

York University Quality Assurance Procedures (YUQAP)

1. QUALITY ASSURANCE CONTEXT

1.1 Preamble

Quality assurance of university academic programs has been adopted around the world and is widely recognized as a vital component of every viable educational system. An important component has been the articulation of degree level expectations and learning outcomes in postsecondary education.

The OCGS [Ontario Council of Graduate Studies] adopted its statement of Graduate University Degree Level Expectations in January 2005. This was followed in December 2005 by COU [Council of Universities] endorsing the Guidelines for University Undergraduate Degree Level Expectations (UUDLES) developed by OCAV [Ontario Council of Academic Vice-Presidents]. The Ontario Council of Academic Vice-Presidents subsequently incorporated UUDLES into its UPRAC Review and Audit Guidelines with an implementation date of June 2008. OCAV's adoption of the Degree Level Expectations set out the academic standards of Ontario's universities. Each university is expected to develop its own institutional expression of the undergraduate and graduate degree Level Expectations and to have them applied to each academic program.

In 2010 the Council of Ontario Universities (COU) approved protocols for the approval of new programs and other curriculum, and the cyclical review of programs set out in a document called the Quality Assurance Framework (QAF). These protocols are overseen at the provincial level by a new quality assurance body established by COU called the Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance (the Quality Council). It is the policy of York University to comply in full with these protocols.¹

As set out in the new QAF, academic standards, quality assurance and program improvement are, in the first instance, the responsibility of universities themselves. The Framework recognizes the institution's autonomy to determine priorities for funding, space, and faculty allocation. The Policy on the Approval and Cyclical Review of Programs and other Curriculum governs the approval of proposed new programs and the review of existing programs at York University. York University's Quality Assurance Procedures (YUQAP) outlines the protocols for the assessment and approval of new programs, review of existing programs, modifications to existing programs, and closures of programs. Templates for the various types of curriculum submissions may be found at <http://vpacademic.yorku.ca/viceprovost/QAP/> The Policy on the Approval and Cyclical Review of Programs and other Curriculum and YUQAP were approved by Senate on (October 28, 2010) and ratified by the Quality Assurance Council on (March 31, 2011).² In developing the new Quality Assurance Framework for postsecondary education, Ontario universities have shown significant leadership and a firm commitment to cultivating a culture of quality in education. The alignment of Ontario universities with international quality assurance standards also facilitates greater international acceptance of our degrees and improves the access that our students have to university programs and employment worldwide.

1 The Quality Assurance Framework was approved by the Ontario Council of Academic Vice Presidents on February 8th, 2010, approved by Executive Heads of the Council of Ontario Universities on April 22, 2010. Italicized text throughout the YUQAP denotes text quoted directly from the Quality Assurance Framework, Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance, (May 2011). See the QAF document for further details on the evolution of quality assurance in Ontario.

2 The Senate *Policy on the Approval and Cyclical Review of Programs and other Curriculum*, was approved by the Senate of York University in October 2010.

1.2 Scope of application

York's responsibility for quality assurance extends to 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. These responsibilities also extend 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 (ITALs). For definitions of the inter-institutional arrangements please refer to the Guidelines for Intra-Institutional & Inter-Institutional Programs on the Quality Assurance website at <http://vpacademic.yorku.ca/viceprovost/QAP/procedures/>.

Each institution's Quality Assurance Process is ratified by the Quality Council whose work is supported by both an Appraisal Committee and an Audit Committee. The Council operates at arm's length from universities and the government to ensure its independence.

1.3 York University's Quality Assurance Procedures

The York University Quality Assurance Procedures reflects two principles: 1) the pursuit of academic quality is the University's highest academic objective; and 2) quality assurance is a responsibility shared by academic units, Faculty Councils and Senate. York University has a well-established commitment to academic quality. The two overarching themes identified in the 2005-2010 York University Academic Plan that informs all of the University specific planning objectives are: attaining the highest academic quality, and knowing ourselves and seeing how we are seen. These themes are carried forward in the White Paper (WP) that was endorsed by Senate in April 2010, which in turn provided the framework for the 2010- 2015 UAP.

The articulation of degree level expectations is central to York's approach to ensuring that our academic programs are of high quality compared to international standards and that the learning outcomes are clear to our students. A priority embedded in the approval of the YUQAP is to ensure that the degree level expectations have been articulated and are available to students in the case of all degree programs. Reviews are premised on the expectation that every program can be improved, and that regular evaluation directed towards improvement is a major responsibility of programs and the related departments/schools/faculties.

