



University of Toronto Quality Assurance Process (UTQAP)

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University of Toronto Quality Assurance Process (UTQAP)

1. Quality Assurance Context

1.1 Overview

The University of Toronto is committed “to being an internationally significant research university, with undergraduate, graduate, and professional programs of excellent quality.”¹ Hence, the University welcomes the opportunity provided by the Ontario Council of Academic Vice-Presidents’ *Quality Assurance Framework* (QAF)² assigning the responsibility for academic standards, quality assurance and program improvement, in the first instance, to universities themselves. The University of Toronto’s approach is built on two primary indicators of academic excellence: (1) the quality of the scholarship and research of faculty and (2) the success with which that scholarship and research is brought to bear on the achievement of Degree Level Expectations. These indicators are assessed by determining how our scholarship, research and programs compare to those of our international peer institutions and how well our programs meet their Degree Level Expectations. Reviews provide the opportunity to celebrate successes, identify areas where we can do better, and vigorously pursue improvements.

The *Policy for Approval and Review of Academic Programs and Units* governs the approval of proposed new programs and the review of existing programs at the University of Toronto. The *University of Toronto Quality Assurance Process* (UTQAP) outlines the protocols for the assessment and approval of new programs, review of existing programs, modifications to existing programs, and closures of programs. An Administrative Manual provides detailed procedures, best practices, and standardized templates for program quality assurance processes. The *Policy for Approval and Review of Academic Programs and Units* and UTQAP were approved by the Governing Council of the UofT on (DATE). The UTQAP was ratified by the Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance (the Quality Council) on (DATE).

The University of Toronto’s responsibilities for quality assurance extend to new and continuing undergraduate and graduate degree and diploma programs whether offered in full or in part by the UofT, or conjointly with any institutions federated or affiliated with the University. These responsibilities also extend to programs offered in partnership, collaboration or other such arrangement with other postsecondary institutions including colleges, universities, and institutes.

The Quality Council ensures that Ontario continues to have a rigorous quality assurance framework. It ratifies each institution’s Quality Assurance Process. It also is responsible for conducting an Audit Process of university processes through a panel of auditors that reports to a committee of the Council. The panel examines each institution’s compliance with its own Quality Assurance Process. The Quality Council approves and monitors the audit reports.

The University of Toronto Quality Assurance Process (UTQAP) encompasses four elements:

- The **New Program Approval Protocol** applies to new undergraduate degrees, undergraduate specialists and majors (for which a similar specialist/major is not already approved), graduate programs and diplomas, collaborative graduate programs, and new fields in a graduate program. Proposals for undergraduate degrees, undergraduate specialists and majors (for which a similar specialist/major is not already approved), and graduate programs are externally reviewed as part of the process leading to approval by institutional governance. Proposals for graduate diplomas, collaborative programs and new fields in existing graduate degrees do not require external appraisal. Once approved by University governance, new program proposals are assessed by the Appraisal Committee of the Quality Council. This Council has the authority to approve or decline all new program proposals.

¹ Statement of Institutional Purpose, 1992

² In 2010, the Ontario Council of Academic Vice-Presidents (OCAV) through the Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance (OUCQA or the “Quality Council”) approved the Quality Assurance Framework for quality assurance of undergraduate and graduate programs in Ontario effective as of September 2010. The Council operates at arm’s length from government to ensure its independence. *Include link to web QAF document when final*

- The **Major Modification Protocol** is used to assure program quality where major substantive changes are made to existing and previously approved programs, but where learning outcomes are not changed in ways that denote a truly new program. Major modifications include the establishment of new undergraduate options and minors within an existing degree. Major modifications are approved through University governance processes and are reported annually to the Quality Council.
- The **Program Closure Protocol** articulates the process for closing programs. There are a number of possible reasons for closing a program including: low enrolment; a changing disciplinary landscape; inadequate resources; or quality of the academic offerings. These reasons may be articulated in external review reports or may be identified by members of the University community. Program closures are approved through University governance processes and are reported annually to the Quality Council.
- The **Cyclical Program Review Protocol** ensures the quality and ongoing improvement of existing undergraduate and graduate programs, including graduate diplomas and collaborative programs. The review of an academic program may be a part of a review of the academic unit(s) in which the program resides.

In addition to the protocols described in the UTQAP, the associated UTQAP Manual:³

- a) provides guidance on the conduct of rigorous, objective and searching self-studies, and describes the potential benefits that can accrue from them;*
- b) includes best practices and establishes criteria for administrative processes such as the selection of reviewers and scheduling of site visits;*
- c) identifies responsibilities for the collection, aggregation and distribution of standardized data and outcome measures required for self-studies;*
- d) specifies the format required for new program proposals, proposal major modifications, self-studies and external review reports; and*
- e) sets out the University's cycle for the conduct of undergraduate and graduate program reviews;*

1.2 Institutional authority

The Vice-President and Provost is the chief academic officer and chief budget officer at the University of Toronto. The Provost, with the Vice-Provost, Academic Programs, is responsible for the oversight of the University of Toronto Quality Assurance Process and ensuring UTQAP is applied in a manner that conforms to our quality assurance principles and to Quality Council requirements.

Within the office of the Vice-Provost, Academic Programs, the Director, Academic Programs and Policy is the contact between the institution and the Quality Council.

New Program Proposals: The Office of the Vice-Provost, Academic Programs responds to divisional queries and facilitates proposal development with respect to academic, planning and budget, student life, governance and approval aspects of proposals.

Major Modifications to Existing Programs: The Office of the Vice-Provost, Academic Programs receives proposed program modifications. The Office compiles an annual report of all divisional modifications.

Program Closures: The Office of the Vice-Provost, Academic Programs responds to divisional queries and facilitates the proposals for the closure of programs. The Office includes program closures in the annual report of major modifications.

Cyclical Review Process: The Office of the Vice-Provost, Academic Programs is responsible for ensuring that cyclical reviews of academic programs and/or units are undertaken.

The Office of the Vice-Provost Academic Programs maintains a web site that includes information pertaining to the UTQAP and Manuals, relevant information specific to program approval and review schedules, as well as contact information.

³ Throughout the document, italicized text denotes text directly quoted from the Quality Assurance Framework.

2 New Program Approval Protocol

The primary responsibility for the design and quality assurance of new undergraduate and graduate programs lies with the University and our governing bodies. Our academic faculties and schools and their academic units are responsible for curriculum design, the development of program objectives, the determination of learning outcomes, and generally for the assembly of human, instructional and physical resources. The approval protocol aims to ensure that programs are aligned with the objectives of the academic faculties and schools and of the University as specified within the *Statement of Institutional Purpose* and thereby advance the Mission of the University and the academic division.

2.1 Purpose and application

The *New Program Approval Protocol* sets out the steps to be taken at the University to assemble and provide the information required for new program proposals. The purpose of the *Protocol* is to ensure that the procedures followed for the assessment of proposed new academic programs is in accordance with the *University Policy for Approval and Review of Academic Programs and Units* and the *Quality Council Quality Assurance Framework*.

The *New Program Approval Protocol* applies to the development of new undergraduate degrees, undergraduate specialists and majors (for which a similar specialist/major is not already approved) and to graduate degrees and programs, offered in full or in part by the UofT or jointly or conjointly by any institutions federated or affiliated with the University:

- Assessments of New Program Proposals are conducted within the division and by the Office of the Provost as part of program development prior to submission to University governance.
- The dean is responsible for commissioning the initial external appraisal of proposed new programs with the approval of the Vice Provost, Academic Programs. Programs that are inter- and multidisciplinary must have an identified permanent lead administrative division and identify a commissioning officer for the future review of the program.
- The program proposal must address the purpose, process and content of new programs and the capacity of the unit to deliver a high quality program.
- Programs that are inter-institutional and offered jointly, conjointly and/or in affiliation with other higher education institutions (colleges and universities) through formal agreements, are assessed as entities distinct from the larger institutions within which they are included. Program proposals specify how future reviews will be conducted.

