

## 6. THE PROTOCOL FOR CYCLICAL PROGRAM REVIEWS

### 6.1 Definition

The Protocol for the Cyclical Program Reviews assesses the academic standards of existing undergraduate and graduate programs, including graduate diplomas, and ensures that programs maintain the highest academic quality.

All undergraduate and graduate degree programs, certificates, and diplomas approved by the Senate of York University, including those offered in partnership, collaboration, or other such arrangement with other postsecondary institutions (i.e., colleges, universities, Institutes of Technology and Advanced Learning [ITALs]), are required to initiate a review every eight years, in accordance with the protocol, guidelines, and schedule set out in the YUQAP, the Policy on the Approval and Cyclical Review of Programs and other Curriculum, and the Quality Assurance Framework (QAF).

### 6.2 Administration and Authority for Cyclical Reviews

The Office of the Vice-Provost Academic shall have administrative responsibility for the cyclical review process and for establishing a Rota of reviews, which shall be submitted annually to the Joint Sub-Committee. The Vice-Provost Academic will commission the external reviewers in consultation with the relevant faculties/schools and ensure that the reviewers receive all relevant materials prior to the site visit. The Vice-Provost Academic shall provide advice to proponents and facilitate processes covered by this policy, consulting with the Dean of Graduate Studies as appropriate. Resources, including templates, guidance documents, and links to the QAF are posted on the YUQAP website.

The Vice-Provost Academic may, under exceptional circumstances, authorize a one-year extension of a cyclical review due to specific academic and logistical challenges, including efforts to align related undergraduate and graduate programs, newly introduced programs in units, and accreditation reviews. Similarly, the Vice-Provost Academic may require a program to launch a review in order to align with related programs.

The Joint Sub-Committee shall have authority for ensuring that cyclical reviews adhere to the protocol and shall monitor the timely implementation of improvements. The Joint Sub-Committee receives the Reviewer Report, along with all relevant documentation; it affirms the implementation plan, the Final Assessment Report, and the Follow-up Report. The reports are transmitted by the Joint Sub-Committee to the Committee of Academic Standards, Curriculum and Pedagogy (ASCP) and to the Committee on Academic Policy Planning and Resources (APPRC). The Vice-Provost Academic transmits the Final Assessment Report to the Dean or Principal, the program, and the Quality Council.

Academic programs under review are responsible for the preparation of all components of the Self-Study Brief and the site visit itinerary.

### 6.3 Programs and Review Schedule

The University's full complement of its undergraduate and certificate programs and its graduate and diploma programs are reviewed on a planned cycle (the Rota). A "program" is a Senate-approved sequence of courses or other components of study prescribed for the fulfillment of the requirements of a particular degree, certificate, or diploma and is considered to be the comprehensive body of studies required to graduate with a degree, certificate, or diploma in a particular discipline or interdisciplinary field of study. Units<sup>1</sup> that administer more than one program must conduct a full review of each, including all elements, as outlined below.

A cyclical review is publicly announced by posting the Rota on the Provost and Vice-President Academic website on Quality Assurance. It is the responsibility of the "unit" and program(s) under review to provide further communications to faculty members, staff, students, and other stakeholders, as may be appropriate.

Programs are reviewed on a regular basis but the interval between program reviews must not exceed eight years. Cyclical reviews of undergraduate programs will normally be conducted concurrently with reviews of graduate programs. Interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary graduate programs, as well as cognate programs offered at multiple campuses, may involve faculty members from several different academic units. A senior academic (typically a Chairperson or a Director) will act as the lead contact and be responsible for the local coordination, in consultation with relevant Directors of undergraduate and graduate programs.

Reviews may also be aligned with professional accreditation. Note that university reviews are not waived because an externally commissioned review, such as an accreditation, has recently been conducted. In some cases, the University process may be streamlined by aligning the requirements of the internally and externally commissioned reviews and supplementing documentation as necessary. The review cycle will include all dual credential or joint degree programs, multi-disciplinary, interdisciplinary, second-entry, multi-sited and inter-institutional programs, and all modes of delivery. Inter-institutional programs offered in partnership with other postsecondary institutions must establish a review process.

### 6.4 Commissioning Officer for Reviews

Reviews of academic programs are commissioned by the Vice-Provost Academic in consultation with the relevant Dean or Principal. A database containing the full schedule of all program reviews is maintained in the Office of the Vice-Provost Academic. The Vice-Provost Academic will seek input from the partner institution(s) regarding the commissioning of the review in cases where the program is offered with other postsecondary education institutions through formal collaborative and/or affiliation agreements.

