



2.2 Approval of New Undergraduate and Graduate Programs and Major and Minor Modifications to Existing Programs

WILFRID LAURIER UNIVERSITY

Waterloo | Brantford | Kitchener | Toronto

Approving Authority:	Senate
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Office of Accountability:	Vice-President: Academic and Provost
Administrative Responsibility:	Quality Assurance Office

I. Objectives

A rigorous and transparent system for approving new undergraduate and graduate academic programs demonstrates accountability to the public and to current and prospective students. Within the university's commitment to the principle of academic freedom, the approval process should be open, objective, analytical, and constructive. The components of the program approval process have been mandated by the Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance (Quality Council) of the Council of Ontario Universities. Wilfrid Laurier University's Institutional Quality Assurance Procedures, comprising this policy and [policy 2.1](#), were ratified by the Quality Council on June 20, 2011 (with re-ratification on November 15th, 2012 and March 13, 2014). The Institutional Quality Assurance Procedures are subject to approval upon revision and will be audited by the Quality Council on an eight-year cycle.

As set out in the [Quality Assurance Framework](#) the approval process is designed to evaluate the proposed program's objectives, requirements, structure, content, and resources as described in Section C below. Policy 2.2 pertains to the approval of the following categories of proposal at Wilfrid Laurier University and its affiliated and federated colleges:

1. New undergraduate degree programs
2. New graduate degree programs
3. New collaborative or joint programs
4. New major(s) in a undergraduate program
5. New field(s) in a graduate program
6. New for-credit graduate diplomas of one of three types:
 - a. Type 1: awarded when a candidate admitted to a master's program leaves that program after completing a defined proportion of the requirements;
 - b. Type 2: offered in conjunction with a graduate degree;
 - c. Type 3: a stand-alone, direct entry program
7. Major modifications to existing graduate and undergraduate programs
8. Minor curriculum changes (both substantive and editorial).

II. Institutional Quality Assurance Procedures

A. Responsibilities

- The administration of the approval process for new degree programs, new for-credit graduate diplomas, and major modifications to existing programs is the responsibility of the [vice-president: academic and provost](#) who is the sole contact between the institution and the Quality Council.

- The development of proposal documents for all undergraduate and graduate programs is overseen by the [Quality Assurance Office](#) in conjunction with the associate vice-president: teaching and learning, the Dean of Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (for graduate programs), and the appropriate Faculty dean (for undergraduate programs).
- The [Program Review Sub-Committee](#) of the [Senate Academic Planning Committee](#), supported by the Quality Assurance Office, is responsible for managing the program approval process. This committee is chaired by the associate vice-president: teaching and learning. On the recommendation of the associate vice-president: teaching and learning, the Senate Academic Planning Committee will appoint four regular faculty members and one dean experienced in program development and review. The term of appointment will be for three years, renewable once.
- The [Senate Finance Committee](#) is responsible for considering the business plan and financial implications of the new program. This committee is constituted in accordance with the Senate By-Laws & Regulations and comprises: the president; the vice-president: academic; the vice-president: finance and administration; the vice-president: research; one academic dean or the university librarian, chosen amongst themselves; eight faculty members including at least two members of Senate and no more than one member from each of the Faculty of Arts, the Faculty of Education, the Faculty of Science, the School of Business and Economics, the Faculty of Social Work, Faculty of Human and Social Sciences, Faculty of Liberal Arts, and the Faculty of Music; one academic librarian; one member of the administrative staff; one undergraduate student; and, one graduate student.
- The [Senate Academic Planning Committee](#) is responsible for the final recommendation of approval of a new program to Senate. This committee is constituted in accordance with the Senate By-Laws & Regulations and comprises: the vice-president: academic; three ex-officio members of Senate (selected by the following officers from among their number: the academic deans, the dean of the Waterloo Lutheran Seminary, and the university librarian); one graduate student chosen by the WLU Graduate Students' Association; one undergraduate student selected from among their number by the student members of Senate; one faculty member elected by the seminary who is a senator; eight faculty members (one from each of the Faculty of Arts, Faculty of Education, Faculty of Science, School of Business and Economics, Faculty of Music, Faculty of Social Work, Faculty of Human and Social Sciences, and Faculty of Liberal Arts) elected by the University Faculty Council, two of whom must be senators. Two of the ex-officio members of Senate shall be Deans of Faculties with undergraduate programs. The vice-president: academic shall chair the committee.