2.2 Overview of the program approval process and submission timing

The steps required to develop and approve proposals for new undergraduate degrees, undergraduate specialists or majors (where no similar specialist/major has been approved), graduate programs, degrees and diplomas programs, collaborative programs, and graduate program fields are indicated in Figures 1a and 1b. These programs require Quality Council approval.

Figure 1a: Process for approval of new undergraduate and graduate degrees and programs

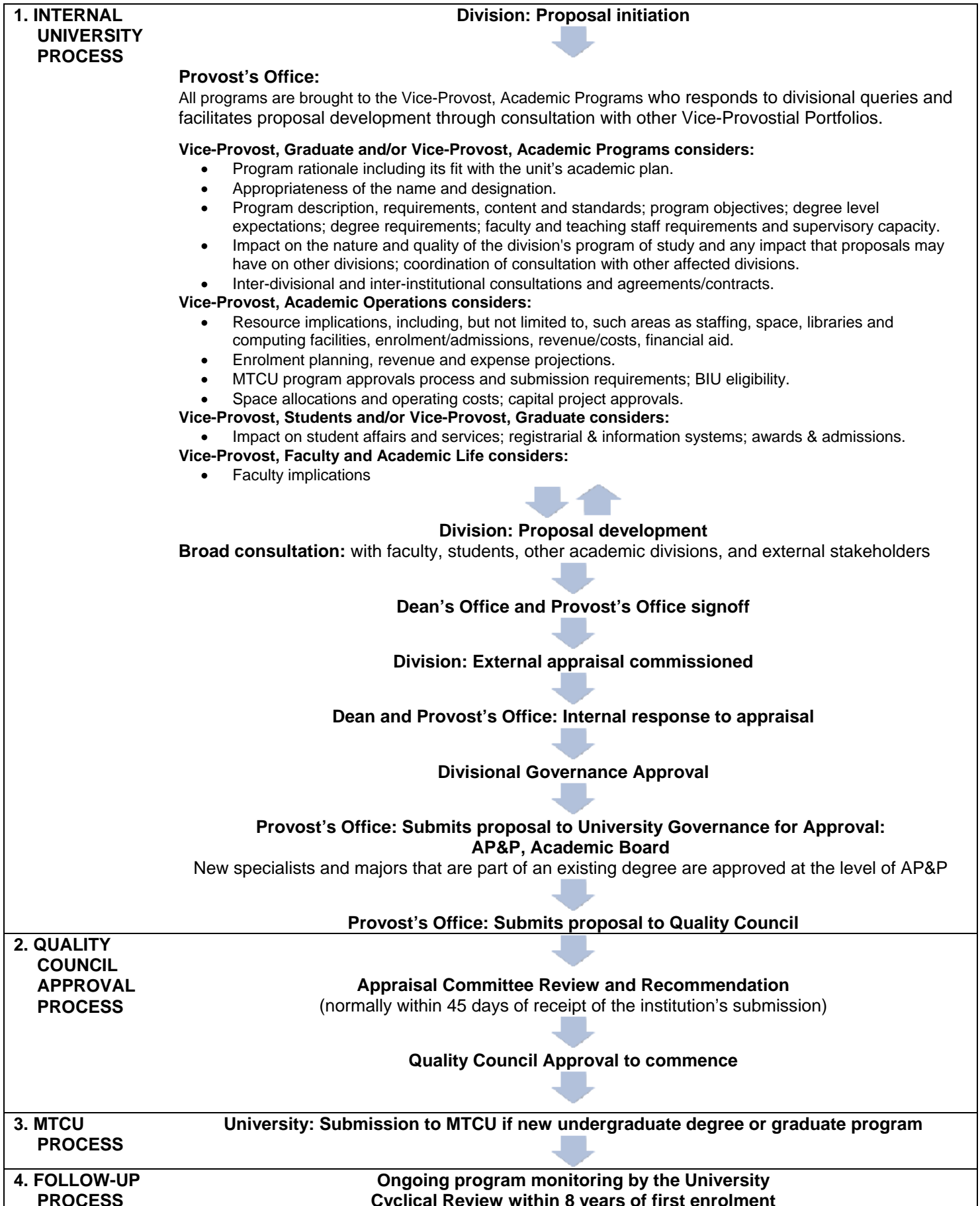
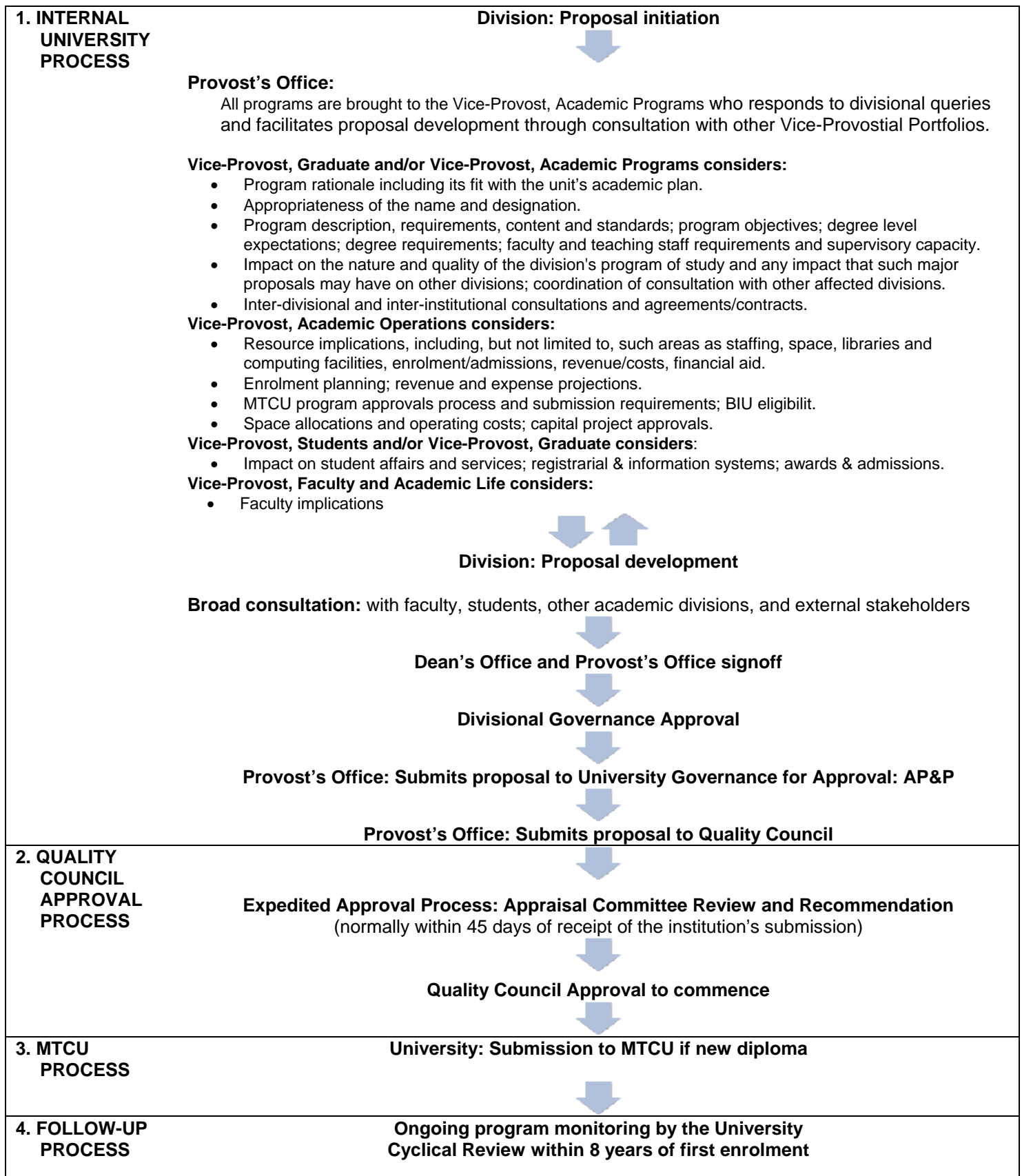


Figure 1b: Process for approval of new graduate diplomas, collaborative programs, new fields in an existing graduate program



2.3 Evaluation Criteria Identified in the Quality Assurance Framework

Proposals for new graduate or undergraduate programs are evaluated against the following criteria set by the Quality Assurance Framework. Academic divisions are responsible for the development of a New Program Proposal Brief that addresses the evaluation criteria below together with any further divisional requirements which the academic division chooses to apply (see Templates in New Program Proposal Manual).