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1 The term "unit" should be taken to include departments, schools, and Faculties (i.e., those bodies responsible for administering academic programs).

## 6.5 Process Overview

The YUQAP for the conduct of Cyclical Program Reviews has five principal components.

- a) Self-Study Brief, including course descriptions and CVs of full-time faculty and CVs or bios of part-time/adjunct faculty
- b) Review Report with recommendations on program quality improvement
- c) Responses each from the program and from the Dean or Principal to the Review Report recommendations
- d) A Final Assessment Report which includes an institutional implementation plan for recommendations, including timelines
- e) Follow-up Report on the Implementation Plan

### 6.5.1 Dual Credential, Joint, and Collaborative Programs

The Cyclical Program Reviews of dual credential, joint, and collaborative programs will include the following:

- One Self-Study Brief
- Input from partners on external reviewers and the selection of reviewers
- Site visits at partner institutions
- A combined Review Report, on which feedback from all institutions will be sought
- A combined Final Assessment Report and Institutional Implementation Plan, which will be made available at each institution
- Follow-up Report with input from each institution

## 6.6 Self-Study: Internal Program Perspective

Relevant Chairs, Directors, Undergraduate Program Directors, and Graduate Program Directors will collaborate in the preparation a single omnibus report even if the documentation has separate sections addressing the undergraduate and graduate programs.

### 6.6.1 Contents

The unit and/or program prepares a Self-Study Brief that is broad-based, reflective, forward-looking, and includes critical analysis. It is an assessment of the strengths of the program(s) and opportunities for strengthening the program(s) in relation to the quality of student experience and the reputation of the program(s). During preparation for the Self-Study Brief, the program should consider the appropriateness of the program(s) in the context of current trends in the field, relevant academic plans, and critical reflection on the program(s) learning outcomes and assessment. Undertaking the self-study involves faculty members, staff, students, and other stakeholders such as alumni or industry partners, and articulating their participation in the process. The Self-Study Brief must address and document the terms of reference and program evaluation criteria that will be provided to the reviewers (see the Self-Study template on the YUQAP website).

The Self-Study Brief describes the following:

- a) Consistency of the program learning outcomes with the institution's mission and degree level expectations, and an articulation of how the learning outcomes are communicated to students and how the achievement of those outcomes is assessed and documented.
- b) Participation of program faculty, staff, and students in the self-study process and how their views were obtained and taken into account.
- c) Program-related data and measures of performance, including applicable provincial, national, and professional standards (where available).
- d) Reflection on the information and trends revealed by the data provided and/or collected.
- e) Review criteria and quality indicators identified in Section 6.7.7.
- f) Concerns and recommendations raised in previous reviews and an outline of the program's responses.
- g) Areas identified through the self-study process that require improvement.
- h) Areas identified that hold promise for enhancement.
- i) Academic services that directly contribute to the academic quality of each program under review.

The Self-Study Brief includes course descriptions and CVs of full-time faculty and CVs or biographies of part-time/adjunct faculty. For graduate programs, the Self-Study Brief includes a list, with rank, of those appointed to the Faculty of Graduate Studies, and the criteria for appointment.

The Dean's or Principal's Agenda of Concerns will be submitted to the Vice-Provost Academic along with the Self-Study Brief.

The documentation for the reviewers will be reviewed and approved by the Office of the Vice-Provost Academic to ensure that it meets the core elements of a self-study and program evaluation criteria. The Vice-Provost Academic will consult with the Dean of Graduate Studies as needed.

## 6.7 Evaluation Criteria and Quality Indicators

The minimum evaluation criteria for the cyclical review of programs as defined by the QAF are set out below. Institutional criteria aligned with the University's priorities may be included in the Self-Study template.

There are several widely used quality indicators or proxies for reflecting program quality, and institutions are encouraged by the QAF to include available measures of their own which they see as best achieving that goal. Outcome measures of student performance and achievement are of particular interest, but there are also important input and process measures which are known to have a strong association with quality outcomes. This section aligns with the most recent QAF wording and may be updated as the QAF is refined.

### 6.7.1 Objectives

- a) Consistency of the program with the institution's mission and academic plans.

- b) Clarity and appropriateness of the program's requirements and associated learning outcomes in addressing their alignment with the degree level expectations.

#### 6.7.2 Admission Requirements

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

#### 6.7.3 Structure

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

#### 6.7.4 Program Content

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

#### 6.7.5 Experiential Education

Appropriateness and sustainability of experiential components which may include a wide variety of options, including classroom-based activities, community-based learning, or internships and co-op placements.

#### 6.7.6 Mode of Delivery

Appropriateness of the proposed mode of delivery to meet the intended program learning outcomes.

