



## 2.1 Cyclical Review of Undergraduate and Graduate Academic Programs

WILFRID LAURIER UNIVERSITY

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

### I. Objectives

A rigorous and transparent system of academic program review ensures quality and demonstrates accountability to the public and to current and prospective students. It also provides a sound basis for program enhancement and improvement. Within the university's commitment to the principle of academic freedom, reviews should be objective, analytical and constructive. Components of the review process have been mandated by the Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance Council (Quality Council) of the Council of Ontario Universities. Wilfrid Laurier University's Institutional Quality Assurance Procedures (IQAP), comprising this policy and [policy 2.2](#), were ratified by the Quality Council on June 20, 2011. 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 review process is designed to evaluate the program's objectives, requirements, structure, content, and resources as described in Section C of this policy. This policy pertains to the review of the following programs at Wilfrid Laurier University and its federated and affiliated colleges:

1. undergraduate degree, general and honours
2. graduate degree and diploma
3. collaborative and joint programs

### II. Institutional Quality Assurance Procedures

#### A. Responsibilities

- The administration of the review process for all graduate and undergraduate degree programs and diploma 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 review documents for all undergraduate and graduate programs is overseen by the [Quality Assurance Office](#) in conjunction with the associate vice-president: teaching and learning and the Dean of the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies.
- The [Program Review Sub-Committee](#) of the [Senate Academic Planning Committee](#), supported by the Quality Assurance Office, is responsible for managing the review process. This committee is chaired by the associate vice-president: teaching and learning. The Senate Academic Planning Committee, on the recommendation of the associate vice-president: teaching and learning, will appoint four regular faculty members and one dean experienced in program development and review. The term of appointment will be for 3-year terms, renewable once.
- The Senate Academic Planning Committee is responsible for approving the recommendations of the Program Review Sub-Committee and presenting them to Senate. This committee is constituted in accordance with the [Senate By-Laws & Regulations](#) and comprises: seven

faculty members elected by University Faculty Council (two of whom must be senators), one faculty senator from the Seminary elected by the Seminary, one undergraduate student chosen amongst the undergraduate senators, one graduate student chosen by the Graduate Students' Association, three ex-officio academic administrator members chosen from amongst the deans and university librarian, and the vice-president: academic, who chairs the committee.

Wherever possible, programs which exist at the graduate and undergraduate level in the same discipline, department, or unit will be reviewed together. Similarly, programs which are offered at more than one campus will be reviewed together. The review schedule for all programs can be found at [www.wlu.ca/qao](http://www.wlu.ca/qao) and is reviewed and updated annually by the Program Review Sub-Committee. All programs must be reviewed within eight years of their initial approval or last review.

#### Accredited Programs

In the case of programs which must also receive review by a professional accreditation body (e.g., programs in Business, Education, Music Therapy, Social Work, and Theology), these review documents may replace those prescribed by this policy if all information required by the policy is contained or appended. The Program Review Sub-Committee will make a determination of the suitability of accreditation documents for the purposes of program review.

#### Joint Programs with other Institutions

In the case of joint programs with other postsecondary institutions, the participating institutions will agree on a common review schedule. Cyclical reviews will be conducted according to the IQAPs of the institution administering the review (usually the institution at which the current director holds appointment).

The following principles shall apply to reviews of joint programs:

- The Self-Study will clearly explain how input was received from faculty, staff and students at each partner institution. There will be a single Self-Study.
- The site visit will involve all partner institutions and preferably all sites. Reviewers will consult faculty, staff, and students at each partner institution, preferably in person.
- Feedback on the reviewers' report will be solicited from participating units at each partner institution, including the deans.
- One Final Assessment Report, with input and agreement from each partner, will be written and submitted through the appropriate governance processes at each institution.
- The Final Assessment Report will be posted on the university website of each partner.
- Partner institutions will agree on an appropriate monitoring process for the Implementation Plan.
- The Final Assessment Report will be submitted to the Quality Council by all partners.

In cases where degree and/or diploma programs are offered jointly or as dual credential programs with non-IQAP institutions (e.g., colleges of applied arts and technology or institutes of technology and advanced learning), Wilfrid Laurier University will take the lead in the review process; all criteria and principles described below shall pertain as relevant.

### **B. Steps in the Review Process for Undergraduate Degree and Graduate Degree and Diploma Programs** (see also, Appendix A: Flow Chart for Cyclical Program Reviews)

1. A self-study will be prepared by a program's curriculum committee or like body and include 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, including employers and professional associations. One author whose responsibility it is

to assemble all material must be identified and recorded on the document. Typically, this author will be a chair, program coordinator, or associate dean (in non-departmentalized faculties).