2.3.1 Objectives

- a) *Consistency of the program with the institution's mission and academic plans.*
- b) *Clarity and appropriateness of the program's requirements and associated learning outcomes in addressing the institution's own undergraduate or graduate Degree Level Expectations.*
- c) *Appropriateness of degree or diploma nomenclature.*

2.3.2 Admission requirements

- a) *Appropriateness of the program's admission requirements for the learning outcomes established for completion of the program.*
- b) *Sufficient explanation of additional requirements, if any, for admission into a graduate, second-entry or undergraduate program, such as minimum grade point average or additional languages or portfolios, along with how the program recognizes prior work or learning experience.*

2.3.3 Structure

- a) *Appropriateness of the program's structure and regulations to meet specified program learning outcomes and Degree Level Expectations.*
- b) *For graduate programs, a clear rationale for program length that ensures that the program requirements can be reasonably completed within the proposed time period.*

2.3.4 Program content

- a) *Ways in which the curriculum addresses the current state of the discipline or area of study.*
- b) *Identification of any 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.*
- d) *Evidence that each graduate student in the program is required to take all of the course requirements from among graduate level courses.⁴*

2.3.5 Mode of delivery

Appropriateness of the proposed mode(s) of delivery (distance learning, compressed part-time, online, mixed-mode or non-standard forms of delivery, flex-time options) to meet the intended program learning outcomes and Degree Level Expectations.

2.3.6 Assessment of teaching and learning

- a) *Appropriateness of the proposed methods for the assessment of student achievement of the intended program learning outcomes and Degree Level Expectations.*
- b) *Completeness of plans for documenting and demonstrating the level of performance of students, consistent with the institution's statement of its Degree Level Expectations (see New Program Manual).*

2.3.7 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.*
- b) *Participation of a sufficient number and quality of faculty who are competent to teach and/or supervise in the program.*

⁴ While the QAF requires a minimum of 2/3 courses be at the graduate level, the University of Toronto requires all courses be at the graduate level

- c) Evidence that there are adequate resources to sustain the quality of scholarship and research activities of undergraduate and graduate students, including library support, information technology support, and laboratory access.*
- d) A budget outline including proposed enrolment, proposed tuition, and indication of whether the proposed program will be cost-recovery.*

2.3.8 Resources for graduate programs only

- a) Evidence that faculty have the recent research or 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 supervisors.*

2.3.9 Resources for undergraduate programs only

- a) Evidence of and planning for adequate numbers and quality of faculty and staff to achieve the goals of the program.*
- b) Planning and commitment to provide the necessary resources in step with the implementation of the program.*
- c) Planned/anticipated class sizes.*
- d) Provision of supervision of experiential learning opportunities (if required).*
- e) The role of adjunct and part-time faculty.*

2.3.10 Quality and other indicators

- a) Definition and use of indicators that provide evidence of quality of the faculty (e.g., 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.*

2.4 Initial Institutional Process

2.4.1 Institutional authority and Quality Council contact

The Provost with the Vice-Provost, Academic Programs is responsible for the oversight of the University of Toronto Quality Assurance Process and ensuring UTQAP is applied in a manner that conforms to our quality assurance principles and Quality Council requirements. The Office of the Vice-Provost, Academic Programs responds to divisional queries and facilitates proposal development with regards to institutional academic, planning and budget, student life, governance and approval aspects of proposals.

Within the office of the Vice-Provost, Academic Programs, the Director, Academic Programs and Policy is the contact between the institution and the Quality Council.

2.4.2 New Program Proposal Brief development and submission to the Vice-Provost, Academic Programs

New programs are initiated within Faculties. The Office of the Dean of the academic division submits the initial proposal outline to the Vice-Provost, Academic Programs who is responsible for providing feedback regarding the program includes the input of the Provost and additional Vice-Provosts, as appropriate.

Once the program has been approved for development, the division works with the Office of the Provost to develop the New Program Brief.

The Dean ensures appropriate compliance with the evaluation criteria (2.3) and ensures that appropriate consultations are conducted with the Office of the Vice-Provost, Academic Programs early in the process of proposal development. The Dean ensures the appropriate consultations are conducted with faculty and students, other university divisions and external institutions. The Dean commissions the external appraisal of a new program as required with the approval of the Vice-Provost, Academic Programs.

The Office of the Provost reviews and approves proposals as identified in figures 1a and 1b.

2.4.3 Program Proposal Brief

The Vice-Provost, Academic Programs confirms that the New Program Proposal Brief is complete, and includes information on all the evaluation criteria (Section 2.3) so that the submission process can continue.

2.4.4 External Appraisals⁵

External appraisals are required for new undergraduate degrees, new specialists and majors (where there is no similar existing specialist or major program), and graduate program proposals only. The following process is required in the selection and appointment of external appraisers who will review the new program proposal.

- External appraisals of new program proposals are commissioned by the Dean of the relevant academic division with the approval of the Vice-Provost, Academic Programs. *There will be at least one reviewer for new undergraduate programs and two for new graduate programs.* (See Manual for a model letter of invitation and sample instructions to reviewers.)
- The reviewers will normally be associate or full professors, or the equivalent, with program management experience, and will be at arm's length from the program under appraisal. (See Manual for a definition of arm's length and for suggestions on the selection of reviewers.)
- External appraisal of new graduate program proposals must incorporate an on-site visit. External appraisal of new undergraduate program proposals will normally be conducted on-site, but may be conducted by desk audit, video-conference or an equivalent method if the external reviewer is satisfied that the off-site option is acceptable.
- External appraisers provide a report that appraises the standards and quality of the proposed program. They will also be invited to acknowledge any clearly innovative aspects of the proposed program and make recommendations on any essential or otherwise desirable modifications to it.

2.4.5 Appraisal Report

The appraisers will provide a report (see Manual template) evaluating the standards and quality of the proposed program and the evaluation criteria (see Manual for exceptions).

2.4.6 Administrative responses

Administrative responses to the Proposal Brief and Appraisal Report are required from both the Dean of the proposing academic unit and the Vice-Provost, Academic Programs. The Vice-Provost, Academic Programs will consult the Vice-Provost, Graduate Education as appropriate.

2.4.7 University of Toronto approval

Based on the Proposal Brief, the Appraisal Report and the internal administrative responses, the proposal will proceed through the divisional and university governance processes.

Divisional governance

Each academic division is responsible for delineating governance approval processes for new undergraduate and graduate programs/diplomas. The Vice-Provost, Academic Programs is responsible for reviewing these processes and ensuring compliance with the University and UTQAP processes. Each division outlines this process on its own council web site. A summary of divisional governance processes is available on the website of the Vice-Provost, Academic Programs.

University-wide governance

Upon approval of a new program by divisional council, the Proposal Brief, External Appraisal, and Administrative Responses are submitted to the Committee on Academic Policy and Programs (AP&P) by the Provost's Office. Pending approval by AP&P, a summarized brief is submitted to Academic Board for final program approval. The summarized brief captures the program and appraisal elements along with the proposal development checklist.

2.4.8 Quality Council Secretariat

⁵ Proposals for new graduate diplomas, collaborative programs and new fields in existing graduate programs undergo an Expedited Approvals process (Figure 1b) without the requirement of an external appraisal (i.e., section 2.4.4 – 2.4.6 do not apply for these proposals).

Upon approval by Academic Board, the Office of the Vice-Provost, Academic Programs submits the Proposal Brief, together with all required reports and documents, to the Quality Council.

