance (oucqa.ca)
[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.

1.1 Authority

The University of Waterloo Senate is the final authority for ensuring the quality of all academic programs, including cyclical program reviews, new program proposals and major modifications to existing programs.

The Vice-President, Academic and Provost has responsibility for the IQAP and is the primary contact with the Quality Council. 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 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 regarding 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.

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 5)
Cyclical Program reviews are "aimed at assessing the quality of existing academic programs, identifying ongoing improvements to programs, and ensuring continuing relevance of the program to stakeholders."[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

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[5] Quality Assurance Framework (oucqa.ca) (2021)

cyclical review and their Final Assessment Reports are submitted annually to the Quality Council for their review.

Note: programs which have been closed or for which admission has been suspended are out of scope and will not be included in a cyclical review.

New Program Approvals & Expedited Approvals of New Programs (QAF 2)
Proposals for new degree programs and Type 2 and 3 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 4)
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 6)
The University of Waterloo is subject to regular audit by the Audit Committee of the Quality Council. The panel examines each institution's compliance with its own Institutional Quality Assurance Process. 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 and the sequence of approval and reporting.

As directed by the QAF (QAF), Waterloo's IQAP 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*."[6] This also extends "*to programs offered in partnership, collaboration or other such arrangement with other postsecondary institutions including colleges, universities, or institutes*"[6], as well as new program proposals, expedited approvals and major modifications with any of the aforementioned institutions.

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[6] Quality Assurance Framework (oucqa.ca) (2021)

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
- Course Level Outcomes[7]
- Degree
- Degree Level Expectations[8]
- Degree Program
- Diploma Program (Graduate Type 1, 2, 3)
- Emphasis, Option, Minor Program
- Expedited Approvals
- Field
- Graduate Level Course
- Inter-Institutional Program Categories (Conjoint Degree, Cotutelle, Dual Credential, Joint Degree Programs)
- Major Modification
- Micro-credential
- Mode of Delivery
- New Program
- Professional Master's Program
- Program Objectives[6]
- Program-Level Student Learning Outcomes[6]
- 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](#)

In general, Waterloo defines a **program** as a defined set of requirements or courses common to a particular degree.

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[7] [Program Objectives and Program-level Learning Outcomes — Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance (oucqa.ca)](#)

[8] [Appendix 2: OCAV's Undergraduate and Graduate Degree Level Expectations — Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance (oucqa.ca)](#)

2. NEW PROGRAM APPROVALS

2.1 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 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.

2.2 What Constitutes a New Program

The QAF defines a new program as:

> "*Any degree credential (e.g., BMus, Bachelor of Integrated Studies) or degree program (within an existing degree credential), 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).*"[9]

The QAF further clarifies that: "a 'new program' is brand -new: that is to say, the program has substantially different program objectives, program requirements and program-level learning outcomes from those of any existing approved programs offered by the institution."[10]

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

Flow chart of QAF Overview of the New Program Approval Process

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[9] Definitions — Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance (oucqa.ca)
[10] Definitions — Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance (oucqa.ca)

2.3 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 QA Office (Procedures);
2. A **Program Proposal Brief** 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), including a site visit[11], 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 2.3) are submitted, summarizing the response to the External Reviewers' Report, and plans for implementing the recommendations (Procedures);
5. **Institutional Approval** (QAF 2.4), 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 2.5) occurs separately from the submission to the Ministry of Colleges and Universities, and is coordinated by the QA Office; 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 is coordinated by Institutional Analysis and Planning (IAP) (Procedures);
8. A **Progress Report** will monitor the implementation of the program (QAF 2.9.2). The 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).

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 QAF. 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 Progress Report. Programs are encouraged to contact

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[11] Virtual site visits are the standard when it is not necessary for the reviewers to visit labs or other program specific facilities/campuses.

the QA Office at any time for further clarification when developing a new program.

2.3.1 New Joint Programs 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 following principles shall apply to the development process of new joint programs:

- There will be a single new program proposal, which will clearly explain how input was received from faculty, staff and students at each partner institution.
- The selection of arm's length external reviewers will involve participation by each partner institution, including the appointment of an internal reviewer from each partner institution.
- The external review will involve all partner institutions and preferably all sites, if the review is held in person. Reviewers will consult faculty, staff, and students at each partner institution.
- Feedback on the reviewers' report will be solicited from participating units at each partner institution, including the deans.
- A single new program proposal package will be submitted jointly to the Quality Council by all partners.
- All partner institutions will agree on the plan to monitor the new joint program, and participate in this monitoring process.
- If the Quality Council approves a new joint program to commence "with report," each partner institution will sign off on the report before it is submitted to the Quality Council.
- Partner institutions will agree on a common review schedule for the new joint program.