2. A draft of the Self-Study will be submitted for review and comment to the Quality Assurance Office and relevant Faculty dean(s), in the case of undergraduate programs. In the case of graduate programs, the Self-Study draft will be submitted to the Quality Assurance Office, Faculty dean and dean of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies. Where both undergraduate and graduate degrees are being reviewed, the Quality Assurance Office and all relevant deans will receive the draft Self-Study.
3. After receiving feedback from the dean(s), and the associate vice-president: teaching and learning, the program director, coordinator, chair, or associate dean will submit the Self-Study to the Program Review Sub-Committee who will select a review committee from the nominees recommended by the program.
4. The associate vice-president: teaching and learning will contact the review committee, schedule the site visit, and submit the Self-Study for appraisal.
5. Following its visit to the university, the review committee will write a report summarizing the strengths of the program(s) and note any concerns or recommendations for change.
6. The program will write a response to the report of the external review committee.
7. In consultation with the vice-president: academic and the associate vice-president: teaching and learning, the dean(s) will prepare a [Final Assessment Report](#), consisting of:
  - a. a summary of the Self-Study;
  - b. a summary of the reviewers' report and recommendations;
  - c. a summary of the unit response;
  - d. as well as a decanal response and implementation plan.
8. The Program Review Sub-Committee will review the Final Assessment Report and submit it to the Senate Academic Planning Committee with a recommendation for final approval.
9. The Final Assessment Report will then be submitted to Senate, the Board of Governors, and the Quality Council for information.

### **C. Criteria for Evaluating the Self-Study**

#### *1. Background*

The Self-Study report provides an opportunity for the unit to engage in serious self-reflection through the analysis of the strengths and areas for improvement of all aspects of the program(s) under review. As such, the report is intended to be contemplative and analytical, not defensive, evasive, or merely descriptive. The opportunity should be taken for a probing examination of the academic character of the program and for exploring innovative alternatives.

The Self-Study consists of three volumes: the Self-Study report, full faculty curricula vitae, and suggested external reviewers. The report should make clear how all data were collected, in what form, and by whom. Only data relating to the period under review should be included, i.e., normally the previous eight (8) years. Program faculty, staff, students, and (where applicable) external stakeholders and professional accrediting bodies should participate in the self-study process and have their contributions acknowledged. For professional programs, feedback from employers and professional associations should be included in the self-study as an appendix.

- a. Brief history and background of the program(s) under review, including any major academic achievements and milestones of the unit, as well as any relationships the program has with other

academic units. Include a list of all programs offered, including those with majors, combined degrees, minors, options, diplomas, or certificates. **For graduate reviews**, identification of any fields within the program.

- b. General structure of the program for students (e.g. required courses, timing of courses or milestones, streams, paths or fields a student might take).
- c. How the data for this report was collected, in what form, and by whom. All those groups or individuals who have contributed significantly to the completion of the self-study, such as current and former students, faculty members, staff members, external stakeholders, and professional accrediting bodies, should be acknowledged.
- d. Actions that have been taken based on recommendations from the previous review.
- e. Concerns or problems that the unit and/or university should address to enhance the quality or viability of the program, as well as recommendations for action to improve the quality of the program or its administration.

## *2. Objectives of the Program*

Learning outcomes are foundational to making sound decisions about the quality and alignment of individual programs. More specifically, they provide the basis to communicate what the program is about; that is, the kinds of knowledge, experiences, and skills students will have ideally developed upon successful completion of the program. Program objectives also inform the identification and development of courses (core, restricted/open electives), as well as the feedback and assessment plan(s) used to evaluate the effectiveness of the program overall and the experience of students.

- a. Consistency with Wilfrid Laurier University's [mission, vision, and values](#) and [Academic Plan](#).
- b. Clarity and appropriateness of the program's requirements and associated program-level learning outcomes addressing [Laurier's undergraduate \(UDLEs\) or graduate \(GDLEs\) degree level expectations](#).
- c. Program-related data and measures of performance, including applicable provincial, national, international and professional standards (where available).

## *3. Admission Requirements*

- a. Appropriateness of the program's admission requirements for the learning outcomes established for completion of the program, including adherence to the university's minimum requirements (consult the [undergraduate and graduate academic calendars](#) for minimum university requirements).
- b. Explanation of alternative requirements, if any, for admission into a graduate, second-entry or undergraduate program, including minimum grade point average, additional languages, portfolios or creative work, along with how the program recognizes prior work or learning experience.