B. Steps in the Approval Process for New Degree Programs and New Majors in Undergraduate Programs

(See also, Appendix A: Flow Chart for New Program Approvals)

1. The first step in the new program development process is to prepare a [Statement of Intent](#) and present it to the Divisional/Faculty Council for review. The Statement of Intent (accompanied by a letter of support from the relevant dean(s)) should then be submitted to the Senate Academic Planning Committee for approval.
2. New program proposals shall be prepared by a program curriculum committee or like body after consultation with students and other relevant communities. These communities may include academic departments or programs within the university, as well as stakeholders in the broader community. One author whose responsibility it is to assemble all material and shepherd a proposal through the various approval bodies must be identified and recorded on the document. This author may be a chair or program coordinator or other designated lead person. In the case of joint programs involving other institutions, one proposal may be prepared for all participating institutions' review bodies as long as the information required by this policy is included. Program curriculum committees may be developed *de novo* in order to prepare proposals for new programs without a pre-existing home in an academic unit.

3. Once completed, the proposal shall be reviewed and approved by the department or equivalent curriculum committee. Proposals shall be approved by department or equivalent councils prior to being forwarded to divisional councils.
4. The proposal shall be reviewed and recommended in accordance with usual department/program/faculty procedures for curriculum, and then approved by the Faculty, school, or federated college. A proposal for a graduate program must also be reviewed and approved by Graduate Faculty Council. Program proposals will be brought forward by the dean of the Faculty responsible. Graduate program proposals shall be presented by the Dean of the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies.
5. A full proposal shall be submitted by the appropriate dean to the Program Review Sub-Committee to assess its completeness and appropriateness relative to the university's mission, academic plan, and standards of quality. This sub-committee shall decide if the proposal is ready for external review and communicate its decision to the Senate Academic Planning Committee.
6. The Program Review Sub-Committee shall review the program's suggestions for external reviewers and select a review committee from the names supplied or request additional nominees. Reviewers must meet the qualifications and requirements specified in section E below.
7. After external review and a response to the External Reviewers' Report by the program and the relevant dean(s), the Senate Academic Planning Committee shall review the complete program proposal package and make a recommendation to Senate.
8. The Senate Finance Committee shall assess the resource implications of the proposed program, and make a recommendation to Senate.
9. Senate is responsible for approving the program proposal.
10. Following Senate approval, a complete program proposal package shall be submitted to the Quality Council of the Council of Ontario Universities for approval.

Subject to approval by the vice-president: academic, the university may announce its intention to offer a new undergraduate or graduate program in advance of approval by the Quality Council. When such announcements are made in advance of Quality Council approval, they must contain the following statement: "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."

11. The chair or co-ordinator of a new program shall submit a brief annual report to the Program Review Sub-Committee at the end of the second and fourth year of an undergraduate program or at the end of the first two years for a master's program and three years for a doctoral program. This report shall include enrolment numbers by year and a comment on the adherence to the goals of the program as set out in the initial proposal.

C. Evaluation Criteria

Prior to submitting a Proposal Brief to the Quality Council for appraisal, the university will evaluate any new programs against the following criteria:

1. Objectives of the program

- a. Consistency with Wilfrid Laurier University's [vision, mission, values](#) and [Academic Plan](#).

- b. Clarity and appropriateness of the program's requirements and program-level learning outcomes addressing Laurier's [undergraduate \(UDLEs\) or graduate \(GDLEs\) degree level expectations](#)).
- c. Consistency with provincial, national, international and professional standards (if applicable).
- d. Appropriateness of degree nomenclature considering disciplinary traditions and requirements.

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, including minimum grade point average, additional languages or portfolios or creative work, along with how the program recognizes prior work or learning experience (consult the [undergraduate and graduate academic calendars](#) for minimum university requirements).

3. Structure

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

4. Curriculum

- a. Ways in which the curriculum addresses the current state of the discipline or area of study.
- b. Employment of 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. These include thesis and major research paper options and also course components designed for the development of critical and analytical skills.
- d. For graduate programs, course offerings designed to ensure that each student in the program is able to meet the Quality Council requirement that a minimum of two-thirds of required coursework consist of graduate-level courses.

5. Mode(s) of delivery

Appropriateness of the proposed mode(s) of delivery to meet the intended program-level learning outcomes and degree level expectations: e.g., classroom format, online, blended, community service, problem-based, compressed part-time, multi-campus, inter-institutional.

6. Assessment methodologies

- a. Description of the assessment methodologies that will be used to evaluate student learning within the program.
- b. Explanation of the alignment between these assessment methodologies and the intended program-level learning outcomes and degree level expectations.
- c. Explanation of how the program will measure and document successful achievement of program-level learning outcomes and degree level expectations.