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.

2.3.2 Statement of Interest

The proponent of a 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, AVPGSPA or designate. The proponent for the new program may then begin to prepare the Proposal Brief.

<mark>Procedures for the Statement of Interest</mark>

2.3.3 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 2.1.2).

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 and Experiential Education (CEE) 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 analysis (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, etc.) – 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, who formally approves the financial elements of the program.

The completed Program Brief is submitted to the QA Office, which oversees an internal approval process that includes vetting by the AVPA, AVPGSPA or designate. The program is then submitted for approval to the relevant Faculty Undergraduate or Graduate Committee, and then Faculty Council.

<mark>Procedures for the Program Proposal Brief</mark>

2.3.4 External Evaluation

The QAF specifies new program proposals should be assessed by external academic reviewers (QAF 2.2.1) using evaluation criteria outlined in the QAF 2.1.2. In addition, the external reviewers will report on the substance of the new program proposal, comment on the adequacy of existing physical, human and financial resources; and acknowledge any clearly innovative aspects of the proposed program together with recommendations on any essential or otherwise desirable modifications to it (QAF 2.2.2)

The Review Committee (also known as the Site Visit Team) 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 selected on following criteria ([QAF 2.2.1](#)):

- normally associate or full professors, or the equivalent—will have suitable disciplinary expertise,

- qualifications and program management experience, including an appreciation of pedagogy and learning outcomes

External reviewers will be nominated by the program in Volume III. The Review Committee is selected by the AVPA, AVPGSPA or designate.

The Review Committee evaluates the academic elements of the proposed program by reading the Proposal Brief (Volumes I and II - CVs) 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 QA 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 2.2.1](#).

Once received, the report is reviewed by the QA Office and AVPA, AVPGSPA or designate 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. Any factual errors reported by the program are kept on file by the QA Office with the original report. 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 or desk review 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, AVPA or the AVPGSPA and Postdoctoral Affairs, Faculty Dean, Associate Deans Undergraduate or Graduate, AFIW Dean (if applicable), and the Chair/Director of the program.

Procedures for the External Evaluation

2.3.5 Program Response and Dean's Response

Separate responses from the program and the Dean are required. 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 Affiliated and Federated Institutions of Waterloo (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. The Dean's response should concentrate on those

elements described in QAF 2.1.1.

2.3.6 Institutional Approval

Major or significant changes to the Proposal Brief require that the proposal return through the initial approval process (i.e., Department/School, 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 2.4).

2.3.7 Submission to & Response from Quality Council

Following Senate approval, the QA Office submits the Proposal Brief (Volume I), External Reviewers Report, Program Response, and Dean's Response, a brief commentary on the qualifications of faculty expertise and supervisory experience, and a submission checklist to the Quality Council Secretariat for approval by the Appraisal Committee (QAF 2.5).

Once the Quality Council Secretariat acknowledges receipt of the proposal, the program may begin to advertise the program to prospective students. However, any announcements or ads must contain the following statement (QAF 2.7):

> *"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 Appraisal Committee evaluates the proposal based on (QAF 2.6.2):
- Overall sufficiency of the External Review Report(s);
- Recommendations and suggestions made by the external reviewers, including on the sufficiency and quality of the planned human, physical and financial resources;
- Adequacy of the internal responses by the unit and Dean(s) to the recommendations, or otherwise for single department Faculty; and
- Adequacy of the proposed methods for Assessment of Teaching and Learning given the proposed program's structure, objectives, program-level learning outcomes and assessment methods. (See Evaluation Criteria 2.1.2.4 a) and b))

The Appraisal Committee will then make a recommendation to the Quality Council. After considering the recommendation of the Appraisal Committee, the Quality Council will make one

of the following decisions: ([QAF 2.7.2](#)):

   a) Approved to commence;
   b) Approved 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) Not approved.

The Quality Assurance Secretariat will convey the decision of the Quality Council to the University. Then the QA Office notifies the program proponent/department/school of the Quality Council's official decision.

A decision of "approved to commence with report" is given when significant additional action, such as a large number of new hires and/or other new resources, are required to assure the quality of the program ([QAF 2.6.3](#)). The preparation of the report is the responsibility of the program, in consultation with the dean or deans of the faculties in which the required actions will be implemented. Approval of the report will be the responsibility of the Vice-President, Academic or their delegate. The QA Office will notify the program when their report is due and will review and submit it to the Quality Council on their behalf.

