

Academic: Review and Approval of Academic Programs

Effective Date:

Approved by: Senate

Policy for the Review and Approval of Academic Programs

I OVERVIEW

The Policy for the Review and Approval of Academic Programs (herein referred to as the Policy) governs the review and approval of proposed new programs, major modifications, and the cyclical review of existing programs at Lakehead University.

The Policy outlines university-wide principles for the review and approval of academic programs. The Policy aligns the University's quality assurance processes detailed in The Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP) and the provincially mandated Quality Assurance Framework (April 2010). The process replaces the Undergraduate Program Review Audit Committee (UPRAC) process for undergraduate program reviews outlined in Undergraduate Program Review Policy and Procedures (2005) and the Ontario Council for Graduate Studies (OCGS) quality reviews of graduate programs. The design of the Lakehead University Quality Assurance process is intended to be as streamlined a possible while still ensuring accessibility and transparency to the Lakehead University Community.

II DEFINITIONS

Programs: For the purpose of this Policy, a "program" is defined as an identified set and sequence of courses and other learning opportunities within an area of study, which is completed in full or partial fulfillment of the requirements for the granting of an undergraduate, second-entry, or graduate degree.

New Program: A "new program" is defined as any degree, degree program, or program of specialization, currently approved by Senate or equivalent governing body, which has not been previously approved for Lakehead University by the Quality Council, its predecessors, or any intra-institutional approval processes that previously applied. The definition for "new programs" is congruent with the Quality Assurance Framework requirements and is expanded on in the Lakehead University Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP).

Major Modifications: Major modifications include the following program changes:

- a) Requirements that differ significantly from those existing at the time of the previous cyclical program review;
- b) Significant changes to the learning outcomes;
- c) Significant changes to the faculty engaged in delivering the program and/or to the essential physical resources as may occur, for example, where there have been changes to the existing mode(s) of delivery (e.g., different campus, online delivery, inter-institutional collaboration);
- d) The addition of a new field to an existing graduate program.

This definition for “major modifications” is congruent with the Quality Assurance Framework requirements and is expanded on in the Lakehead University Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP).

III SCOPE

The Policy applies to submissions for approval of new academic undergraduate and graduate programs, major modifications to existing undergraduate and graduate programs, and the cyclical review of existing undergraduate and graduate programs. Cyclical reviews of undergraduate and graduate programs are commissioned through the Office of the Vice-President Academic and Provost in accordance with the Cyclical Program Review Schedule.

IV OBJECTIVES OF THE REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

The primary objective of Lakehead University’s program review and approval process is to support programs in achieving and maintaining the highest possible standards of academic excellence through objective and constructive assessment and follow up. The program reviews are intended both to improve academic programs and to demonstrate accountability to the University community and other public stakeholders.

Program reviews at Lakehead University will:

- Ensure rigorous standards for the development of new programs that align with the mission and academic directions of the University;
- Secure the academic standards of existing undergraduate and graduate programs, including for-credit graduate diplomas;
- Ensure that programs are current with respect to developments in the discipline;
- Ensure ongoing follow-up and development of programs;
- Assist the faculties and academic units in future planning by clarifying academic objectives and identifying areas of existing and emerging strengths, and areas of weakness or concern;

- Evaluate the curricular and pedagogical policies and practices of the academic unit offering the program(s).

V PROGRAM REVIEW AND APPROVAL PRINCIPLES

- a) Administrative procedures for the review and approval of academic programs will be coordinated and monitored by the Office of the Vice-President and Provost, and are detailed within the *Lakehead University Quality Assurance Process (IQAP)* as approved by the Senate Academic Committee: Quality Assurance Committee (Date), and ratified (Date) by the Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance (the Quality Council).
- b) The *Lakehead University Quality Assurance Process (IQAP)* will address the protocols by which reviews and approvals will be conducted, the content of the required documents, as well as the circulation of proposals and reports to meet Lakehead University governance requirements.
- c) Authority for periodically revising and ensuring implementation of the *Lakehead University Quality Assurance Process (IQAP)* and associated manuals/guides rests with the Office of the Vice-President (Academic) and Provost. Minor changes to the procedures will be presented to the Senate Academic Committee: Quality Assurance Committee for information. Any substantive changes to the Lakehead University IQAP will be subject to approval by the Senate Academic Committee: Quality Assurance Committee, and ratification by the Quality Council.
- d) Reviews of academic programs by external bodies, such as professional accrediting bodies, may serve different purposes than those commissioned as part of the undergraduate and graduate program cyclical review process. In cases where professional program accreditation standards are consistent with the standards set out in the Lakehead University IQAP, components of the accreditation may be applied to the University's undergraduate program review process. The process for incorporating work completed to meet professional accreditation standards is detailed in the Lakehead University IQAP.
- e) Where possible, the University process will aim to streamline the review process by aligning the scheduling of undergraduate program reviews and graduate program reviews.

VI ACCOUNTABILITY

A. Review and Approval of New Programs, and Major Modifications to Existing Programs

- Institutional review and approval of proposals addressing new programs and major modifications to existing programs are the responsibility of the Senate.

- Faculties are responsible for considering program proposals in detail and for making recommendations to Senate for referral.
- Senate has delegated responsibility to the Senate Academic Quality Assurance Subcommittee (SAC- QA) to verify that Faculties have taken the appropriate steps to ensure that programs are robust, viable and deliverable, are in the interest of the University, and meet the provincial requirements outlined in the Quality Assurance Framework.
- The Senate Undergraduate Studies Committee (SUSC), Senate Budget Committee (SBC) and the Faculty of Graduate Studies: Program/Regulations Committee are also involved in reviewing program proposals, in accordance with their terms of reference, prior to Senate approval.
- Other types of new programs, including a concentration, minor, and not-for-credit certificates, do not require Quality Council appraisal and approval but still require internal review and approval by Faculty Council(s), Senate Standing Committees (SAC-QA, SUSC or Faculty of Graduate Studies: Program/Regulations Committee Subcommittee, and SBC as appropriate) and final Senate approval.
- Minor changes to curricula will continue to be submitted to Senate for referral to the appropriate Standing Committee using existing Lakehead University review and approval processes.

B. Cyclical Review of Existing Programs

- A cyclical program review will be initiated via communication from the Office of the Vice-President Academic and Provost, and in accordance with the Cyclical Program Review schedule. The Office will receive the self-study documentation and make arrangements for the site visit.
- The SAC-QA subcommittee will be responsible for selecting the reviewers, for reviewing the response to the reviewers' report, and for reviewing and approving the Final Assessment Report.
- Once approved, a recommendation to accept the report will be forwarded to the Senate Academic Committee (SAC) for approval.
- The Chair of SAC will submit an Executive Report as an item of information for Senate, and for posting on the University website.
- The Executive Report and Implementation Plan will be forwarded to the Quality Council.
- The Vice-President Academic and Provost will report to the Board of Governors once a year on the programs which were reviewed during the previous academic year.

VII REVIEW OF POLICY

The Vice-President (Academic) and Provost will ensure that the **Policy for Review and Approval of Academic Programs** is forwarded to the Senate Academic Committee and the Senate for review and approval within five years.

