

UPRAC REVIEW AND AUDIT GUIDELINES

1. Preamble

As part of their commitment to offering undergraduate programs of high quality and standards, the publicly assisted universities of Ontario have adopted the *UPRAC Review and Audit Guidelines*. Under *Guidelines*, universities undertake to establish, maintain and enhance the academic quality of their programs in accordance with their mission statements and their institutional undergraduate degree level expectations¹. To further this objective and to provide public accountability, they agree to: i) establish policies and procedures for the approval process for the introduction of new programs; ii) establish policies and procedures for the review process of existing programs; and iii) have these policies and procedures audited following the process described herein.

2. Approval Process for New Undergraduate Programs

The institutional policy for the approval of new programs should:

2.1 identify the authority responsible for the application of the policy;

2.2 define the steps in the approval process and the criteria to be applied;

2.3 address the following points:

- 2.3.1 consistency of the program with the general objectives of the institution's mission and academic plans and with the standards, educational goals and learning objectives of the degree, which shall be designed, structured and delivered so that graduates may demonstrate achievement, in ways appropriate to the values and ambitions of the institution, of its undergraduate degree level expectations;
- 2.3.2 appropriateness of the admission requirements, e.g., achievement and preparation, for the learning objectives of the institution and the program;
- 2.3.3 appropriateness of the program's structure and curriculum for its learning objectives;
- 2.3.4 appropriateness of the mode of delivery (including, where applicable, distance or on-line delivery) to meet the program's learning objectives;
- 2.3.5 appropriateness of the methods used for the evaluation of student progress;

¹ The Council of Ontario Universities endorsed OCAV's "Guidelines for University Undergraduate Degree Level Expectations" on December 16, 2005, and institutions have agreed to use the document as a threshold framework for the development of their own undergraduate degree level expectations, which will be consistent with this document – or may indeed go beyond it. See Appendix 3.

- 2.3.6 appropriateness of the utilization of the existing human/physical/ financial resources;
 - 2.3.7 a sufficient number of faculty, including full-time appointments, with evidence of their quality and academic expertise in the area of the proposed program.
- 2.4 when the university has applied to the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU) for authorization to count the students enrolled in a new non-core program toward its BIU entitlement, require evidence that the institution has evaluated and met the criteria established by MTCU for the approval and funding of new non-core programs. Specifically, the university should provide documentation related to each of the criteria identified in the program approvals certification form.

3. Undergraduate Program Review Process

A credible periodic undergraduate program review process undertaken by an institution must include the objective, structure, and elements presented below.

3.1 Objective of the Undergraduate Program Review Process

The objective of the institutional periodic undergraduate program review process is to assess the quality of the undergraduate programs that the university provides in all areas of study.

3.1.1 Scope:

- a) **Institution** - The institution granting a degree is responsible for ensuring the quality of all components of programs of study, including those offered: i) in full or in part by its federated and affiliated institutions, and ii) in partnership with other higher education institutions (colleges and universities) through collaborative or other affiliation agreements.
- b) **Degree Level** - The undergraduate program review process should apply to all programs, including second-entry degree programs that are not subject to OCGS appraisal.
- c) **Program** - A program is defined as a sequence of courses or other units of study prescribed by an institution for the fulfilment of the requirements of a particular degree, and is considered to be the comprehensive body of studies required to graduate with a specialization in a particular discipline (i.e., the "major"). Some institutions may choose to establish quality review processes for their degree programs *per se*, but all should ensure that all their "major" programs are part of coherently defined degree programs, and are the subject of program quality review.

d) **Unit of Review** - Programs are not necessarily coterminous with academic organizational units, and institutions may decide to conduct reviews of their departments or other academic units. Nevertheless, for UPRAC audit purposes, the quality of each major academic program and the learning environment of the students in the program must be explicitly addressed. Provision should be made to include joint programs and multi- or interdisciplinary programs in a way that is appropriate for the institution. (See Appendix 1.)

