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
Original Approval Date:	November 18, 2004
Date of Most Recent Review / Revision:	October 16, 2012 (Senate approval) November 15, 2012 (OUCQA re-ratification)
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. 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 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 3-year terms, 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: two faculty senators, a faculty member from each faculty, an academic librarian, an administrative staff member, and two students, all elected by Senate; and, as ex officio members, one academic dean or the university librarian, chosen among themselves, the president, vice-president: finance and administration, vice-president: academic, principal/vice-president: Brantford campus, and the vice-president: research.
- 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: 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 Wilfrid Laurier University Graduate Student Association (WLUGSA), three ex officio academic administrator members chosen from amongst the deans and university librarian.

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 should then be submitted to the Senate Academic Planning Committee for approval.

2. New program proposals are 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 will be reviewed and approved by the department or equivalent curriculum committee. Proposals may need approval by department or equivalent councils prior to being forwarded to divisional councils.

4. The proposal will be reviewed by the divisional curriculum committee, and then approved by the Faculty, school, federated college, or campus divisional council. 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. In the case of graduate programs, the dean of the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies will present all proposals.

5. A full proposal will 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 will bring a recommendation to the Senate Academic Planning Committee that the proposal either proceed to external review or be returned to the unit for revision.

6. The Program Review Sub-Committee will review and approve the program's suggestions for external reviewers 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 Program Review Sub-Committee will review all proposal documents and make a recommendation to the Senate Academic Planning Committee.

8. The Senate Academic Planning Committee will review the complete program proposal package and make a recommendation to Senate.

9. Meeting jointly with the Senate Academic Planning Committee, the Senate Finance Committee will assess the financial implications of the proposed program, and make a recommendation to Senate.

10. Senate is responsible for approving the program proposal. Following Senate approval, all supporting documents and reports will be submitted to the Quality Council of the Council of Ontario Universities for review.

    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 will submit a brief annual report to the Program Review Sub-Committee at the end of each of the first four years 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 will 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 (see Postsecondary Education Quality Assessment Board for guidelines).

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. It is understood that completion times in graduate programs may vary. However, master's programs should be designed to be either one year or two years in length; doctoral programs should be no more than four years in duration.

4. Curriculum

a. Degree to 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 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 and indicate, where appropriate, if the program is cost recovery. 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 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/or 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 joint programs, the university will 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 will select 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 will request additional names from the academic unit. Before issuing formal invitations, the Sub-Committee shall submit the recommended list of reviewers to the Senate Academic Planning Committee for approval. Following approval, 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 consultants 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 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 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 will spend one to two days visiting the academic unit(s) proposing the program. The reviewers must 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 will prepare a final report, which must be submitted to the Program Review Sub-Committee within six 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 chair of the Program Review Sub-Committee will 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) will 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 suggestions and recommendations raised by the reviewers.

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

H. Program Review Sub-Committee Recommendation to the Senate Academic Planning Committee

Upon receipt of the internal response, the Program Review Sub-Committee will review all materials and recommend that the Senate Academic Planning Committee 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 will attend meetings of both committees to present the proposal and answer any questions. If the Senate Academic Planning Committee recommends approval of the proposal, it will move the proposal forward to the Senate Finance Committee for consideration.

If the vice-president: academic concurs, the proposal will move forward to Senate for approval; the recommendation of the Senate Academic Planning Committee will be communicated to Senate.

I. Senate Finance Committee Recommendation

A joint meeting of the Senate Academic Planning and Senate Finance Committees will be held to consider the financial implications of a new program proposal. The author of the original document

will attend to present the proposal and answer questions from both Committees. The recommendation of the Senate Finance Committee will be communicated to Senate.

J. Senate Approval

The new program proposal will 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. If the proposal is approved by Senate, the proposal and all necessary reports and responses will be forwarded to the Quality Council Secretariat. 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."

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

Once submitted to the Quality Council, all new program proposals for non-core undergraduate programs or for graduate programs must be submitted to the MTCU for funding consideration. 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.

L. 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.

M. Monitoring of New Programs

The chair or co-ordinator of a new program will submit a brief annual report to the Program Review Sub-Committee at the end of each of the first four years 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 will include enrolment numbers by year and a comment on the adherence to the goals of the program as set out in the initial proposal.

N. Approval Process for Major Modifications to Existing Programs

As well as proposals for new degrees, fields and diplomas, all changes to existing programs must be approved by Senate using the procedures outlined below. The types of major modifications listed below in **a. Program Changes** do not need approval by the Quality Council. Those outlined in **b. Expedited Review** do require submission to the Quality Council for review and 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 (may be defined in quantitative terms; typically, institutions have chosen one-third)
- 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, 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 will be reviewed and approved by the department or equivalent curriculum committee. Proposals may need approval by department or equivalent councils prior to being forwarded to divisional curriculum committees.