Universities may consult/appeal a decision of b), c), or d) from the Appraisal Committee within 30 days ([QAF 2.7.2](#)). Should the result of this reconsideration be unsatisfactory, the University can appeal the Appraisal Committee's final recommendation to the Quality Council ([QAF 2.7.2](#)).

Programs will be notified by the Quality Assurance Office as to when they can begin to make offers of admission. 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.

After a new program is approved to commence, the program launches with its first student intake within 36 months of the date of approval ([QAF 2.9.1](#)) otherwise, the approval will lapse. The new program enters into the cyclical program review cycle, with the first review taking place no later than eight years following the first intake of students ([QAF 2.9.3](#)).

New undergraduate and/or graduate programs that have been approved within the period since the previous Audit are eligible for selection for the University's next Cyclical Audit. Note: an audit cannot reverse the approval of a program to commence.

Procedures for Approval by Quality Council

2.3.8 Submission to & Response from the Ministry

Once the proposal has been submitted to the Quality Council, IAP submits a program proposal to the Ministry of Colleges and Universities (MCU) for approval of proposed tuition and grant weight. Once MCU approval is confirmed, IAP notifies the department/school and applicable university personnel.

2.3.9 Progress Report

A Progress Report is prepared by the program's Chair or Director, submitted to the QA Office and reviewed and approved by the AVPA or AVPGSPA. The submission deadline for the Progress Report is determined on a case-by-case basis but is required no later than 48 months after the program's first student intake. This report satisfies the QAF requirement to ensure the monitoring of new programs (QAF 2.9.2). The purpose of the report is to provide initial data on student progress and implementation of the program, to respond to recommendations and any issues raised in the External Reviewers' Report, and to highlight any additional areas to be considered in the first cyclical review of the new program. In addition, this report will carefully evaluate the program's success in realizing its objectives, requirements, and outcomes, as originally proposed and approved, and any changes that have occurred in the interim, including in response to any Note(s) from the Appraisal Committee.

The 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 2.6.3).

Procedures for the Progress Report

3. EXPEDITED APPROVALS OF NEW PROGRAMS

Proposals for new for-credit Type 2 and 3 graduate diplomas (GDip), as well as, new standalone degree programs arising from a long-standing field in a master's or doctoral program that has undergone at least two Cyclical Program Reviews and has at least two graduating cohorts, 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. New graduate diplomas are required to submit a Proposal Brief that addresses the relevant QAF Evaluation Criteria (QAF 2.1.2).

The Quality Council's Appraisal Committee conducts an appraisal and will then make a recommendation to the Quality Council. After considering the recommendation of the Appraisal Committee, the Quality Council will make one of the following decisions: (QAF 3.2):

   a) Approved to commence;
   b) Approved to commence, with report;
   c) Not approved.

The Quality Assurance Secretariat will convey the decision of the Appraisal Committee to the Quality Council for information, and then to the University. The QA Office notifies the program proponent of the Quality Council's official decision (QAF 3.2).

A decision of "approved to commence with report" will only be required when significant additional action, such as a large number of new hires and/or other new resources, are required to assure the quality of the program (QAF 2.6.3). The QA Office will notify the program when their report is due and will review and submit it to the Quality Council on their behalf.

The University may appeal a decision of b) or c) using the same process for new program appeals in the QAF 2.7.1 to 2.7.4.

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. However, Waterloo has rarely used this process for graduate fields or major modifications. Note: programs created or modified through the Protocol for Expedited Approvals are not normally subject to the institution's Cyclical Audit.

An approved GDip should be added to the Cyclical Program Review Schedule, for review alongside its "parent" program, where one exists. In the absence of an existing "parent" master's or doctoral degree program, best practice would be to have the proposed GDip externally reviewed by desk review or equivalent method.

Flow chart of QAF Overview of the Expedited Approval Process

Procedures for Expedited Approvals of New Programs

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

Proposals for a new for-credit undergraduate minors, options, specializations, certificates, or diplomas require, at minimum, Faculty-level approval, Senate Undergraduate Council and Senate approval (Appendix A).

New for-credit undergraduate diplomas are considered major modifications and are subject to the approval process for major modifications (see Section 4). Proposals for new for-credit undergraduate diplomas may be subject to approval by the Ministry of Colleges and Universities for tuition and grant funding. Please consult Institutional Analysis and Planning.

