

3. THE PROTOCOL FOR NEW DEGREE PROGRAM APPROVALS

3.1 Definition

The Protocol for New Degree Program Approvals applies to new programs where a similar option has not already been approved. New programs include:

- Undergraduate degrees
- Undergraduate honours specializations and majors
- Graduate degrees

This protocol covers inter- and intra-institutional degree programs where a degree is being proposed.

A new program has substantially different program requirements and substantially different learning outcomes from those of any existing approved programs. A change of name, on its own, does not constitute a new program, nor does the inclusion of a new program of specialization where another with the same designation already exists (e.g., a new honours program where a major with the same designation already exists).

The Office of the Vice-Provost Academic will determine whether a change falls under the protocol for major modifications or new programs.

3.2 Initial Institutional Process

The approval process for the introduction of new undergraduate and graduate degree programs is set out below.

3.2.1 Early Notice of Intent

Prior to the development of a proposal, proponents shall submit to the Vice-Provost Academic a Notice of Intent, signed by the Deans or Principals of the relevant Faculties, providing a brief statement about the proposal, a summary of new or reallocated resources, and details about preliminary consultations undertaken and those anticipated.

The purpose of this required step is to allow the Vice-Provost Academic to:

- Provide input and ensure consultation with other Faculties and with the Deans or Principals
- Consult with the Dean of Graduate Studies as needed
- Facilitate consultations among interested parties at the earliest opportunity
- Ensure alignment with academic plans.

The Vice-Provost Academic is authorized to determine whether the proponents will be authorized to proceed with the development of a Proposal Brief. Authorization to proceed with a proposal does not constitute formal support.

The Notice of Intent form is posted on the YUQAP website.

3.2.2 Development of the New Program Brief

Once authorized, the proponents proceed to develop the New Program Brief with oversight from the Office of the Dean or Principal and with support from the Office of the Vice-Provost Academic, the Teaching Commons, and other relevant bodies. Following approval by the Faculty curriculum committee, the Faculty's Dean or Principal provides a full statement of support subject to revision pending the review of the proposal. The Office of the Vice-Provost Academic reviews the proposal for compliance with the evaluation criteria (see Section 3.3). The Provost and Vice-President Academic provides a full statement of support that is provisional and subject to revision pending the review of the proposal.

3.2.3 External Review of New Program Proposals

The external review of a new undergraduate degree or program will normally be conducted following approval of proposals by the Curriculum Committee of Faculty Councils but before consideration by individual Faculty Councils. The external review of new graduate program proposals requires an on-site visit. The external review of new undergraduate program proposals will normally be conducted on-site, but, under exceptional circumstances and with agreement from the external reviewer, a review may be conducted through an alternative off-site option.

3.2.4 External Reviewers

The Vice-Provost Academic is responsible for commissioning external appraisals and is responsible for contacting, selecting, and vetting potential external reviewers. 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. There will be at least one reviewer for new undergraduate programs and two for new graduate programs. External reviewers will normally be associate or full professors, or the equivalent, with program management experience, a strong track record as academic scholars, and have previous academic administrative experience. They will be at arm's-length from the program under development. The York University External Reviewer Nomination Form, posted on the YUQAP website, defines arm's-length and the nomination process.

3.2.5 Appraisal Report

The reviewers will normally provide one report that appraises the standards and quality of the proposed program, addressing the criteria set out in Section 3.3, including the faculty members associated with the program and the material resources and facilities. They will identify any clearly innovative aspects of the proposed program and make recommendations on any essential or otherwise desirable modifications to it. The Appraisal Report will normally be due within two weeks of the site visit.

The Quality Council Appraisal process can be found here: <http://oucqa.ca/framework/2-3-initial-appraisal-process/>. The External Reviewers template is posted on the YUQAP website.

3.2.6 Internal Responses

Responses to the Appraisal Report and recommendations are required from both the proposing academic unit and the relevant Dean or Principal. The proponents may modify the program proposal at this time. The program response, including a summary of changes, if any, to the proposal will be provided by the proponents. The Dean or Principal and the Office of the Provost and Vice-President Academic will provide either modified statements of support or statements confirming that no modification is warranted. The Vice-Provost Academic will determine, at this point, if the program proposal should be returned to an earlier committee or if it may proceed directly to the Faculty Council(s).

3.2.7 Institutional Approval

Based on the Proposal Brief, the Appraisal Report, and the internal responses to both, the program proposal proceeds to Faculty Council, and then to the Senate Committee on Academic Standards, Curriculum and Pedagogy (ASCP) for its approval. ASCP determines whether the proposal satisfies the new program evaluation criteria or needs further modification or additional information.

Upon approval by ASCP, proposals are forwarded to the Senate Academic Policy, Planning and Research Committee (APPRC) for concurrence and then forwarded to Senate by ASCP.

Note: It is possible that a determination will be made at this point, or at any other point, not to proceed with a proposal. Communication to proponents about such a decision will come from the Vice-Provost Academic or, if initiated by proponents, be communicated to the Vice-Provost Academic.

3.2.8 Quality Council Secretariat and Other Approvals

Following Senate's approval of the proposal, the Office of the Provost and Vice-President Academic submits the Proposal Brief, together with all required reports and documents, to the Quality Council Secretariat.