2.4.9 Announcement of new programs

Following its submission to the Quality Council, the academic unit *may announce its intention to offer the program, provided that clear indication is given that approval by the Quality Council is pending and provided that no offers of admission will be made until and unless the program is approved by the Council.*

2.5 Initial Quality Council Appraisal Process as set by the Quality Assurance Framework

2.5.1 Secretariat check

The Quality Council Secretariat will confirm that the Proposal Brief and associated reports and internal responses to them (as set out in Section 2.4 above) are complete. If there is missing information or defects of substance, the Secretariat will return the Proposal Brief for revision or amendment and resubmission. Otherwise the Proposal Brief and accompanying documents will be forwarded directly to the Quality Council Appraisal Committee.

2.5.2 Appraisal Committee reviews and recommends

The Quality Council's Appraisal Committee reviews and appraises the complete file. This committee may seek further information, in which case it provides reasons for its requests. In rare instances, the Appraisal Committee may invite further input from an external expert, either through a desk audit or site visit. If no further information is required, the Appraisal Committee, through the Quality Council, will propose its recommendation, including a brief explanation of its reasons. In the case of new undergraduate and graduate degrees and programs this assessment includes one of the following recommendations:

- a) Approval to commence;*
- b) Approval to commence, with report (This typically refers to some provision or facility not currently in place but planned for later implementation, often two to three years in the future. The with report condition implies no lack of quality in the program, does not hold up the implementation of the new program, and is not subject to public reference, whether on the web or elsewhere.)*
- c) Deferral for up to one year during which time the university may address identified issues and report back; or*
- d) Against approval.*

In the case of new graduate diplomas, collaborative programs, new fields in an existing graduate program, after reviewing the submission, conferring with the proposing institution, and receiving further information as needed, the Council's Appraisal Committee will come to its decision that:

- a) That the university proceed with the proposed programs/fields;*
- b) That further consultation is required, over details of interest or concern, regarding the proposed program/fields. It can be anticipated that these subsequent consultations will normally be brief and affirmative in their outcome.*

These steps will normally be completed within forty-five days of receipt of the institution's submission, provided that the submission is complete and in good order, and that no further information or external expert advice is required. Where additional information is required by the Appraisal Committee, one of the four possible recommendations (see above) to the Council will be made within a further thirty days of its receipt.

2.6 Quality Council appraisal process continuation

2.6.1 Institution may consult/appeal to Committee

When the recommendation is one of b), c) or d) in 2.5.2 above, the University may, within sixty days, make an appeal to, or request a meeting with, the Appraisal Committee for reconsideration. Normally, the grounds for seeking reconsideration are that the University will be providing new information, or that there

were errors of fact in the Appraisal Committee's commentary, or there were errors of process. Following such communication, the Appraisal Committee revisits and may revise its assessment. It will convey its final recommendation to the Quality Council.

2.6.2 Institution may appeal to Council. Council decides

Having received and considered the Appraisal Committee's final assessment and recommendation, any additional comments from the University on the assessment, and further, having heard any requested appeal from the University on matters of fact or procedure, the Council makes one of the following decisions:

- a) Approved to commence;
- b) Approved to commence, with report;
- c) Deferred for up to one year, affording the University an opportunity to amend and resubmit its proposal brief; or
- d) That the program proposal is declined.

When the Quality Council chooses option c), then the Appraisal Committee suspends the assessment process until the University has resubmitted its Brief. After this, the Appraisal Committee reactivates its appraisal process (see Section 2.5.2 above). When the Appraisal Committee does not receive a response within the specified period, it considers the proposal to have been withdrawn.

2.6.3 Council reports decision

The Quality Council conveys its decision to the University through the designated institutional contact, and reports it for information to OCAV and to the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU). Information about decisions on approval to commence for new programs, together with a brief description of the programs, are posted on the websites of the Quality Council and the Vice-Provost, Academic Programs. Only at this point may the University make offers of admission to the program.

2.6.4 Waiting period before resubmission

To allow time for revisions to proposals, any institution declined permission to proceed at this stage of the process, or following a denied appeal of the decision, will normally wait until one year has elapsed from the date of the Quality Council's decision before resubmitting a revised version of its proposal. The same waiting period normally applies when a university does not resubmit a deferred program proposal within the specified period.

2.6.5 Subsequent appraisal with report

When the University has been given approval to commence a program with report, the Appraisal Committee reviews the subsequently submitted report, conducts whatever consultation it requires, and then makes one of the following recommendations to the Council. That:

- a) The program be approved to continue without condition.
- b) The program may continue accepting admissions, but the Council requires additional follow-up and a report within a specified period, prior to the conduct of the initial cyclical review. On the Council's receipt of that required report, the procedure returns to this same step in the appraisal process (i.e., Section 2.6.6)
- c) The program be required to suspend admissions for a minimum of two years. The Quality Council will then specify the conditions to be met in the interim in order for admissions to the program to resume.
- d) The University may appeal, to the Quality Council, the proposed recommendation of the Appraisal Committee to suspend admissions to the program (Section 2.6.5c, on the same terms as are set out in Section 2.6.2 above (i.e., the University will be providing new information; and/or there were errors of fact in the Appraisal Committee's commentary; and/or there were errors of process).

2.6.6 Council hears appeal based on report. Council decides

Having received and considered the Appraisal Committee's recommendation, and the University's appeal, if any, the Quality Council may decide:

- a) To approve the program without condition, or
- b) To approve the program continuing admissions with a further report, or

c) To require the program to suspend admissions for a minimum of two years. This decision is final. The Quality Council conveys its decision to the University, and reports it to OCAV and to MTCU for information.

2.7 Subsequent Process

2.7.1 Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU) Funding Approval for New Undergraduate Degrees and Graduate Degrees and Programs

The Minister approves funding (BIU) for new undergraduate degree and graduate degree and diploma programs. The approval process occurs several times per year. Proposals will be submitted to MTCU by the University once Quality Council approval has been received.

2.7.2 Implementation window

*After a new program is approved to commence, the program will begin within **36 months** of that date of approval; otherwise the approval will lapse.*

2.7.3 First cyclical review

*The first cyclical review for any new program must be conducted no more than **8 years** after the date of the program's initial enrolment and normally in accordance with the UofT program review schedule. The Dean is responsible for conveying to the Vice-Provost, Academic Programs the inclusion of the program in the University's review schedule.*

2.8 Quality Council Audit Process

At least one of the undergraduate programs and one of the graduate programs selected for the sample for each institutional audit (See Quality Assurance Framework Section 5.2.2) will be a New Program or a Major Modification to an Existing Program approved within the period since the conduct of the previous audit. The audit cannot reverse the approval of a program to commence.

3 Major Modifications to Existing Programs Protocol

A major modification of a program is a restructuring of a program, a merger of existing programs or a refreshing of a program in order to keep it current with its academic discipline. Under the scope of 'Major Modification' is included:

- a) *Requirements that differ substantially 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) A new undergraduate major or specialist where a similar specialist/major currently exists at the undergraduate level,⁶ and
- e) A new undergraduate option or minor within an existing degree.

Major modifications to existing programs do not require submission of a Proposal Brief to the Quality Council. The University may request that the Quality Council review a major modification proposal and normally that will occur through an Expedited Approval Process without requirement of an external review process.

3.1 Proposal Brief

The proposal brief for a major modification includes the following together with any additional requirements which the academic division chooses to apply (see Templates in Major Modification Manual):

- Rationale for the major modification and fit with the unit's academic plan;
- Outline of the major changes to the program description, requirements, learning outcomes;
- Description of any impact that such major modification may have on other divisions; coordination of consultation with other affected divisions; and,
- Description of any resulting resource implications, including, but not limited to, such areas as staffing, space, libraries and computing facilities, enrolment/admissions, revenue/costs.