7. Resources for all programs

- a. Adequacy of the administrative unit's planned utilization of existing human, physical and financial resources (indicating, where appropriate, if the program will be cost recovery) and any institutional commitment to supplement those resources, to support the program (see [budget template](#)).
- b. Participation of a sufficient number of faculty who are competent to teach and/or supervise in the program. Faculty participating in graduate programs must be appointed to the [Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies](#).
- c. Evidence that there are adequate resources to sustain the quality of students' scholarship and research activities, including library support, information technology support, and laboratory access.

8. Resources specific to graduate programs

- a. Evidence that faculty have the recent research or creative/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 who will provide instruction and supervision. Faculty participating in a graduate program must be appointed to the [Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies](#).

9. Resources specific to undergraduate programs

Evidence of and planning for:

- a. adequate numbers and quality of faculty and staff to achieve the goals of the program or the commitment to provide the necessary resources in step with the implementation of the program;
- b. the role of adjunct and part-time faculty;
- c. anticipated class sizes;
- d. provision of supervision of experiential learning opportunities (if applicable).

10. Quality and other indicators

- a. Evidence of the quality of the faculty, with reference to qualifications, research, innovation and scholarly record; appropriateness of collective faculty expertise to contribute substantively to the proposed program.
- b. Evidence of a program structure and faculty research that will ensure the intellectual quality of the student experience.

D. Program Proposal Brief

The [template](#) for new program proposals must be used to prepare the brief. Proposals for new degree programs (categories 1, 2, and 4 in section I, Objectives) follow **all** of the following procedures. For proposals for new collaborative programs, new graduate fields, and new graduate diplomas (categories 3, 5 and 6) proceed to step H below (Program Review Sub-Committee Recommendation to the Senate Academic Planning Committee).

E. External Reviewers

External review is required *only* for new graduate and undergraduate program proposals (including new undergraduate majors).

The academic unit(s) responsible for the proposed program shall submit to the Quality Assurance Office the names and contact information of and rationale for those they wish to nominate as reviewers, as specified here:

- at least four tenured associate or full professors at Laurier from outside the academic unit who are recognized as excellent teachers and scholars, and who are known for their objectivity and judgment; and
- at least eight associate or full professors from other North American universities who are within the discipline. Normally, four of these will be from universities outside Ontario. These nominees also must be recognized as excellent teachers and scholars, and at least two of them must have academic administrative experience. These nominees must not have any past or current formal affiliation with the unit or with members of the unit (e.g., PhD supervisor, co-author) and must be in compliance with the university's [Conflict of Interest policy](#). The nominees may be grouped into categories reflecting different areas or fields within the discipline, with the request that at least one member from each category be selected.
- if appropriate for the program being reviewed, a list of at least four representatives of industry, the professions, and/or practical training programs

In keeping with the requirement that reviewers must be at arm's-length, the academic unit(s) shall not contact the reviewers directly but shall submit the names of prospective reviewers to the Quality Assurance Office. The Quality Assurance Office shall contact the nominees to determine their interest and availability and collect the information to complete the required Volume III template.

For joint programs, the university shall consult with the office of the vice-president: academic and provost, or equivalent, at partner institutions.

From the lists of nominees, the Program Review Sub-Committee shall select at least one internal reviewer from outside the academic unit(s) proposing the program and one external reviewer for undergraduate programs, and two external reviewers for graduate programs. If the Sub-Committee is not satisfied with the appropriateness of the nominees, they may request additional names from the academic unit. The Sub-Committee shall submit the list of reviewers to the Senate Academic Planning Committee for information.

The associate vice-president: teaching and learning shall contact the nominees to confirm their role and to schedule the site visit. It is the responsibility of the associate vice-president: teaching and learning to ensure that the reviewers will:

- a. understand their role and obligations;
- b. identify and commend the proposal's notably strong and creative attributes;
- c. describe the proposal's respective strengths, areas for improvement, and opportunities for enhancement;
- d. recommend specific steps to be taken to improve the proposal, distinguishing between those the program can itself take and those that require external action;
- e. recognize the University's autonomy to determine priorities for funding, space, and faculty allocation;
- f. respect the confidentiality required for all aspects of the review process.