#### 6.7.7 Assessment of Teaching and Learning

- a) Appropriateness and effectiveness of the means of assessment, especially in the students' final year of the program, in clearly demonstrating achievement of the Degree Level Expectations as articulated by the program learning outcomes.
- b) Completeness of plans for communicating to students the assessment of program learning outcomes, at appropriate levels, using appropriate methods.

- c) Completeness of plans to document and assess the program's achievement of its stated learning and student outcomes.
- d) Plans for addressing courses that are determined to have significant drop and failure rates.

#### 6.7.8 Resources for all Programs

- a) Participation of a sufficient number of appropriately qualified faculty members who are competent to teach and/or supervise in the program. Information about class sizes, the percentage of classes taught by permanent or non-permanent (contractual) faculty members, the participation and qualifications of part-time or temporary faculty members should be included.
- b) Evidence that there are adequate resources to sustain the quality of scholarship produced by undergraduate students as well as graduate students' scholarship and research activities, including library support, information technology support, and laboratory access.
- c) Adequacy of the administrative unit's planned utilization of existing human, physical, and financial resources, and any institutional commitment to supplement those resources, to support the program.

#### 6.7.9 Resources for Graduate Programs

- a) Evidence that faculty members have the recent research or professional/clinical expertise needed to sustain the program, promote innovation, and foster an appropriate intellectual climate, including evidence, where appropriate, of funding honours and awards.
- b) Where appropriate to the program, evidence that financial assistance for students will be sufficient to ensure adequate quality and numbers of students, including international students.
- c) Evidence of how supervisory loads will be distributed, and the qualifications and appointment status of faculty who will provide instruction and supervision and student mentoring.
- d) Evidence that students' time-to-completion is both monitored and managed in relation to the program's defined length and requirements.
- e) Sufficient number of graduate-level courses that allow students to meet the requirement that they take two-thirds of their courses at this level.

#### 6.7.10 Students

Trends, challenges, and opportunities for students include applications and registrations, retention or attrition rates, time-to-completion, final-year academic achievement, graduation rates, academic awards, and student in-course reports on teaching.

For graduate students, trends, challenges, and opportunities include rates of graduation, employment following six months and two years after graduation, post-graduate study, "skills match," and alumni reports on program quality when available.

Reviewers will be instructed that these items may not be available and applicable to all programs.

#### 6.7.11 Quality Enhancement

Quality enhancement of programs includes initiatives taken to improve the quality of the program and the associated learning and teaching environment, taking into consideration the recommendations from the previous review.

#### 6.8 Reviewer Selection and Process

The Vice-Provost Academic is responsible for contacting, selecting, and vetting potential external reviewers. The senior academic lead (typically a Chair or a Director) is responsible for submitting recommendations for reviewers to the Dean or Principal. Programs and Dean(s)/Principal will normally nominate eight reviewers which are to be ranked by the Dean(s)/Principal and submitted to the Vice-Provost Academic. Consultation should be undertaken with the relevant Director or Chair, Graduate Program Director, and Undergraduate Program Director if the undergraduate and graduate programs are being reviewed together to ensure that the needs of both programs are addressed. Further, if there is more than one department or school involved either at one campus or at different campuses, consultations should be undertaken to produce a comprehensive list of reviewers that is supported by the different program(s) and/or unit(s).

A list of suggested reviewers will be submitted to the Vice-Provost Academic who will finalize the selection of the reviewers who are qualified by discipline and experience to review the programs. In the case of graduate programs, the selection will be made in consultation with the Dean of Graduate Studies.

##### 6.8.1 Number of Reviewers

Normally the evaluation will be conducted by a Review Committee composed of at least:

- One external reviewer for an undergraduate program
- Two external reviewers for a graduate program
- Two external reviewers for the concurrent review of an undergraduate and graduate program
- One further reviewer who is either from within the university but from outside the discipline (or interdisciplinary group) and engaged in the program or external to the university

See Section 3.2.4 for requirements regarding external reviewers.

Additional discretionary members may be assigned to be reviewers if required by the complexity of the program(s) or other factors.

##### 6.8.2 Communication with the Reviewers

The Vice-Provost Academic will communicate with the reviewers prior to the commencement of the site visit and/or start of the review process to establish a mutually agreeable date for the site visit and to ensure that the reviewers:

- a) Understand their role and obligations.
- b) Identify and commend the program's notably strong and creative attributes.
- c) Describe the program's respective strengths, areas for improvement, and opportunities for enhancement.
- d) Recommend specific steps to be taken to improve the program, distinguishing between those the program can itself take and those that require external action.
- e) Recognize the institution's autonomy to determine priorities for funding, space, and faculty allocation.
- f) Respect the confidentiality required for all aspects of the review process.
- g) That the reviewers agree to the timelines of the process.