Not-for-credit and for-credit undergraduate or post-graduate diploma programs are not subject to approval or audit by the Quality Council.

4. MAJOR MODIFICATIONS TO EXISTING PROGRAMS

4.1 Definition of a Major Modification

Major modifications are made by institutions in order to ([QAF 4](#)):

> • Implement the outcomes of a cyclical program review;
> • Reflect the ongoing evolution of the discipline;
> • Accommodate new developments in a particular field;
> • Facilitate improvements in teaching and learning strategies;
> • Respond to the changing needs of students, society, and industry; and/or
> • Respond to improvements in technology.

Such modifications provide an opportunity for continuous improvement, improving the student experience and staying current with the discipline.

According to the QAF, the purpose of identifying major modification to existing programs is to ensure "their approval through a robust quality assurance process" and to "assure stakeholders, including the university, students, the public, and the government of the ongoing quality of the institution's academic programs."[12]

A [major modification](#) is defined as one or more of the following program changes ([QAF 4](#)):

- Requirements that differ significantly from those existing at the time of the previous cyclical program review;

- Significant changes to the program-level learning outcomes that do not, however, meet the threshold of a new program;

- Significant changes to the program's delivery, including to the program's faculty and/or to the essential physical resources as may occur, for example, where there have been changes to the existing mode(s) of delivery (e.g., different campus and/or online/hybrid delivery – see below);

- Change in program name and/or degree nomenclature, when this results in a change in learning outcomes; and/or

- Addition of a single new field to an existing graduate program. Note that universities are not required to declare fields for either master's or doctoral programs. Also note that the creation of more than one field at one point in time or over subsequent years may need to go through the Expedited Protocol.

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[12] [Quality Assurance Framework (oucqa.ca)](#) (2021)

Waterloo defines a *significant change* as revisions or additions (i.e., major modifications) that substantially impact a program. For example, changing *up to* one third of the courses or requirements to a program. Changes that impact *more* than a third of courses or requirements may be considered a new program. The AVPA or AVPSGA will make the decision as to whether the changes constitute a new program, requiring the initiation of the new program protocol.

When changing the mode of delivery of a program to online for all or a significant portion of a program that was previously delivered in-person, consider the following criteria:

- Maintenance of and/or changes to the program objectives and program-level learning outcomes;
- Adequacy of the technological platform and tools;
- Sufficiency of support services and training for teaching staff;
- Sufficiency and type of support for students in the new learning environment; and
- Access.

All major modifications to existing programs require internal approvals. Changes that impact collaborations with other courses, programs, departments/schools and Faculties require consultation in advance of bringing the change forward for approval. IAP must be consulted as some major modifications can impact tuition and grant funding from the Ministry.

In addition, academic support units such as Centre for Teaching Excellence (CTE), Co-operative and Experiential Education (CEE), and the Library must be consulted to assess any impact of the proposed changes.

Furthermore, an assessment of the impact of the proposed modification will have on the program's students, and input from current students and recent graduates of the program must be included in the documented rationale for the major modification. Specifically, including a statement on the way in which the proposed major modification will improve the student experience.

In such cases where a submission of a major modification to the Quality Council is for expedited approval, the submitted Proposal requires:
- Description of, and rationale for, the proposed changes; and
- Application of the relevant criteria, as outlined in Framework Section 2.1.2, to the proposed changes. The University will determine which criteria are deemed relevant for each Proposal and, to meet their own needs and in recognition of the diversity in institutional strategies, institutions may include their own quality assurance requirements, including for example, consideration of equity, diversity and inclusion, special missions and mandates, and student populations that are being encouraged by governments, institutions, and others.

Any program closure will be considered a major modification and will follow the approval process listed below. The internal approval process will ensure that the proposed modification is in alignment with the relevant program-level learning outcomes.

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 4.3). The Quality Council has the final authority to decide if a major modification constitutes a new program and, therefore, must follow the Protocol for New Program Approvals. Note: major modifications are not normally subject to the institution's Cyclical Audit.

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/significant or minor, the program should contact the QA Office. The AVPA or AVPGSPA will be the final arbiter for decisions with regards to major modifications for undergraduate and graduate programs, respectively.

==Procedures for Major Modifications==

4.2 Minor Modifications

Modifications that do not meet the threshold of a major modification are considered to be minor. These would minimally include: changes to an existing Emphasis, Option, or Minor Program; the creation of a new micro-credential(s); undergraduate certificate(s); and laddering, stacking or similar options or comparable elements. While these modifications do not need Quality Council appraisal and approval, the QC requires that the University of Waterloo detail how the changes will be made and the quality of such changes will be assured.