These expectations shall be conveyed to the reviewers in written instructions and face-to-face meetings with the relevant dean(s) and the vice-president: academic (or associate vice-president:

teaching and learning). The vice-president: academic or the associate vice-president: teaching and learning shall also be responsible for providing the reviewers with explicit instructions that the program is to be evaluated against the criteria listed in C above.

F. The Review and Report

The internal and external reviewers shall evaluate the Program Proposal Brief and may request additional information (programs must inform the Quality Assurance Office of any additional information provided to the reviewers). They shall spend one to two days visiting the academic unit(s) proposing the program. The reviewers shall meet with the vice-president: academic; associate vice-president: teaching and learning; faculty, staff, and undergraduate and graduate students within the unit (where applicable); the deans of the relevant Faculties; the chair/director of the unit proposing the program and of any collaborating units (for interdepartmental programs); the university librarian; and any other members of the university community who can provide needed information. The reviewers shall prepare a final [report](#), which must be submitted to the Quality Assurance Office within four weeks following the site visit. In the written report, the reviewers should comment on compliance with all evaluation criteria, note any clearly innovative aspects of the proposed program, and make recommendations on essential and desirable modifications to the proposal.

G. Response of the Unit to the Report of the Review Committee

Upon receipt of the reviewers' report, the Quality Assurance Office shall distribute copies to the vice-president: academic, dean(s) and chairperson(s)/co-ordinator(s) of the academic unit(s) proposing the program, and the author of the program proposal. Within one month of receiving the report, the unit(s) and the relevant dean(s) shall prepare an internal response that includes:

- a. clarifications or corrections of statements in the report; and
- b. answers to all questions and responses to all recommendations and suggestions raised by the reviewers.

At this time, the program shall make any necessary revisions to the program proposal and forward them to the Quality Assurance Office.

H. Senate Academic Planning Committee Recommendation

Upon receipt of the internal response, the Senate Academic Planning Committee shall review all materials and make one of the follow decisions:

- a. Approve the proposal;
- b. Return it to the unit for further revisions;
- c. Not approve the proposal.

The author of the proposal brief shall be invited to attend the meeting to present the proposal and answer any questions. If the Senate Academic Planning Committee recommends approval of the proposal, and the vice-president: academic concurs, the proposal will move forward to the Senate Finance Committee for consideration. The recommendation of the Senate Academic Planning Committee shall be communicated to Senate.

I. Senate Finance Committee Recommendation

A meeting of the Senate Finance Committee shall be held to consider the financial implications of a new program proposal. The author of the proposal brief shall be invited to attend the meeting to present the proposal and answer questions from the committee. The recommendation of the Senate Finance Committee shall be communicated to Senate.

J. Senate Approval

The new program proposal shall be presented by the dean(s) responsible for the units proposing a new undergraduate program, and by the dean of the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies, in the case of graduate programs.

M. Quality Council Approval

Following Senate approval, the complete program proposal package will be forwarded to the Quality Council Secretariat for approval. If approved, programs must commence within 36 months of Quality Council approval, or the approval will lapse.

Subject to approval by the vice-president: academic, the university may announce its intention to offer a new undergraduate or graduate program in advance of approval by the Quality Council. When such announcements are made in advance of Quality Council approval, they must contain the following statement: "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."

L. Application for funding to the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU)

All new program proposals (for non-core undergraduate programs or for graduate programs) which require operating grant funding must be submitted to the MTCU for funding approval. The required information will be provided by the relevant chair/coordinator/dean to the Quality Assurance Office who will prepare the submission for the MTCU.

M. Report to the Board of Governors

The vice-president: academic will present an annual report to the Board of Governors, detailing all new programs approved by Senate and the Quality Council.

N. Monitoring of New Programs

The chair or co-ordinator of a new program shall submit a brief annual report to the Program Review Sub-Committee at the end of the second and fourth year of an undergraduate program, or at the end of the first two years for a master's program, and three years for a doctoral program. This report shall include enrolment numbers by year and a comment on the adherence to the goals of the program as set out in the initial proposal.