The York University Quality Assurance Procedures (YUQAP) comprises five distinct components based on the Quality Assurance Framework:

- The **Protocol for New Degree Program Approvals** applies to new undergraduate degrees, undergraduate honours specializations and majors (for which a similar specialization/major is not already approved), graduate degrees, joint degrees and intra/inter-institutional degree programs (dual credential, collaborative and combined degrees) when a new parent program at the University is being proposed in conjunction with the intra/inter-institutional degree). The Quality Assurance Framework defines a new program as brand new – that is, the program has substantially different program requirements and substantially different learning outcomes from those of any existing approved programs offered by the institution. New degree programs are externally reviewed as part of the process leading to institutional approval. Once approved by the institutional governance process, new programs are then reviewed by the Appraisal Committee of the Quality Council. The Council has the authority to approve or decline new program proposals.
- The **Protocol for New Programs with Expedited Approvals** applies to new graduate diplomas, new fields to existing graduate degrees, and joint degrees and intra/inter-

institutional degree programs (dual credential, collaborative and combined degrees) when a parent program already exists at York. These programs do not require external appraisal. Once approved by the institutional governance process, new programs are then reviewed by the Appraisal Committee of the Quality Council. The Council has the authority to approve or decline these proposals.

- **The Protocol for Major Modifications** is used to assure program quality where significant changes have been made to existing and previously approved programs, but where the program requirements and learning outcomes are not changed in ways that denote a truly new program. Major modifications are approved by the institutional governance process and are reported annually to the Quality Council. The procedures for the identification and approval of Major Modifications in YUQAP are subject to Quality Council ratification. See Section 5.1 for examples of changes that would fall under the Major Modifications Protocol.
- The **Protocol for Program Closure** specifies the process for closing programs. Program closures are approved through the institutional governance process and are reported annually to the Quality Council.
- The **Protocol for Cyclical Program Reviews** assesses the academic standards of existing undergraduate and graduate programs, including credit graduate diploma and undergraduate certificate programs, and assures their ongoing improvement. To the extent possible, undergraduate and graduate program reviews will be conducted concurrently.

In addition to the Protocols described in the YUQAP, the Quality Assurance website:

- a) specifies the proposal brief required for new program proposals, new program proposals with an expedited approval process, and major modifications;
- b) provides guidance on self-studies including the articulation of degree level expectations and examples of curricular mapping for degree level expectations that allow programs to assess:
 - i) the extent of curricular alignment with degree level expectations;
 - ii) how degree level expectations are being assessed in the curriculum; and
 - iii) the appropriateness of the teaching and learning strategies for achieving learning outcomes;
- c) identifies responsibilities for the collection, aggregation and distribution of data and outcome measures required for self-studies;
- d) outlines the processes for the selection of reviewers and scheduling of site visits;
- e) specifies the format required for external review reports;
- f) provides specifics for joint programs and other inter-institutional programs governed by the YUQAP;
- g) sets out the Rota for the conduct of undergraduate and graduate program reviews;
- h) provides definitions of terms as set out in the QAF; and
- i) offers contact information for support and assistance.

1.4 York University's Quality Assurance Procedures for Inter-institutional Programs

In the case of joint programs and other inter-institutional programs in which all partners are within Ontario, the Quality Council's standards will apply. The separately approved quality assurance protocols will apply to all elements of the programs irrespective of the partner offering them. Where partners are outside of Ontario, the elements of the programs contributed by partners outside of Ontario will be subject to the quality assurance processes in their respective jurisdictions. The Quality Council will maintain a registry of jurisdictions with similar standards to those of Ontario. In cases involving a jurisdiction not in the registry, the Quality Council will make a determination about the appropriate action to be taken on quality assurance.

The following criteria will apply:

- a) There will be one self-study brief for the purposes of the YUQAP that will specify how input from the faculty, staff and students at all partner institutions was received;
- b) The partner institutions will provide input on the external reviewers and selection of the internal reviewer;
- c) The site visit will involve all partner institutions although separate reviewers may be assigned to different partners/institutions;
- d) There will be one Reviewer Report and feedback will be solicited from all partner institutions including the respective Deans/Principal;
- e) The Final Assessment Report and Implementation Plan prepared with oversight from the resource Dean/Principal will incorporate input from each partner;
- f) The Summary Report and Implementation Plan will be made available at each institution (normally on the website unless available in a specific jurisdiction); and
- g) The Implementation Plan will include information on the monitoring process.