Minor modifications to academic programs for credit (e.g., Emphasis, Specialization, Option, or Minor, undergraduate certificate(s) or comparable elements) 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 for non-credit or alternative credentials offerings such as micro-credential(s), laddering, stacking or similar options, or comparable elements, are approved by an Alternative Credentials Approval Committee which is chaired by the AVPA. New offerings are submitted to this Committee for review and approval using a standardized template. The template requires that the offerings detail how they will solicit feedback from participants and provide a timeframe for ongoing evaluation. The Committee will review the report to assess indicators of

the quality of the offering and will recommend steps taken to address any problems that are identified.

Minor modifications are not subject to Quality Council review or reporting. Level of approval and reporting for minor modifications is listed in Appendix A.

Procedures for Minor Modifications

5. CYCLICAL REVIEWS OF EXISTING PROGRAMS

5.1 Purpose of Cyclical Reviews

Cyclical reviews of academic programs are conducted to:

- help each program achieve and maintain the highest possible standards of academic excellence, through systematically reflecting on its strengths and weaknesses, and look 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.

A key outcome from a Cyclical Review is the Final Assessment Report which forms the basis of a continuous improvement process that monitors the recommendations in the Implementation Plan.

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 such as participation certifications and language diplomas are excluded from a cyclical review.

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/schools.

Waterloo encourages combined or 'augmented' reviews (i.e., where related undergraduate and graduate are reviewed concurrently) where feasible as 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.

Note: regardless of the "bundling" of program reviews, the quality of each academic program and the learning environment of the students in each program will be explicitly addressed in the self-study and the external reviewers' report.

5.2 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 5.1.1). 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.

The program review schedule is posted on the Academic Program Review website and is updated annually. Note: programs which have been closed or for which admission has been suspended are out of scope. The review schedule includes all program offerings, including those that are joint/inter-institutional, multi-disciplinary, interdisciplinary or at multiple sites. The Schedule will also include all modes of program delivery and can reflect independent or concurrent review of a university's undergraduate and graduate programs, and/or with other departments and academic units.

Flow chart of QAF Overview of Cyclical Program Review Process

5.3 Cyclical Program Review Process

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

1. The **self-study** (QAF 5.1.3) is prepared by faculty and staff with input from faculty, students and alumni of the program. Professional programs must also seek feedback from employers and/or professional associations. (Procedures);
2. An **external evaluation** (QAF 5.2.1), including a site visit[13], is conducted by qualified, arm's length reviewers, who submit a report on their findings (Procedures);
3. The **Program Response, Implementation Plan & Dean's Response** (QAF 5.3.2) are submitted, summarizing the response to the External Reviewers' Report and plans for implementing the recommendations (Procedures);
4. A **Final Assessment Report (FAR)** (QAF 5.3.2), which is a synopsis of the self-study, reviewers' recommendations, Program and Dean's Responses, and the Implementation Plan, is prepared by the QA Office (Procedures);
5. **Approval and Reporting** (QAF 5.4.1, 5.4.2) 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 (note: these bodies have delegated authority to approve such items on behalf of Senate), and then sent to Senate for information Upon Senate approval, the FAR is sent to the Program Chair or Director, Dean and Associate Dean and is posted publicly on the University's website. The FARs are submitted annually to the Quality Council (Procedures)

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[13] Virtual site visits are the standard when it is not necessary for the reviewers to visit labs or other program specific facilities/campuses.

In order to ensure that the full quality improvement value of the cyclical review process is attained, the University of Waterloo has monitoring and reporting steps as required in the QAF 5.4.1:

6. The **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);

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 QAF. Any substantial changes made to these procedures requires the approval of Senate and the Quality Council. Note: Editorial changes, changes to deadlines, and similar minor changes are not subject to such approval.

The QA Office maintains the Academic Program Reviews website which includes 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 QA Office at any time for further clarification on matters pertaining to their cyclical program review.

5.3.1 Self-Study

As per Waterloo's schedule of cyclical program reviews, the QA Office, on behalf of the AVPA or AVPGSPA, notifies the Chair/Director of the program of the upcoming review approximately a year in advance of the deadline for submission of the self-study. The programs and any associated "bundling" of programs are denoted in the program review schedule and distinct versions of each program must be identified at the beginning of the process, including the various delivery modes and sites.