3.2 Structure of the Undergraduate Program Review Process

The institutional undergraduate program review policy statement should:

- 3.2.1 identify the statutory authority for the policy and the authority responsible for the application of the policy;
- 3.2.2 define the issues to be addressed in the undergraduate program review;
- 3.2.3 specify an appropriate role for faculty deans in the review process;
- 3.2.4 prescribe at least the following steps:
 - a) self-appraisal by professors and students² participating in the program. This should lead to the drafting of a reflective, self-critical, analytical self-study report that is the outcome of active involvement of faculty and students. The self-study should address, at a minimum, the review Elements contained in section 3.3;
 - b) evaluation, including a site visit, by at least one expert from another university, including universities outside Ontario. The expert(s) must be at arm's length from the program under review. At a minimum, the evaluation should address the review Elements contained in Section 3.3;
 - c) appraisal by peers chosen among professors from the institution who do not participate in the program under review. Appraisal by peers could consist of either or both of: i) one or more internal-external reviewers, ii) a committee that receives and acts on the self-appraisal study and reviewers reports;
 - d) the university may also, where appropriate, seek the advice of others such as representatives of industry, professions and practical training programs;
- 3.2.5 specify the mechanism for action on the recommendations arising from the undergraduate program review. This mechanism should bring closure to

² Student involvement in the preparation of the self-appraisal report has included *inter alia* a student survey, open meetings, attendance at a program retreat, etc.

the undergraduate program review by specifying the actions to be taken (and not taken) as a result of the recommendations of the external expert(s), and other aspects of the review process. The mechanism should also describe the monitoring steps that will be followed to ensure that the actions have been taken;

- 3.2.6 determine the maximum period for the cycle of reviews; this should not exceed 10 years for a university's full set of programs;
- 3.2.7 require the publication of a report (excluding all personal information) that summarizes the findings and conclusions of the institutional undergraduate quality review for each program. The report should include a statement of the strengths and weaknesses of the program, and the action to be taken on the recommendations arising from the undergraduate review. This report shall be presented to the Senate, and a report that summarizes the outcomes of the review shall be presented to the governing body of the university.

3.3 Elements of the Undergraduate Program Review Process

Those who know where they intend to go have a better chance of getting there, and of understanding whether they could have done so in a faster, more efficient or otherwise better way. Undergraduate programs that know what they intend their students to achieve have a better chance of having their students indeed achieve what is intended, and of understanding whether those intended outcomes can be achieved more effectively.

The curricular content, admission requirements, mode of delivery, bases of evaluation of student performance, commitment of resources and overall quality of any undergraduate program and its courses are all necessarily related to its goals, learning objectives and learning outcomes. Goals provide an overview for students, instructors and program/course evaluators of what the program or course aims to accomplish. Learning objectives are an expression of what the instructor(s) intends that the student should have learned or achieved by the end of the program or course. Learning outcomes are what the student has actually learned or achieved in the program or course.

The institutional policy for review of existing undergraduate programs should ensure that members of every program give conscious attention to the goals and learning objectives of the program and its courses. Teaching and learning methodologies should be selected that are most likely to lead to the achievement of the stated objectives. Testing and other assessments of student performance should be directly related to determining the extent to which students learned what was intended. Evaluation, monitoring the level of student performance over an extended time period and implementing changes to improve the integrity and quality of a program should be tied explicitly to the outcomes.

In order for the unit to assess the integrity and quality of the program, the institutional policy for review of existing undergraduate programs should address the following points:

- 3.3.1 consistency of the program with the general objectives of the institution's mission and academic plans, and with the standards, educational goals and learning objectives of the degree, which shall be designed, structured and delivered so that graduates may demonstrate achievement, in ways appropriate to the values and ambitions of the institution, of its undergraduate degree level expectations;
- 3.3.2 appropriateness and effectiveness of the admission requirements, e.g., preparation and achievement, for the learning objectives of the institution and the program;
- 3.3.3 appropriateness of the program's structure and curriculum to meet its learning objectives;
- 3.3.4 appropriateness and effectiveness of the mode of delivery (including, where applicable, distance or on-line delivery) to meet the program's learning objectives;
- 3.3.5 appropriateness of the methods used for the evaluation of student progress and, where possible, consideration of the effectiveness of the methods used;
- 3.3.6 the level of achievement of students, consistent with the educational goals for the program and the degree, and institutional standards;
- 3.3.7 appropriateness and effectiveness of the utilization of the existing human/physical/financial resources;
- 3.3.8 definition of indicators that provide evidence of quality of faculty, student clientele (applications and registrations), student quality, and the outcomes of the program (graduation rate, length of studies, etc.) and achievement of its learning objectives. (The indicators are invariably best developed by the unit whose program is under review, but examples of possible indicators could be provided in the institutional policy for undergraduate program reviews. Data on indicators should be collected over an extended time period rather than simply once every review cycle, and the results should be discussed in the self study as a means to enhance program quality and student satisfaction.)