3. Proposals will be reviewed by the divisional curriculum committee, and then approved by the Faculty, school, federated college, or campus divisional council. Changes to graduate programs must also be reviewed and approved by Graduate Faculty Council.

4. Proposals will then be submitted to the Senate Academic Planning Committee by the responsible Faculty for review and approval. Proposals for changes to graduate programs will 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 will 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.

8. Major modifications are included in the Program Development Report, filed annually with the MTCU.

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 or other changes which may result in additional or reduced resource requirements.

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

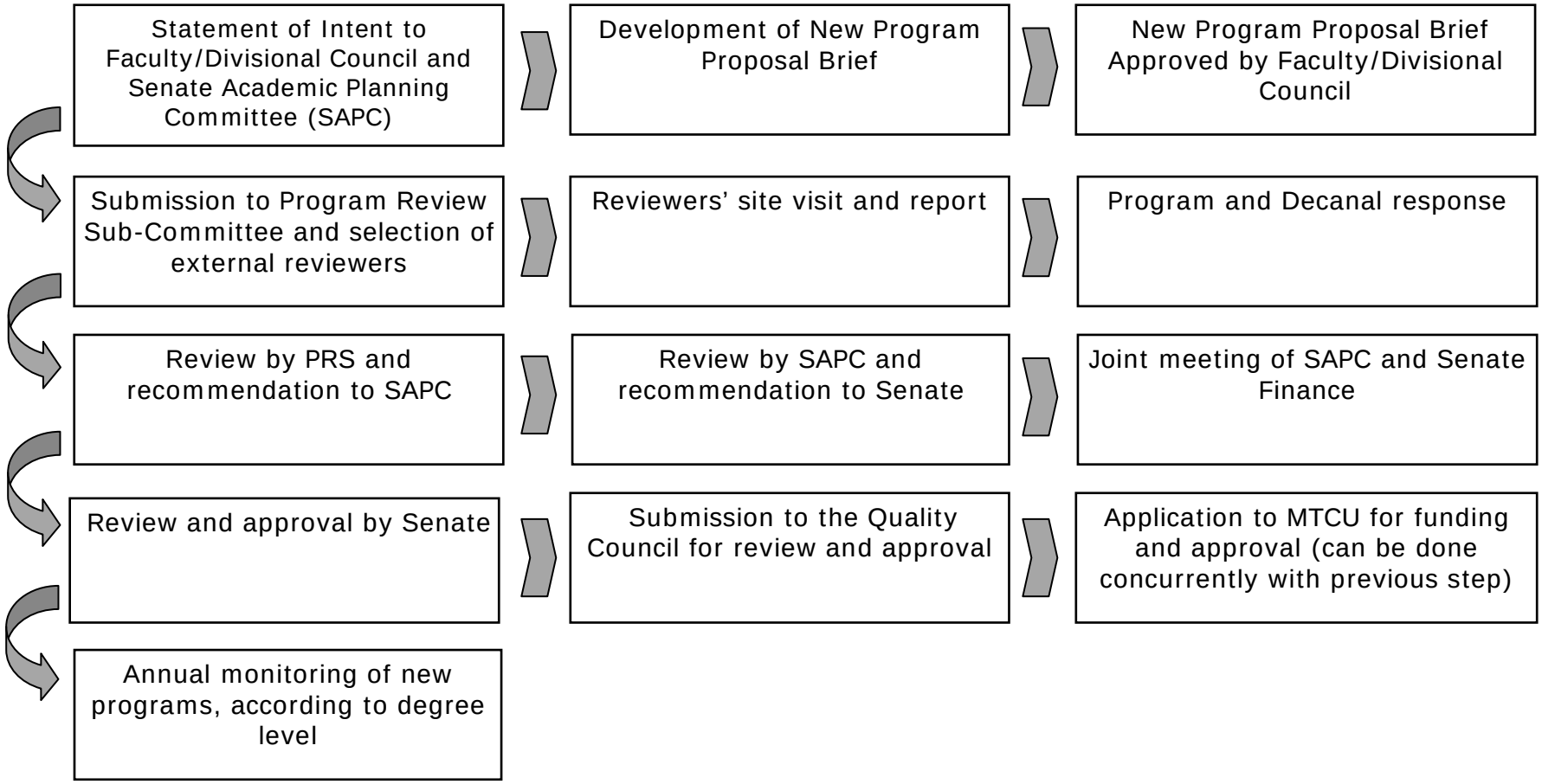
Steps in the Review and Approval Process for Minor Curriculum Changes

1. The process for the approval of substantive minor changes is the same as for major modifications, except that reporting to the Quality Council and, in most cases, to MTCU 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 will 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