An orientation presentation is organized by the QA 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 faculty, students, staff and alumni, as well as feedback on professional programs from employers and/or professional associations; receipt of partners' contributions (e.g., cooperative education, library, and others); the gathering of faculty data including access to up-to-date 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 for enhancement.

Data for the self-study are provided primarily by 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, the QA Office, 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 QAF (QAF 5.1.3.). 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 5.1.3.1);
- Identify any unique curriculum or program innovations, creative components, or significant high impact practices;
- concerns and recommendations raised in previous reviews (including items flagged for monitoring or follow-up with the QC for new programs undergoing their first cyclical review);
- areas identified through the self-study as requiring improvement;
- areas identified as holding potential for enhancement and/or opportunities for curricular change as identified by the program's faculty, staff and/or students;
- academic services that directly contribute to the academic quality of each program under review;
- participation of program faculty,[14] staff, students, and alumni in the self-study

The completed self-study is subject to review and approval of the AVPA, AVPGSPA or designate.

All documentation associated with the self-study is confidential and not publicly available.

Procedures for Completing the Self-Study

5.3.2 External Evaluation

The QAF specifies that the review of existing programs should be assessed by external academic

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[14] Faculty who regularly teach in the program, and faculty from the Affiliated and Federated Institutions of Waterloo (AFIW) are to be consulted.

reviewers guided by QAF 5.2 using the QAF's evaluation criteria in QAF 5.1.3.1. The Review Committee consists of two external reviewers who are arm's length from the program under review, one from inside and one from outside the Province of Ontario, and an internal support person, as needed, from within the institution, but outside the program/discipline.

External reviewers will be selected on following criteria (QAF 5.2.1):

- normally associate or full professors, or the equivalent—will have suitable disciplinary expertise,

- qualifications and program management experience, including an appreciation of pedagogy and learning outcomes

External reviewers (including employers and/or professional associations related to professional programs) are nominated by the program in Volume III. From the full list of nominees, the Review Committee (also known as the Site Visit Team) will be selected, as appropriate, by the AVPA, AVPGSPA or designate. The criteria for selection of the reviewers include at minimum associate or full professor level, previous administrative leadership, evidence of current research and teaching, and similarity of the externals' academic discipline to the program(s) being reviewed. External reviewers for professional programs will be selected based on length and quality of expertise in industry or profession as well as current level of activity in the field.

The Review Committee will evaluate the program by reading the self-study and Volume II (CVs) and conducting a site visit. During the site visit, the AVPA, AVPGSPA or designate 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 and view related facilities.

The reviewers are provided with an External Reviewers' Report template that includes the criteria outlined in the QAF 5.2.1. Reviewers are instructed to present their findings from the site visit in one joint report using the External Reviewers' template and submit it to the QA Office. Reviewers are asked to identify and commend the notably strong and creative attributes of each discrete program documented in the self-study, as well as, each discrete program's respective strengths, areas for improvement, and opportunities for enhancement. In addition, reviewers are asked to provide evidence of any significant innovation or creativity in the content and/or delivery of the program relative to other such programs. This report must include a minimum of three recommendations for specific steps to be taken that will lead to the continuous improvement of the program, distinguishing between those the program can itself take and those that require external action. Reviewers must articulate and demonstrate the value of any suggested additional resources, such as faculty complement and/or space requirements, and how these are directly tied to issues of program quality or sustainability. The QA Office requests to receive this report within two weeks of the site visit.

Once received, the report is reviewed by the QA Office and AVPA, AVPGSPA or designate to ensure proper completion. Any major issues or errors identified in this review are addressed with the

reviewers by the QA Office, and AVPA or AVPGSPA, if appropriate. Any factual errors reported by the program are kept on file by the QA Office with the original report. In the unlikely case where a report does not provide sufficient value to the program under review, a new Review Committee may be sought, and a second site visit or desk review 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, AVPA or AVPGSPA, Faculty Dean(s), Associate Deans Undergraduate or Graduate, AFIW Dean (if applicable), and the Chair/Director of the program.

Procedures for the External Evaluation

5.3.3 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 the implementation of the recommendations and prioritizes recommendations selected for action. 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 and their Implementation Plan. 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 provide clarity to the program, the Faculty, and the University on:

- what actions will follow from specific recommendations and prioritizes recommendations selected for action;
- 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; and

- 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 QA Office to prepare the Final Assessment Report (FAR); however, the Program Response and Dean's Response documents are not publicly available.