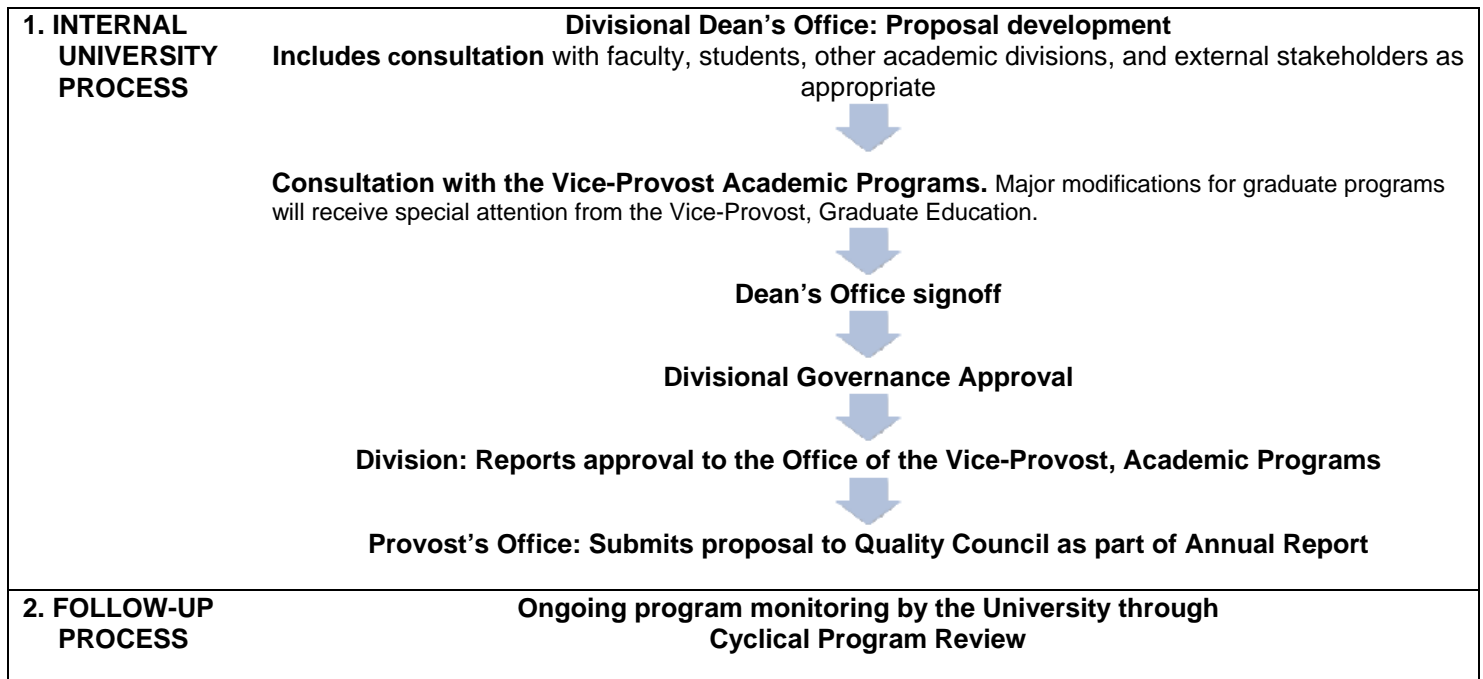
3.2 Institutional Process and Approvals

Major modifications for academic programs are initiated within Academic Divisions. The Office of the Dean is responsible for ensuring that a major modification proposal brief addresses the criteria above and for approving any additional resources required. It ensures co-ordination and consultation with the Office of the Vice-Provost, Academic Programs. The Vice-Provost, Academic Programs is responsible for providing feedback regarding the major modification that includes the input of the Provost and other Vice-Provosts, as appropriate. In particular, major modifications for graduate programs will receive special attention from the Vice-Provost Graduate Education.

The University of Toronto is responsible for approvals of categories a), b), c) d) and e). Such modifications are normally approved by Divisional Councils after sign off to proceed by the Office of the Dean. They are reported annually to the Quality Council by the Office of the Vice-Provost, Academic Programs.

⁶ Item (d) and (e) have been added by the University of Toronto

Figure 2: Process for approval of Major Modifications of undergraduate and graduate programs



3.3 Annual Report to the Quality Council

The Vice-Provost, Academic Programs files an annual report to the Quality Council which provides a summary of major program modifications that were approved through the university's internal approval process in the past year.

3.4 Subsequent University Process

Cyclical review of the program according to the pre-existing cycle within 8 years.

4 Program Closure

There are a number of possible reasons for closing a program including: low enrolment; a changing disciplinary landscape; inadequate resources; and quality of the academic offerings. These reasons may be articulated in external review reports or may be identified by members of the University community.

4.1 Proposal Brief

The proposal brief for a program closure will include the following criteria together with any additional requirements which the academic division chooses to apply (see Templates in Program Closure Manual):

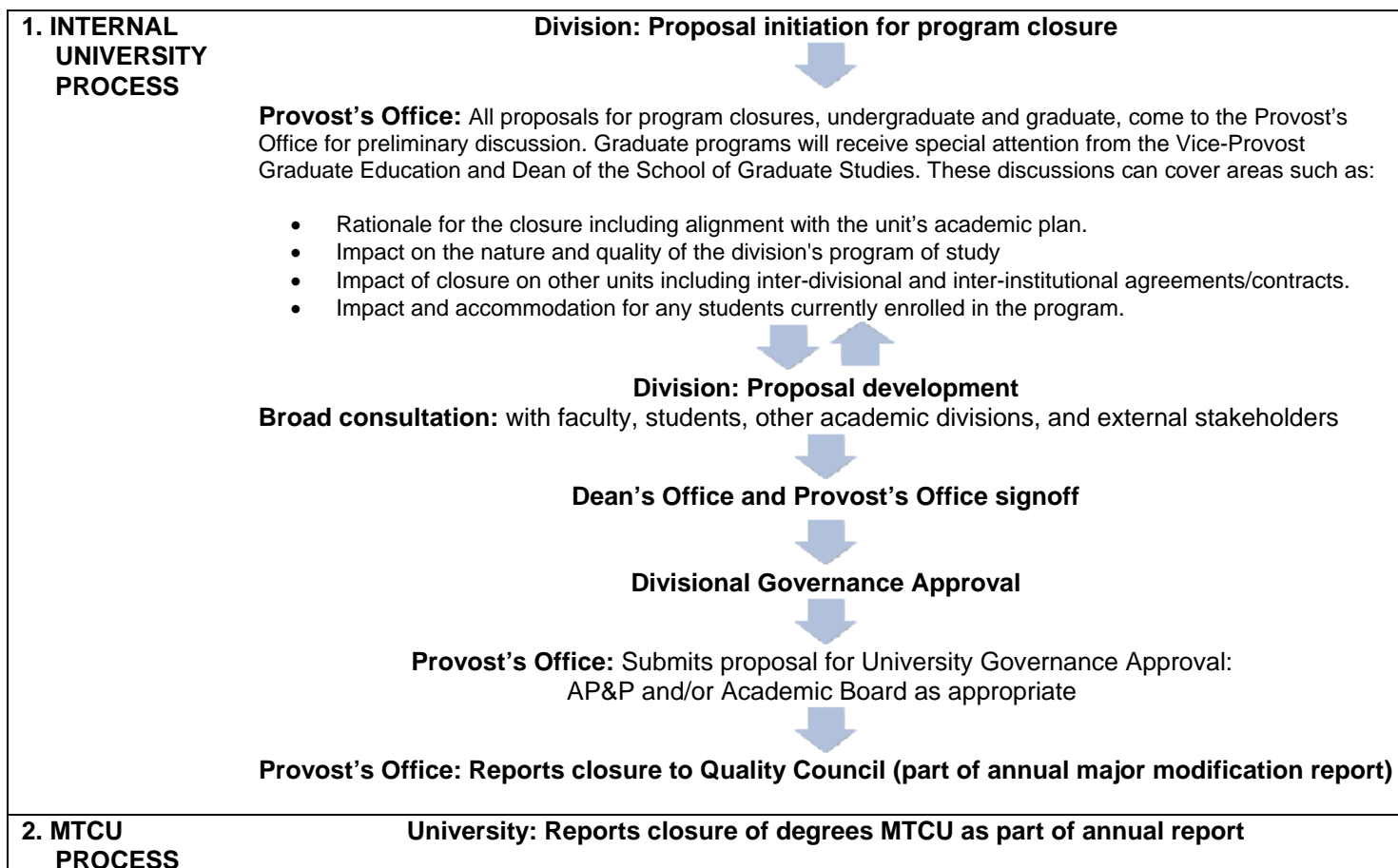
- Rationale for the closure including alignment with the unit’s academic plan.
- Impact on the nature and quality of the division's program of study
- Impact of closure on other units including inter-divisional and inter-institutional agreements/contracts.
- Impact and accommodation for any students currently enrolled in the program.