O. Approval Process for Major Modifications to Existing Programs

All changes to existing programs, as well as proposals for new fields and diplomas, shall be approved by Senate according to the procedures outlined below. The types of major modifications listed below in **a. Program Changes** do not require approval by the Quality Council. Those outlined in **b.**

Expedited Review do require submission to the Quality Council for approval. All major modifications are reported annually to the Quality Council.

a. Program Changes. These include:

- (i) Requirements that differ significantly from those existing at the time of the previous cyclical program review
 - the merger of two or more programs
 - the deletion of a program (please refer to Article 23 of the [WLUFA Collective Agreement](#))
 - new bridging options for college diploma graduates
 - significant change in the laboratory component of an undergraduate program
 - the introduction or deletion of an undergraduate thesis or capstone project
 - the introduction or deletion of a work experience, co-op option, internship or practicum, or portfolio
 - at the master's level, the introduction or deletion of a research project, research essay or thesis, course-only, co-op, internship or practicum option
 - any change to the requirements for graduate program comprehensive or other examination requirements, field studies or residence requirements
 - major changes to courses comprising a significant proportion of the program (typically, one-third or more)
 - addition of a new minor or option to a program
 - major changes to an existing minor or option

- (ii) Significant changes to the learning outcomes
 - changes to program content, other than those listed in a) above, that affect the learning outcomes, but do not meet the threshold for a 'new program'

- (iii) Significant changes to the faculty engaged in delivering the program and/or to the essential resources as may occur, for example, when there have been changes to the existing mode(s) of delivery (e.g. different campus, online delivery, inter-institutional collaboration)
 - changes to the faculty delivering the program: e.g. a large proportion of the faculty retires; new hires alter the areas of research and teaching interests
 - a change in the language of program delivery
 - the establishment of an existing degree program at another institution or location
 - the offering of an existing program substantially online where it had previously been offered in face-to-face mode, or vice versa
 - change to full- or part-time program options, or vice versa
 - changes to the essential resources, where these changes impair the delivery of the approved program

b. Expedited Reviews. These include:

- a proposal for a new field in a graduate program (Note: the university is not required to declare fields in either master's or doctoral programs.);
- a proposal for a new collaborative or joint program;
- proposals for new for-credit graduate diplomas;
- if the university requests it, Quality Council approval of any of the program changes listed above (for the process, see steps 5 and 6 below).

Steps in the review and approval process of major modifications:

1. [Proposals for major modifications](#) of any type must be prepared by a program or academic unit's curriculum committee or like body after consultation with other relevant communities. These communities may include academic departments or programs within the university, as well as stakeholders in the broader community such as partners in joint programs.
2. When appropriate, the proposal shall be reviewed and approved by the department or equivalent curriculum committee. Proposals shall be approved by department or equivalent councils prior to being forwarded to divisional curriculum committees.
3. Proposals shall be reviewed by the divisional curriculum committee, and then approved by the Faculty, school, or federated college divisional council. Changes to graduate programs must also be reviewed and approved by Graduate Faculty Council.
4. Proposals shall then be submitted to the Senate Academic Planning Committee by the responsible Faculty for review and approval. Proposals for changes to graduate programs shall be presented by the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies regardless of the program's home.
5. The vice-president: academic and provost, on the recommendation of the Senate Academic Planning Committee, will determine which curriculum changes are major modifications and, of those major modifications, which ones should be submitted to the Quality Council for expedited review. When expedited review is deemed necessary, the department or equivalent shall prepare a proposal brief which addresses the relevant evaluation criteria as outlined in II(C) above.
6. Approved proposals for major modifications, along with the vice-president: academic and provost's recommendation on expedited review, will be brought forward to Senate and presented by the Faculty responsible.
7. Major modifications are reported annually to the Quality Council.

O. Approval Process for Minor Curriculum Changes to Existing Programs

Minor curriculum changes (either substantive or editorial) must be approved by the university, but Quality Council approval is not required.

For the purposes of approval and review, changes should be divided into:

Substantive:

- a. renaming of programs;
- b. changes in admission or progression requirements;
- c. course additions or deletions which effectively reorganize a program, impact another faculty, or result in significant additional or reduced resource requirements;
- d. changes in program regulations with broad implications;
- e. changes that run counter to the university's [academic plan](#);
- f. other changes which may result in additional or reduced resource requirements.

Editorial: all other minor curriculum changes, including editorial changes to curriculum material.

Steps in the Review and Approval Process for Minor Curriculum Changes

1. The process for the approval of substantive minor changes is the same as for major modifications, except that reporting to the Quality Council is not required.
2. Editorial minor changes should be submitted in an omnibus motion to the Senate Academic Planning Committee by the Faculty responsible.
3. Once received by the Senate Academic Planning Committee editorial minor changes shall be presented to Senate in the consent section of the agenda.

RELATED POLICIES, PROCEDURES, & DOCUMENTS

[Policy 2.1 Cyclical Review of Undergraduate and Graduate Academic Programs](#)
[Quality Assurance Framework](#)

Appendix A: Flow Chart for New Program Approvals

