

## Review and Approval of Academic Programs

**Policy Category:** Academic

**Approved By:** Senate

**Effective Date:** March 18, 2011

### 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 ([QAF](#); 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 as 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 fulfilment 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 [QAF](#) requirements and is expanded on in the Lakehead University IQAP.

**Major Modifications:** [The fundamental purpose of the identification of major modifications to existing programs, and their submission through a robust quality assurance process, is to assure the University Community and the public of the ongoing quality of all of Lakehead University's academic programs \(QAF Section 3.3, IQAP Section5\).](#)

[The QAF defines](#) major modifications [as changes to programs that](#) include [any of](#) the following:

- 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 is expanded on in the Lakehead University 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 [Provost and Vice-President \(Academic\)](#) 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 [Provost and Vice-President \(Academic\)](#), and are detailed within the Lakehead University IQAP, as approved by the Senate Academic Committee: Quality Assurance [Sub-Committee \(SAC-QA\)](#), and ratified ([April 2011, revised and ratified January 2016](#)) by the Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance (the Quality Council).
- b) The Lakehead University 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 IQAP and associated manuals/guides rests with the Office of the [Provost and Vice-President](#)

(Academic). Minor changes to the procedures will be presented to the [SAC-QA](#) for information. Any substantive changes to the Lakehead University IQAP will be subject to approval by the [SAC-QA](#), 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 [carefully](#) considering program proposals and for making recommendations to Senate for referral.
- Senate has delegated responsibility to the SAC- QA to verify that Faculties have taken the appropriate steps to ensure that programs are [of high quality \(i.e. robust, viable and deliverable\)](#), [and](#) in the interest of the University.
- [The Senate Undergraduate Studies Committee \(SUSC\) or Faculty of Graduate Studies \(FGSC\): Program/Regulations Sub-Committee, and Senate Budget Committee \(SBC\)](#) are also involved in reviewing program proposals, in accordance with their terms of reference, prior to Senate approval.
- Other [curriculum proposals](#), including concentrations, minors, [specializations](#) and not-for-credit certificates, do not require Quality Council appraisal and approval but still require internal review and approval by Faculty Council(s), SAC-QA, SUSC or [FGSC](#), and SBC, as appropriate, [prior to](#) 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 [Provost and Vice-President \(Academic\)](#) and in accordance with the Cyclical Program Review schedule. The Office [of the Provost](#) will receive the self-study documentation and make arrangements for the site visit.
- The SAC-QA will be responsible for selecting [external and internal](#) reviewers [from nominations provided by the Program Head/Department](#), for reviewing the response to the reviewers' report, and for reviewing and approving the Final Assessment Report ([FAR](#))

[and Implementation Plan](#). 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 [Summary](#) as an item of information for Senate, and for posting on the University website.
- The Executive [Summary, FAR](#), and Implementation Plan will be forwarded to the Quality Council [and placed on the University website](#).

#### **VII REVIEW OF POLICY**

The [Provost and](#) Vice-President (Academic) 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.

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