4.2 Institutional Process and Approvals – Figure 3

Proposals for the closure of degrees and degree programs are brought forward along the same governance path as proposals for new programs. Once the Provost’s Office has signed off on the proposed closure, the closure is taken forward by approval to the divisional council. Program closures for undergraduate specialists and majors are approved by the Committee on Academic Policy and Programs, closures of degrees are approved by the Academic Board, as recommended by the Committee on Academic Policy and Programs.

Program closures are reported annually to the Quality Council by the Vice-Provost Academic Programs.

Figure 3.



5 Cyclical Program Review Protocol

5.1 Purpose and application

The *Cyclical Program Review Protocol* is used to ensure University of Toronto programs meet the highest standards of academic excellence. As stated in the *Policy on Approval and Review of Academic Programs*, regular reviews allow for ongoing appraisal and quality improvement of programs and the academic units in which they reside.

The *Cyclical Program Protocol* applies to all undergraduate and graduate programs offered by the University and programs that are offered by the University with other institutions.

5.2 Institutional authority

The Vice-Provost, Academic Programs is responsible for the oversight of the University of Toronto Quality Assurance Process and ensuring UTQAP is applied in a manner that conforms to our quality assurance principles and Quality Council requirements. The Office of the Vice-Provost, Academic Programs is responsible for ensuring the cyclical reviews of academic programs and/or units are undertaken. *The review cycle includes all joint, multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary, multi-site and inter-institutional programs, and all modes of delivery.*

Within the office of the Vice-Provost, Academic Programs, the Director, Academic Programs and Policy is the authoritative contact between the institution and the Quality Council.

5.3 Programs and review schedule

The University's full complement of undergraduate, graduate and diploma programs are reviewed on a planned cycle.⁷ Reviews are conducted on a regular basis, frequent enough to ensure that the chairs, deans, and the Provost are kept informed of developments in all academic units, but at sufficiently long intervals that the effects of given actions can be assessed and that the system is not over-burdened by the logistical demands of the process. The interval between program reviews must not exceed eight years.

The review of an academic program can be completed through a review of the academic unit offering the program. That is, such reviews may be timed to coincide with the end of term of the unit's head, as the review then also provides a clear mandate for the next leadership of the unit. Reviews of the various programs, undergraduate and graduate, offered by a given academic unit may be synchronized. Reviews may also be conducted concurrently with professional accreditation. Divisions can elect to conduct quality reviews at the level of the degree or the program. Regardless of the schedule, the quality of each academic program and the learning environment of the students in each program are explicitly addressed as set out in the evaluation criteria below.

Academic divisions have considerable flexibility in scheduling their program reviews. Cyclical program reviews of undergraduate programs may be conducted either independently from, or concurrently with, reviews of graduate programs, and/or departments and other academic units. Nevertheless, it is essential that the quality of each academic program and the learning environment of the students in each program will be explicitly addressed in the reviewers' report(s) as set out in this Protocol.

When an academic division chooses to review different program levels (for example, graduate and undergraduate), program modes, or programs offered at different locations, separate reports are prepared for each discrete program or address each program within a single omnibus report with the distinctive attributes of each discrete program reported on by the reviewers.

University-commissioned reviews are not waived because an externally-commissioned review, such as an accreditation, has recently been conducted. Reviews of academic programs for professional accreditation bodies form part of collegial self-regulatory systems to ensure that mutually agreed-upon threshold standards of quality are maintained in new and existing programs. Such reviews may serve

⁷ Include link to provost website that contains listing or reviews/schedule

different purposes than those commissioned by the University. In some cases, however, the University process may be streamlined by assessing the alignment of mandates of externally and internally commissioned reviews and supplementing documentation as necessary.

Interdivisional programs offered by more than one unit may be reviewed as entities distinct from the larger academic units within which they are included. Such programs must have an identified commissioning division for the purpose of administering the Protocol.

Inter-institutional programs offered in partnership with other higher education institutions (colleges and universities) through affiliation, federation and other formal agreements, are reviewed as entities distinct from the larger institutions within which they may be included. Such programs must have an identified review process for administering the *Protocol*.

5.4 Commissioning officer

Reviews of academic programs and the units in which they reside are commissioned Dean. The Vice-Provost, Academic Programs commissions reviews of Faculties and associated programs that are being reviewed at the time of a Faculty review. A database containing a schedule of all program reviews is maintained in the Office of the Vice-Provost, Academic Programs.

In the case of programs that involve more than one unit, the review is commissioned by the lead academic administrator of the program.

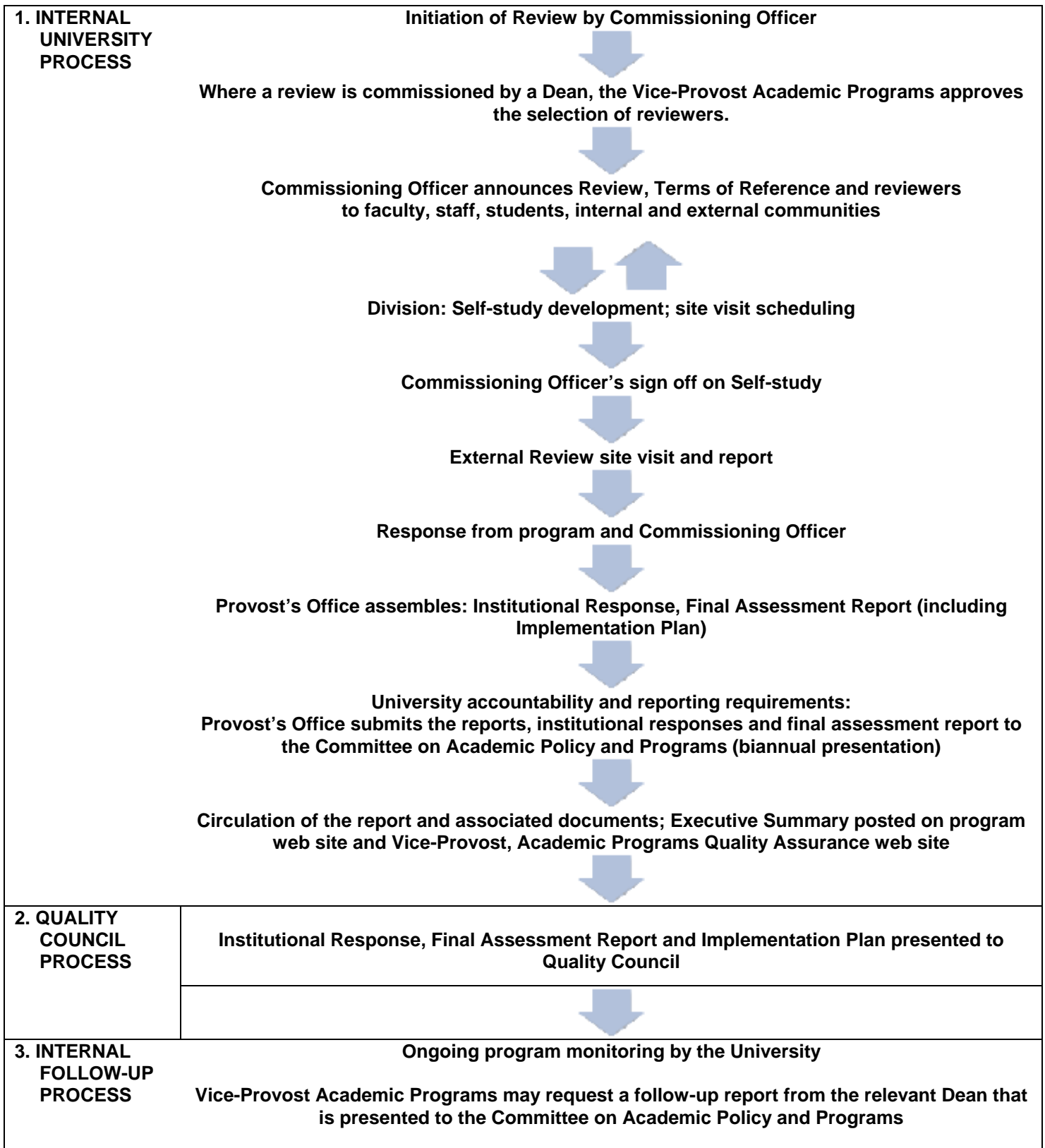
- Reviews of programs offered across divisions are commissioned by the Dean of the identified administrative home of the program.
- Reviews of programs offered in partnership with other higher education institutions (colleges and universities) through formal collaborative and/or affiliation agreements are commissioned jointly by agreed upon and identified senior commissioning officers at the institutions.