## *4. Structure and Administration of the Program*

- a. Appropriateness of the program's structure and curriculum to meet its learning outcomes; specifically, whether all program courses listed in the calendar are necessary to meet curricular objectives, and whether any new courses are needed to reflect recent developments in the discipline/profession.
- b. For graduate programs: (i) sufficient regularly offered courses at the appropriate level to meet the Quality Council requirements that two-thirds of required coursework consists of graduate-level courses; (ii) evidence that students' time to completion is both monitored and managed in relation to the program's defined length and program requirements.
- c. The reports of recent accreditation or professional reviews, if appropriate.
- d. Recent (past eight years) or anticipated significant curriculum changes that have been made, or will be made, to meet program- and course-level learning outcomes along with strategies and a proposed schedule for implementing any future changes.

- e. For undergraduate programs: requirements for an honours thesis, and the number of students who have completed a thesis in each of the past eight years.
- f. Number of courses with tutorials or labs, by course and/or program level.
- g. Amount of service teaching for other academic units and any advantages/disadvantages of this activity.
- h. Curricular relation between undergraduate and graduate programs (if applicable).
- i. Strategic plan for future directions and aspirations for the program, including barriers to reaching these objectives.
- j. Description of the administrative and decision-making structure/process within the unit (e.g., titles of all standing or ad hoc committees, how members are appointed/elected, the frequency of meetings) and an assessment of the effectiveness of the current structure and process.

#### 5. Curriculum

- a. How the curriculum reflects the current state of the discipline, area of study or field.
- b. Evidence of any significant innovation in the content and delivery of the program relative or comparable to other such programs.
- c. Explain how the modes of delivery are effective and appropriately aligned with the program's learning outcomes.

#### 6. Assessment of Learning Outcomes

- a. Methods for assessing student achievement of the defined program- and course-level learning outcomes and degree level expectations.
- b. Appropriateness and effectiveness of the means of assessment, especially in the students' final year of the program, in clearly demonstrating achievement of the program-level learning outcomes and Laurier's [Degree Level Expectations](#).

#### 7. Resources

- a. Appropriateness and effectiveness of the academic unit's use of *existing* (not planned) human, physical and financial resources in delivering the program.
- b. Academic services that contribute directly to the academic quality of each program under review, including library support, information technology support, laboratory access, Teaching Support Services, the Writing Centre, Accessible Learning, Co-operative Education, peer learning support, and academic advising.
- c. Numbers of support staff and their roles and responsibilities.

#### 8. Quality Indicators

- a. Faculty:
  - i) Appropriateness of collective faculty expertise to sustain the program, promote innovation, and foster an appropriate intellectual climate.
  - ii) The type and amount of professional service provided to the profession, discipline, or community.
  - iii) Quality and quantity of scholarly and creative activity within the program, including involvement by undergraduate students where applicable.
  - iv) Qualifications and appointment status of faculty who provided instruction and supervision.
    - For graduate programs: numbers of faculty who have graduate faculty status by type of [status](#)
    - For all degree levels: numbers of full-time tenured, tenure track, long-term appointment, and contractually limited faculty members contributing to the program.

- v) Evidence of how teaching and supervisory loads were distributed and the criteria used to determine this distribution.

b. Students:

- i) Numbers of applications and registrations, compared to targets (if applicable).
- ii) Average GPA of students entering from secondary school (for first undergraduate degree programs only) or from any previous post-secondary degrees (if applicable).
- iii) Percentage of students obtaining the necessary GPA, or other requirements, to progress through the program.
- iv) Attrition rates per year.
- v) Number of students graduating from the program each year as well as the percentage of graduating students who have completed the program within the normal number of years (e.g., four years for an honours program; one or two years for a second degree or master's program; four years for a doctoral program).
- vi) Times to completion (in full-time terms).
- vii) Average GPA at program completion.
- viii) Average class size, by level of course (years 1 to 4; graduate).
- ix) Average number of honours, general, and graduate students in the program per year, by level: i.e., how many students were enrolled in each year of honours, general, diploma and graduate programs.
  - For graduate programs with fields: how many students enrolled in each field.
- x) Any changes in unit enrolment patterns.
- xi) At the graduating level:
  - For undergraduate students: the number in a research specialization stream/other stream, or the number writing a major research paper/course work only, as appropriate to the department;
  - For graduate students: the number of master's students completing the degree by course work, major paper, or thesis option.
- xii) Numbers of students in each degree level receiving external awards.
- xiii) Where appropriate to a graduate program, evidence that financial assistance for students has been sufficient to ensure adequate quality and numbers of students.
- xiv) Course evaluations and summarized exit surveys, where permitted by the Collective Agreement and the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA).

c. Graduates of the program:

- i) Level of achievement by students of the program's learning outcomes and Laurier's degree level expectations as evidenced by indicators developed by the unit.
- ii) Employment options and career successes 6 months and 2 years after graduation:
  - For baccalaureate programs: an estimate of the numbers applying to graduate school and the rate of successful admissions; an estimate of number working in relevant "skills matched" fields.
  - For second degree and graduate programs: an estimate of the numbers working on a subsequent degree or postdoctoral fellowship; estimate of the number employed in relevant "skills matched" fields.
- iii) Alumni reports of satisfaction with the program. (Programs should consult [Policy 8.2 Ethics Approval for Administrative Research Using Human Subjects](#) prior to surveying alumni.)