The Office of the Vice-Provost Academic also coordinates program approval requests to the Ministry of University and Colleges.

3.2.9 Announcement of New Programs

Following Senate's approval of a new program and the submission of the New Program Brief to the Quality Council, and subject to approval by the Office of the Provost and Vice-President Academic, the University may announce its intention to offer the new undergraduate or graduate program in advance of approval by the Quality Council. In such instances, prospective students are advised that offers of admission to a new program may be made only after the University receives confirmation that the Quality Council has approved the program.

3.3 Evaluation Criteria

New Program Briefs must address the evaluation criteria in the Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) as set out below.

3.3.1 Objectives

- a) Consistency with the institution's mission and academic plans.
- b) Clarity and appropriateness of the program's learning outcomes and associated assessment and course requirements in addressing the institution's own undergraduate or graduate degree structure and degree level expectations.
- c) Appropriateness of degree nomenclature. Note: Degree types are approved by Senate and require two meetings for approval: an initial notice of motion and then the motion to establish the new degree type.

3.3.2 Admission Requirements

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

3.3.3 Structure

- a) Appropriateness of the program's structure and regulations to meet specified program learning outcomes and degree level expectations.
- b) Evidence of a program structure and faculty members' research that will ensure the intellectual quality of the student experience.
- c) For graduate programs, a clear rationale for program length that ensures that the program requirements can be reasonably completed within the proposed time period.

3.3.4 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, a clear indication of the nature and suitability of the major research requirements for degree completion.
- d) Evidence that graduate students in the program are required to take a minimum of two-thirds of the course requirements from among graduate level courses.

3.3.5 Mode of Delivery

Appropriateness of the proposed mode of delivery to meet the intended program learning outcomes and degree level expectations.

3.3.6 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.

3.3.7 Assessment of Teaching and Learning

- a) Appropriateness of the proposed methods for the assessment of student achievement of the Degree Level Expectations as articulated in the program learning outcomes.
- b) Completeness of plans for documenting and demonstrating the level of performance of students, consistent with the program learning outcomes and degree level expectations.
- c) Evidence of plans and the commitment to provide the necessary resources in step with the implementation of the program.
- d) Evidence of plans and the commitment to support the development and supervision of experiential learning opportunities (if required).

3.3.8 Resources for all Programs

- a) Adequacy of the administrative unit's planned utilization of existing human, electronic, physical, and financial resources, and any institutional commitment to supplement those resources, to support the program.
- b) Evidence and planning for adequate numbers and quality of faculty and staff to achieve the goals of the program.
- c) Participation of a sufficient number and quality of faculty members who are competent to teach and/or supervise in the program, including the role of adjunct and part-time faculty members.
- d) Indication of planned/anticipated class sizes.
- e) Evidence that there are adequate resources to sustain the quality of scholarship produced by undergraduate students' and graduate students' scholarship and research activities, including library support, information technology support, and laboratory access.
- f) Definition and use of indicators that provide evidence of quality of the faculty members (e.g., qualifications, research, innovation, and scholarly record; appropriateness of collective faculty members' expertise to contribute substantively to the proposed program).
- g) Indication of whether the new program is intended to be funded or to be a full-cost recovery program.

3.3.9 Resources for Graduate Programs Only

- 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.
- b) Where appropriate to the program, evidence that financial assistance for students will be sufficient to ensure adequate quality and numbers of students.

- c) Evidence of how supervisory loads will be distributed, and the qualifications and appointment status of faculty members who will provide instruction and supervision.

3.3.10 Other Quality Indicators

Programs may identify other quality indicators not included above.

3.4 Appraisal Process by the Quality Council

The Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) outlines the processes followed by the Appraisal Committee for new program proposals in detail. This includes the initial appraisal, the process for requesting additional information, decisions, and the appeal process.

The Quality Council makes one of the following decisions about new programs:

- a) Approval to commence
- b) Approval to commence, with report
- c) Deferral for up to one year, affording the institution an opportunity to amend and resubmit its Proposal Brief
- d) Refusal of program proposal

The outcomes of an appraisal process will be conveyed to the Office of the Vice-Provost Academic.

Where a report is required, the Office of the Vice-Provost Academic will, in consultation with the Dean or Principal, prepare and submit the report to the Quality Council.

A link to the Quality Assurance Framework and E-Guide can be found on the YUQAP website.

3.5 Subsequent Process

3.5.1 Ontario Government Funding

Program proposals are submitted, as required, to the relevant Ontario Ministry by the Office of the Vice-Provost Academic. The Notice of Approval by the Quality Council is forwarded to the Ministry.

3.5.2 Monitoring of New Programs

New programs are to be monitored by the academic unit and the respective Deans or Principals responsible for delivering the program, including an annual assessment of data such as admissions and enrolment trends, retention patterns, and faculty resources. Significant concerns will be relayed to the Vice-Provost Academic.

3.5.3 First Cyclical Review

The first cyclical review for any new program must be initiated no more than eight years after the date of the program's initial enrolment and normally in accordance with York University's program review schedule (the Rota).

3.5.4 Implementation Window

After a new program is approved to commence by the Quality Council, the program will begin within thirty-six months of that date of approval; otherwise, the approval will lapse. Programs shall inform the Office of the Vice-Provost Academic of any change in plans for the start of a program.