5.3.4 Final Assessment Report

The Final Assessment Report (FAR) is the key outcome of a cyclical review and forms the basis of a continuous improvement process that monitors the recommendations in the Implementation Plan. The QA Office prepares the FAR and it is reviewed 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 an implementation plan for all of the external reviewer's recommendations (except, where an approved rationale is provided for not including a specific recommendation(s)). Furthermore, any additional recommendations that the program/unit, the Dean(s) and/or the University may have identified as requiring action as a result of the program's review will be included in the FAR.

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 5.3.2). The Final Assessment Report will not include any confidential information.

5.3.5 Approval and Reporting

After the FAR and associated Implementation Plan are reviewed by the AVPA or AVPGSPA, they are shared with the Program Chair or Director and the Dean for review of any factual corrections. Before they go to Senate for information they are reviewed and approved by members of Senate Undergraduate Council or Senate Graduate and Research Council (note: these bodies have delegated authority to approve such items on behalf of Senate). Once through Senate, they are sent to the Program Chair or Director for them to "own" and act on, as appropriate, and are posted publicly on the Academic Program Reviews website and the website of any affiliated institution. Programs are also encouraged to post the FAR and associated Implementation Plan on their own websites. The FARs, including the Implementation Plans, are submitted annually to the Quality Council and to the Board of Governors. The annual report and related Cyclical Program Review processes will occasionally be reviewed for compliance by the Quality Council and, if issues are found, the Quality Council may decide to initiate a Focused Audit (see Section 6).

5.3.6 Progress Report

The Program Chair or Director is responsible for the preparation and submission of a Progress Report, submitted approximately four years after the start of each cyclical review. In this report, programs are asked to outline their progress on their Implementation Plan from their last program review. This report is an opportunity for the program to explain any circumstances that have altered the original implementation plan, address any significant developments or initiatives that have arisen since the program review process or that were not contemplated during the review, and report on anything else the Program Chair or Director believes is appropriate to bring to Senate concerning the program.

The 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 Academic Program Reviews website.

==**Procedures for Completing the Progress Report**==

5.4 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, United 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.

For a number of Waterloo programs, a substantial contribution is made to program delivery by one or more of the AFIW, and in a few cases there is a parallel unit to the Waterloo department primarily responsible for the delivery of the program. Success in such situations is facilitated by active cooperation and communication between the units involved, and it is expected that such units will use the review process as an opportunity to explore ways in which the program(s) under review can be strengthened. In such cases the following principles should apply:

- the Waterloo department in which the program is housed will be primarily responsible for preparation of the self-study, for hosting site visitors, and for responding to recommendations;
- the self-study should accurately reflect the role of the AFIW in the delivery of the program;
- the Waterloo unit is responsible for ensuring that there is meaningful consultation with the AFIW units (or where there is no unit, colleagues who are involved in the delivery of the program to a considerable degree) during the preparation of the self-study and the response to recommendations;

- in cases where implementing recommendations may require changes to processes and practices not only with the Waterloo units but within the AFIW as well, program and Deans' responses to the recommendations should clearly indicate what steps will be taken in each institution. If a recommendation is to be acted on in one unit but not another, a rationale should be provided.

Conversely, for programs whose delivery is primarily the responsibility of a unit within one or more AFIW, appropriate involvement of relevant Waterloo departments or colleagues in the preparation of self-studies and response to recommendations is required.

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. The Final Assessment Reports (FARs) and Progress Reports for AFIW-based programs will be centrally posted on the Academic Program Reviews website as well as on the AFIW's own website.

5.5 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).

Procedures for joint programs with other universities

In the case of joint programs with other postsecondary institutions in Ontario, the participating institutions will agree on a common review schedule. Cyclical reviews will be conducted according to the IQAP of the institution administering the review (usually the institution at which the current director holds appointment) and under the leadership of that institution's program director. For purposes of consistency, the institution that holds directorship of the joint program at the beginning of the cyclical review will be responsible for leading the process through to the completion of the Final Assessment Report, Implementation Plan, and the Progress Report.

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. 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., video, photos, floor plans, etc.).

5.6 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 "as on-going and continuous evaluation for the purpose of quality improvement. Quality assurance processes include assessing, monitoring, guaranteeing, maintaining and improving."[15] 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 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 IQAP requirements.

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

In the event that the Associate Vice Presidents allow elements of a cyclical program review to be substituted or augmented with elements from an accreditation review, a record of each substitution or addition will be kept as well as a record of the AVP's decision making (QAF 5.5). A Record of Substitution or Addition, and the grounds on which decisions were made, is eligible for Cyclical Audit by the QC.