## D. Manual for Conduct of Self-Study

The university will prepare a detailed manual for the conduct of cyclical program reviews. The manual will provide templates for the self-study and reports, and a schedule for review of all undergraduate and graduate programs. In addition, the manual will provide guidance on the benefits and conduct of rigorous, transparent, objective, analytical, and constructive self-studies; establish criteria for nomination and selection of arm's-length external peer reviewers; and identify

responsibilities for the collection, aggregation and distribution of institutional data and outcome measures required for self-studies.

## E. External Reviewers

The academic unit(s) responsible for the program under review will 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 practical training programs.

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

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

From the lists of nominees, the Program Review Sub-Committee will select one internal reviewer from outside the program's academic unit(s) and one external reviewer for an undergraduate program or two such reviewers if the review is of a graduate program or of both a graduate and undergraduate program. If the Sub-Committee is not satisfied with the appropriateness of the nominees they will request additional names from the academic unit. The Sub-Committee shall submit the list of reviewers to the Senate Academic Planning Committee for information. Following approval by the Program Review Sub-Committee, the associate vice-president: teaching and learning will 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:

- 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 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 will 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 will 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 will consider the Self-Study and may request additional information (programs must inform the Quality Assurance Office of any additional information provided to the reviewers). The reviewers will spend one to two days visiting the academic unit(s) under review. They will meet with the vice-president: academic; associate vice-president: teaching and learning; faculty, staff, and undergraduate and graduate students within the unit; the deans of the relevant Faculties; the chair/director/coordinator of the unit under review 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 report must be submitted to the Program Review Sub-Committee within six weeks of the site visit. In the written report, the reviewers should comment on compliance with all evaluation criteria and respond to any questions posed in the Self-Study. This report should also contain an executive summary suitable for inclusion in the Final Assessment Report and posting on the university's Quality Assurance Office [website](#).

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

Upon receipt of the reviewers' report, the chair of the Program Review Sub-Committee will distribute copies to the vice-president: academic, dean(s) and chairperson(s)/co-ordinator(s)/associate dean(s) of the academic unit(s) under review. Within one month of receiving the report, the unit(s) must submit a written response to the Sub-Committee which includes:

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

## **H. Final Assessment Report and Implementation Plan**

In consultation with the vice-president: academic and the associate vice-president: teaching and learning, the dean(s) will prepare a [Final Assessment Report](#), to be reviewed by the Program Review Sub-Committee. The Final Assessment Report will:

- a. Summarize the Self-Study, reviewers' report, and unit response;
- b. Identify significant strengths of the program;
- c. Identify opportunities for program improvement and enhancement;
- d. Explain which recommendations from the reviewers' report will be approved and why;
- e. Prioritize recommendations approved for implementation;
- f. If necessary, contain a confidential section where personnel issues may be addressed;
- g. Establish an Implementation Plan that identifies for each recommendation:
  - Who will be responsible for approving the recommendation;
  - Who will be responsible for acting on the recommendation;
  - Any changes in organization, policy or governance, at any level, that would be necessary to meet the recommendation;
  - The resources, financial and otherwise, that would be provided in supporting the implementation of recommendation;
  - Who will be responsible for providing resources made necessary by the recommendation;
  - A proposed timeline for the implementation of all recommendation.

## **I. Final Approval and Reporting Requirements**

1. The Program Review Sub-Committee will submit the Final Assessment Report to the Senate Academic Planning Committee for approval or further modification, as necessary.
2. The Final Assessment Report (excluding all confidential information) will be provided to the program and relevant deans and submitted for information to Senate, the Board of Governors, and the Quality Council.
3. The Final Assessment Report will be posted on the university's Quality Assurance Office website.
4. Only the Final Assessment Report will be publicly accessible. All other information will remain confidential.

## **J. Yearly Monitoring**

Each year, the Program Review Sub-Committee will review the progress of the changes outlined in the implementation plan of the Final Assessment Report. Monitoring reports, authored by the program in question and reviewed and approved by the Program Review Sub-Committee and the Senate Academic Planning Committee, will be made public on the Quality Assurance Office website.

## **RELATED POLICIES, PROCEDURES, & DOCUMENTS**

[Policy 2.2: Approval of New Undergraduate and Graduate Programs and Major and Minor Modifications to Existing Programs](#)  
[Quality Assurance Framework](#)

## Appendix A: Flow Chart for Cyclical Program Reviews