5.5 Overview of the review process

The UTQAP for the conduct of **Cyclical Program Reviews** has five principal components:

- a) Self-study (see Section 5.6.4);*
- b) External evaluation (peer review) with report and recommendations on program quality improvement (see Section 5.7);*
- c) University evaluation of the self-study and the external assessment report resulting in recommendations for program quality improvement (see Section 5.8);*
- d) Preparation and adoption of plans to implement recommendations and to monitor their implementation (see Section 5.8.3); and*
- e) Follow-up reporting on the principal findings of the review and the implementation of the recommendations (see Section 5.8.4).*

Figure 4 Overview of the Protocol for Cyclical Program Reviews.



5.6 Self-study Requirements: Internal program perspective

5.6.1 Unit of review

The commissioning officer defines the unit of review, including the specific program or programs that will be reviewed, and formally initiates the review process. For example, a unit may elect to review both its undergraduate and graduate programs concurrently or separately.

5.6.2 Terms of Reference

The terms of reference address the core program evaluation criteria (Section 5.6.5). Commissioning officers may enlarge or enhance the criteria to meet the needs of their disciplines. Standard terms of reference for reviews are included in the Manual.

5.6.3 Announcement

A review is publicly announced by the commissioning officer through appropriate unit and/or program channels and University and/or divisional media as appropriate. Submissions are invited from teaching and administrative staff, students, alumni and members of the program and/or unit community.

5.6.4 Self-study

A *self-study* is a broad-based, reflective report that includes critical analysis. It is an assessment of the appropriateness and strength of the areas of activity in a program and/or the unit. The process of preparing a self-study involves faculty, students and staff and the self-study outlines the nature of this involvement. The self-study must address and document the terms of reference and program evaluation criteria that will be provided to the external reviewers. The UTQAP Manual provides templates that outline the core elements of a self-study.

In accordance with the Quality Assurance Framework, the self-study should address and document the following:

1. *Consistency of the program's learning outcomes with the institution's mission and divisional Degree Level Expectations, and how its graduates achieve those outcomes;*
2. *Program-related data and measures of performance, including applicable provincial, national and professional standards (where available);*
3. *The integrity of the data;*
4. *Core program evaluation criteria and quality indicators identified in Section 5.6.5 below;*
5. *Concerns and recommendations raised in previous reviews;*
6. *Areas identified through the conduct of the self-study as requiring improvement;*
7. *Areas that hold promise for enhancement;*
8. *Academic services that directly contribute to the academic quality of each program under review;*
9. *Participation of program faculty, staff, and students in the self-study and how their views have been obtained and taken into account.*

The input of others deemed to be relevant and useful, such as graduates of the program, representatives of industry, the professions, practical training programs, and employers may also be included.

The self-study is reviewed and approved by the commissioning officer to ensure that it meets the core elements of a self-study and program evaluation criteria. In order to ensure that self-studies include critical self-reflection, divisions can determine the degree to which each individual self-study will be publicly distributed.

5.6.5 Core program evaluation criteria defined by the Quality Assurance Framework

Reviews of undergraduate and graduate programs and graduate diplomas require, at minimum, the evaluation criteria set out below. Commissioning officers may enlarge or enhance the criteria to meet the needs of their disciplines. (See Manual for standardized data to be included, etc.)

i) Objectives

- Program is consistent with the institution's mission and academic plans.
- Program requirements and learning outcomes are clear, appropriate and align with the degree's undergraduate and/or graduate Degree Level Expectations.

ii) Admission requirements

Admission requirements are appropriately aligned with the learning outcomes established for completion of the program.

iii) Curriculum

- The curriculum reflects the current state of the discipline or area of study and is appropriate for the level of the program
- Evidence of any significant innovation or creativity in the content and/or delivery of the program relative to other such programs.
- Mode(s) of delivery to meet the program's identified learning outcomes are appropriate and effective.

iv) Teaching and assessment

- Methods for assessing student achievement of the defined learning outcomes and degree learning expectations are appropriate and effective.
- Appropriateness and effectiveness of the means of assessment, especially in the students' final year of the program, in clearly demonstrating achievement of the program learning objectives and the program's Degree Level Expectations.

v) Resources

Appropriateness and effectiveness of the academic unit's use of existing human, physical and financial resources in delivering its program(s). In making this assessment, reviewers must recognize the institution's autonomy in determining priorities for funding, space, and faculty allocation.

vi) Quality indicators

Outcome measures of student performance and achievement are of particular interest, but there are also important input and process measures which are known to have a strong association with quality outcomes. It is expected that many of the following listed examples will be widely used. The Manual makes reference to further sources and measures that might be considered.

- **Faculty:** qualifications, research and scholarly record; class sizes; percentage of classes taught by permanent or non-permanent (contractual) faculty; numbers, assignments and qualifications of part-time or temporary faculty;
- **Students:** applications and registrations; attrition rates; time-to-completion; final-year academic achievement; graduation rates; academic awards; student in-course reports on teaching; and
- **Graduates:** rates of graduation, employment six months and two years after graduation, postgraduate study, "skills match" and alumni reports on program quality when available and when permitted by the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA). Auditors will be instructed that these items may not be available and applicable to all programs.⁸
- Assessment of the programs relative to the best of their kind offered in Canada, North America and internationally, including areas of strength and opportunities.

⁸ Not all of the items listed will be available or appropriate for all programs. The Council, nevertheless, does encourage institutions to support the identification, collection and use of relevant student performance and outcome data to the extent that is feasible, if only in the longer term.

vii) Quality enhancement

Initiatives taken to enhance the quality of the program and the associated learning and teaching environment.

viii) Additional graduate program criteria

- a) *Evidence that students' time-to-completion is both monitored and managed in relation to the program's defined length and program requirements.*
- b) *Quality and availability of graduate supervision.*
- c) *Definition and application of indicators that provide evidence of faculty, student and program quality, for example:*
 1. *Faculty: funding, honours and awards, and commitment to student mentoring;*
 2. *Students: grade-level for admission, scholarly output, success rates in provincial and national scholarships, competitions, awards and commitment to professional and transferable skills;*
 3. *Program: evidence of a program structure and faculty research that will ensure the intellectual quality of the student experience;*
 4. *Sufficient graduate level courses that students will be able to meet the requirement that two thirds of their course requirements be met through courses at this level (see Manual).*

5.7 External evaluation: reviewer selection and review process

The commissioning officer is responsible for the selection of the external review committee in consultation with the unit and/or program(s) to be reviewed. All reviewers will be approved by the Office of the Provost.