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[15] 5.5 Use of Accreditation and Other External Reviews in the Institutional Quality Assurance Process — Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance (oucqa.ca)

6. AUDIT PROCESS

The Quality Council will audit each university once every eight years. An audit provides necessary accountability to post-secondary education's principal stakeholders (QAF 6). As the QAF states,

> *"the objectives of the Cyclical Audit…are to ensure transparency and accountability in the development and review of academic programs, to assure students, citizens and the government of the international standards of quality assurance processes, and to monitor the degree to which a university has:*
>
> a) *Improved/enhanced its quality assurance processes and practices;*
>
> b) *Created an ethos of continuous improvement; and*
>
> c) *Developed a culture that supports program-level learning outcomes and student-centred learning."[16]*

Cyclical Program Reviews that were undertaken within the period between audits and any new undergraduate and/or graduate programs that have been approved since the previous audit are eligible for selection for the university's next Cyclical Audit. Note that an audit cannot reverse the approval of a program to commence.

The University is required to complete the following:

- participate in a half-day briefing with the Quality Council Secretariat and an Audit Team member approximately one-year prior to the scheduled Cyclical Audit;
- prepare an institutional self-study;
- describe the process for the preparation of the institutional self-study;
- assign responsibility for the preparation of the self-study and submission of the self-study and desk audit documentation to the Quality Council Secretariat;
- establish the schedule for the site visit so that the audit team meet with all the stakeholders (listed in QAF 6.2.6);
- submit a report on the factual accuracy of the audit report draft;
- if necessary, submit a follow-up report frame with details about how the issues have been addressed;
- if necessary, make changes in the follow-up report;
- if required, participate in a focused audit and act accordingly;
- publish the Audit Report, absent any confidential information, on its website;
- publish the Follow-up Response Report, as well as the associated auditors' report on its website; and
- publish any Focused Audit Report on its website.
- The AVPA and AVPGSPA, with support from the QA Office, are jointly responsibility for drafting the institutional self-study. The following academic support units that are involved in new programs, cyclical reviews, and major modifications, will be asked for

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[16] Quality Assurance Framework (oucqa.ca) (2021)

their input into the self-study: Institutional Analysis and Planning (IAP), Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs Office, Centre for Teaching Excellence, Centre for Extended Learning, Registrar's Office, Marketing and Undergraduate Recruitment, Co-op and Experiential Education, the Library, EDI-R and the Indigenous Relations Office and others as needed.

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). In addition, the University of Waterloo may be required to participate in a subsequent Focused Audit (QAF 6.3) when the Quality Council has some concerns about the quality assurance processes at the University.

Appendix A: Sequence of Approval and Reporting

IQAP Item	Faculty-Level	Externally Reviewed	SUC*/SGRC*/ ACAC*	Senate	Quality Council	Ministry
Cyclical Program Reviews						
Final Assessment Report (FAR)	Dean's Signature	Yes	Approval	Information	Information	N/A
Two-Year Progress Report	Dean's Signature	No	Approval	Information	No	N/A
Five-Year Progress Report	Dean's Signature	No	No	No	No	N/A
New Program Proposals						
Undergraduate Major	Approval	Yes, if 'brand-new'	Approval	Approval	Yes, if 'brand-new'	Yes, in non-core areas[17]
Undergraduate Degree	Approval	Yes	Approval	Approval	Approval	Yes, in non-core areas[17]
Type 2 & 3 Graduate Diploma	Approval	No	Approval	Approval	Approval	Yes, if Type 3 GDip
Graduate Degree	Approval	Yes	Approval	Approval	Approval	Yes
Two-Year Progress Report for new programs	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
New minor modification, non-credit (e.g., micro-credentials, badges etc.)	No	No	ACAC Approval	No	No	Yes- if OSAP eligible
New Undergraduate Diploma, Minor, Option, or Certificate	Approval	No	Approval	Approval	Information	Information, except UG Diplomas in non-core areas[17]
Graduate Field	Approval	No	Approval	Approval	Information	No
Graduate Specialization, Type 1 GDip	Approval	No	Approval	Approval	Information	No
Graduate Collaborative Program	Approval	No	Approval	Approval	Information	Yes– if tuition or grant funding is impacted

*As delegated by Senate

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[17] Consult Institutional Analysis and Planning (IAP) for Ministry core/non-core areas.