#### 6.8.3 Documentation Provided to the Reviewers

The external reviewers will receive the following documents prior to the site visit either in hard copy or through online access to the unit website and related links (see the YUQAP website for further information):

- University planning documents (University Academic Plan, Faculty Plans, for example)
- Self-Study Brief along with the Dean's or Principal's Agenda of Concerns
- Faculty CVs
- Other materials deemed relevant by the program, in consultation with the Vice-Provost Academic
- The Review Report template

#### 6.8.4 Site Visit

The senior academic lead in the unit is responsible for arranging the itinerary for the site visit prior to commencement of the visit. The reviewers should visit together and attend all relevant campuses.

The Vice-Provost Academic and, in the case of reviews involving a graduate program, the Dean of Graduate Studies shall attend. During the site visit they will meet with reviewers at the beginning of their visit, and provisions must be made for them to meet with faculty members, students, administrative staff, and senior program administrators, including the relevant Dean or Principal.

#### 6.8.5 Reviewer Report

The Reviewer Report is normally submitted within two months following the site visit to the Vice-Provost Academic. The Review Report will address the substance of the self-study and the evaluation criteria set out in Section 6.7. The Vice-Provost Academic will have an opportunity to identify any clear factual errors. The Review Report will be provided to the program lead and Dean or Principal by the Vice-Provost Academic.



In the case of an unsatisfactory or incomplete review report, the Vice-Provost will work with the reviewers to ensure a viable report is provided.

## 6.9 Institutional Response

### 6.9.1 Unit Response

The senior academic lead is responsible for preparing the formal response to the Review Report and recommendations, in consultation with other members of the unit, including any relevant Directors of undergraduate and/or graduate programs. The response shall provide the response to the Review Committee's report(s) and recommendations.

The unit's response is submitted to the Vice-Provost Academic.

### 6.9.2 Dean's or Principal's Response

Following receipt and review of the unit's response, the Dean or Principal of the Faculty provides a response and proposes actions, which include the following:

- a) Identification of those responsible for acting on and monitoring those recommendations.
- b) The resources, financial and otherwise, that will be provided to support the implementation of the recommendations; and identification of what other supports are required from the institutional level.
- c) A proposed timeline for the implementation of those recommendations.

### 6.9.3 Implementation Plan and Final Assessment Report

The Vice-Provost Academic drafts an implementation plan that identifies recommendations to be implemented by the program, with specified resources, timelines and support, as well as recommendations that will not be pursued, with a rationale.

The Joint Sub-Committee reviews the following documentation:

- Self-Study Brief along with the Dean's or Principal's Agenda of Concerns
- Review Report
- Program's response to the Review Report
- Dean's or Principal's response

The Vice-Provost Academic writes the Final Assessment Report, which includes the implementation plan, and an Executive Summary of the FAR. These are confirmed by the Joint Sub-Committee

The Final Assessment Report is a summary of the external evaluation and internal responses and assessments which:

- a) Identifies any significant strengths of the program
- b) Identifies opportunities for program improvement and enhancement
- c) Sets out and prioritizes the plan for the external reviewer recommendations that are confirmed for implementation

- d) May include a confidential section (where personnel issues need to be addressed)
- e) Provides an Executive Summary, exclusive of any such confidential information, and suitable for publication on the YUQAP website

#### 6.9.4 Reporting Requirements and Access

The Final Assessment Report (excluding all confidential information) shall be forwarded to the parent Senate committees, ASCP and APPR. The ASCP transmits the Report to the program(s) and Dean(s)/Principal as well as Faculty Councils and Senate for their information.

The Executive Summary of the Final Assessment Report, which includes the Implementation Plan resulting from the review, is provided to the Board of Governors through the Board Academic Resources Committee.

The Executive Summary is posted on the website of the Vice-Provost Academic. Information provided to the program for the self-study and the Self-Study Brief, as well as the Report of the Review Committee, will be available only to the program, the Dean or Principal, and the relevant committees involved in the cyclical review.

The Office of the Vice-Provost Academic transmits the Final Assessment Report to the Quality Council and maintains an administrative record to track the subsequent eighteen-month follow-up reports.

The Follow-up Report, normally due eighteen months after the Final Assessment Report is completed, is provided in a written report on the Implementation Plan from the Dean or Principal. The Implementation Plan may identify more frequent or earlier or specified reports. Upon review and confirmation by the Joint Sub-Committee, the Follow-up Report is transmitted to the relevant Faculty Council(s).