5.7.1 Selection of reviewers

Normally the evaluation will be conducted by a Review Committee composed of at least:

1. *Two external reviewers (or one internal and one external reviewer) for an undergraduate program qualified by discipline and experience to review the program(s);*
2. *Three external reviewers for a graduate program (or two external and one internal reviewer) qualified by discipline and experience to review the program(s);*
3. *Three external reviewers (or two external and one internal reviewer) for the concurrent review of an undergraduate and graduate program.*

In cases of more than one program being considered by the Review Committee, reviewers should be selected to ensure the appropriate review of all the programs being considered. In selecting reviewers, an appropriate balance needs to be struck between familiarity with the unit and/or program(s) under review and distance to allow for objective assessment. All members of the Review Committee must be at arm's length from the program under review, that is, they should not have a particular interest in the outcome of the review due to personal or professional relationships with members of the unit.

The external and institutional reviewers will be active and respected in their field, and normally associate or full professors with program management experience. They will be representatives of peer institutions offering high quality programs in the field under review.

5.7.2 Commissioning Officer responsibilities

The Commissioning officer is responsible in ensuring that all members of the Review Committee will:

1. *Understand their role and obligations;*
2. *Identify and commend the program's notably strong and creative attributes;*
3. *Describe the program's respective strengths, areas for improvement, and opportunities for enhancement;*
4. *Recommend specific steps to be taken to improve the program, distinguishing between those the program can itself take and those that require external action;*
5. *Recognize the institution's autonomy to determine priorities for funding, space, and faculty allocation.*
6. *Respect the confidentiality required for all aspects of the review process.*

5.7.3 Documentation to be provided to the Review Committee

The commissioning officer identifies what reports and information are provided to the Review Committee in advance of the site visit. Core documents that must be included are:

- Terms of Reference;
- Self-study;
- Previous review report including the administrative response(s); and,
- Any non-University commissioned reviews (for example, for professional accreditation or Ontario Council on Graduate Studies) completed since the last review of the unit and/or program.

External reviewers are provided with access to all course descriptions and the *curricula vitae* of faculty. This can be done through course calendars, web links, etc.

In the case of professional programs, the views of employers and professional associations may be solicited and made available to the Review Committee.

5.7.4 Site Visit

The commissioning officer provides the site visit schedule to reviewers. Reviewers should visit together. During their visit, provision must be made for reviewers to meet with faculty, students, administrative staff and senior program administrators as well as members of relevant cognate units as determined by the commissioning officer. In the case of professional programs, the views of employers and professional associates should be made available to the reviewers.

5.7.5 Review Report

The Review Committee submits a report normally within one month of the site visit. The Review Committee's report addresses the substance of both the self-study and the evaluation criteria set out in Section 5.6.5 above. A template for the review report is provided to reviewers to ensure that all elements of the program appraisal are addressed. Before accepting the report as final, the Commissioning Officer brings to the attention of the reviewers any clear factual errors that can be corrected in the report. The Commissioning Officer then formally accepts the final report and submits it to the Office of the Vice-President and Provost.

5.8 Institutional perspective and response

5.8.1 Institutional authority – Administrative perspective

The Office of the Vice-Provost, Academic Programs, as the identified institutional authority, assesses the Review Committee report. The Vice-Provost, Academic Programs requests a formal administrative response to the Review Committee report from the relevant Dean

The Dean responsible for the program then provides his/her response to the Vice-Provost to each of the following:

1. *The plans and recommendations proposed in the self-study;*
2. *The recommendations advanced by the Review Committee;*
3. *The program's response to the Review Committee's report(s).*

The Dean will also describe:

1. *Any changes in organization, policy or governance that would be necessary to meet the recommendations;*

2. *The resources, financial and otherwise, that would be provided in supporting the implementation of selected recommendations; and*
3. *A proposed timeline for the implementation of any of those recommendations.*

A timeline will be specified by the Office of the Vice-Provost, Academic Programs, outlining when the Review Committee report and administrative response will be brought forward to divisional and university governance.

5.8.2 Final Assessment Report

The Vice-Provost, Academic Programs compiles the *Final Assessment Report* providing the institutional synthesis of the external evaluation and internal responses and assessments. This report:

1. *identifies significant strengths of the program;*
2. *identifies opportunities for program improvement and enhancement;*
3. *sets out and prioritizes recommendations that are selected for implementation;*
4. *may include a confidential section (where personnel issues are required to be addressed); and*
5. *includes an institutional Executive Summary, exclusive of any such confidential information, and suitable for publication on the web.*
6. *identifies an Implementation Plan including:*
 - *who will be responsible for approving the recommendations set out in the Final Assessment Report;*
 - *who will be responsible for providing any resources made necessary by those recommendations;*
 - *who will be responsible for acting on those recommendations;*
 - *timelines for acting on and monitoring the implementation of those recommendations; and,*
 - *whether a follow-up one-year report is required from the Dean.*

5.8.3 Circulation of the Review Committee report

The review report is a public document and is circulated within the program and/or unit reviewed along with the administrative response from the Dean and the Final Assessment Report from the Vice-Provost, Academic Programs.

5.8.4 University accountability and reporting requirements

Reviews are important mechanisms of quality assurance accountability. The *Accountability Framework for Review of Academic Programs and Units* is contained within the *Policy for Approval and Review of Academic Programs and Units*. The Framework outlines the following responsibilities and mechanisms:

Program and unit reviews are considered by governance in order to allow governors to ensure that academic administrators are reviewing programs and units on a regular basis and are responding to these reviews in a manner that achieves the purpose of maintaining and improving program quality.

The Office of the Vice-Provost, Academic Programs ensures that reviews are performed on a regular basis, that they are conducted appropriately and that the issues identified in the self-study and by reviewers are dealt with appropriately.

Concerns may be raised in an external review report that require a long and sustained period of response. In order to ensure that improvements are made, the Vice-Provost, Academic Programs may request a follow-up one-year report from the relevant dean to bring forward to AP&P.

Occasionally a program may have a review or series of reviews indicating significant problems or deficiencies such that admissions to the program should be discontinued until significant improvements are made. In these situations, the Divisional Dean or the Vice-Provost, Academic Programs may halt program admissions until there is evidence that changes have been made to address quality concerns.

Reporting

The Office of the Vice-Provost, Academic Programs submits the Final Assessment Reports (excluding all confidential information) and Implementation Plan to governance through the Committee on Academic Policy and Programs of the Academic Board on a biannual basis.

The Committee on Academic Policy and Programs, which reports to the Academic Board, has general responsibility for policy on, and for monitoring, the quality of education and the research activities of the University.⁹ The Committee's terms of reference, membership, and meeting schedule (that include links to agenda documents), are maintained online. The Committee receives review reports on a biannual basis. Its total membership is approximately 31. As with all Governing Council committees, its membership is broadly representative of the academic divisions including Teaching Staff, Administrative Staff, Students and Alumni.¹⁰

The compendium of summaries is also considered by the Agenda Planning Committee of the Academic Board to determine whether they raise any overall academic issues warranting discussion by the Board. As well, the record of the discussion at AP&P is forwarded to the Executive Committee of Governing Council.

The Executive Summary of the outcomes of the review and the subsequent implementation reports are posted on the web site of the Vice-Provost, Academic Programs.

The review Executive Summary of the outcomes of the review, and the associated Implementation Plan is posted on the Office of the University website.

The Vice-Provost, Academic Programs provides for the timely monitoring of the implementation of the recommendations, and the appropriate distribution, including web postings, of the scheduled monitoring reports.

5.8.5 Quality Council reporting requirements

The Quality Council is provided copies of Final Assessment Report (excluding all confidential information), including the Implementation Plan by the Office of the Vice-Provost, Academic Programs on an annual basis.

5.9 Quality Council Audit Process

Auditors independently select programs for audit, typically four undergraduate and four graduate cyclical program reviews.

⁹ <http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/bac/ap.htm>

¹⁰ The Governing Council *Elections Guidelines* establish the manner and procedure to be used in the election of Teaching Staff, Administrative Staff, and Students to the Governing Council and Teaching Staff and Librarians to the Academic Board, including the establishment of constituencies within these categories.
<http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/elections.htm>