3.4 Relationship of Undergraduate Program Reviews to Professional Accreditation Reviews

Program reviews required for professional accreditation (e.g., engineering and medicine) overlap to a greater or lesser degree with the standards of the

undergraduate program review process described above. Universities may use such accreditation reviews to satisfy the undergraduate program review process to the extent that the accreditation reviews can be demonstrated to be consistent with the objective, structure and elements of the undergraduate program review process. Where accreditation reviews are more focussed than required by the undergraduate program review process, an institution should supplement the accreditation review so that the broader requirements are met.

3.5 Review of Multidisciplinary and Interdisciplinary Programs

In order to conform with UPRAC guidelines, the review of undergraduate inter-disciplinary and multidisciplinary programs, however they are managed, must be clearly shown to have effectively considered such programs as entities distinct from the larger academic units within which they may be included. (See Appendix 1 for more details.)

4. Steps in the Audit

In performing the audit, Auditors should follow three main steps: i) an analysis of the documentation submitted by the institution, ii) appropriate interaction with the institution as defined below, and iii) the preparation of an audit report. The purpose of the audit is to look for assurance that the institution's policies and practices explicitly address the objective, structures and elements described in the previous sections, and that each specified component is covered in the institution's undergraduate program approvals and reviews. The audit is not undertaken to assess the quality of programs themselves, or to judge the "correctness" of any particular objective or outcome, but rather to assess the extent to which the institution's quality assurance policies and practices comply with these guidelines.

The Auditors must ensure that the audit takes place in an atmosphere of co-operation and open dialogue with the institution concerned.

4.1 Auditors Examination of the University Submission

It is essential that the Auditors have a clear understanding of the review process followed by the institution and, to this end, they must have access to all documents and information that they deem necessary.

4.1.1 Documents and information submitted by the institution:

General documents that present the program approval policies, procedures and practices, program review policies, procedures and practices adopted and implemented by the institution, and the schedule of completed and planned periodic quality reviews.

Complete record of the approvals of programs and the reviews of programs as requested by the Auditors. The Auditors reserve the right to choose the programs whose review they wish to examine from the lists of approvals and reviews completed by the institution over the last cycle. In making their choice of programs, the Auditors will take into account the diversity of educational programs offered by the university, whenever possible.

Institutions are required to submit the documents mentioned above, and may provide additional documents they deem appropriate.

The Auditors will undertake to preserve the confidentiality of all documentation.

4.2 Auditors Interaction with the Institution

Following a review of the documentation provided, the Auditors will normally visit the institution, although other modes of interaction may be appropriate (e.g., conference calls, video-conferencing, etc.).

In the course of their site visit or other interaction, the Auditors will speak with members of the senior administration, those responsible for implementation of the approval and review processes, etc. The program and schedule of interaction will be established in consultation with the institution.

4.3 The Audit Report

In the preparation of their report, the Auditors shall refer to articles 3.3, 3.4 and 5.1 of Bylaw 1 of the OCAV Constitution (see Appendix 2), and shall follow the guidelines presented below.

4.3.1 Outline

- a) description of the methodology and the verification steps used by the Auditors;
- b) status report on the program approvals and reviews carried out by the institution;
- c) presentation of the general principles and guidelines used by the institution in the approval and review of its programs;
- d) the Auditors' comments detailing how well the approval and review procedures and practices conform to the institution's own policies, and how well the institutional process as a whole conforms to the objectives, structure and elements of approvals and reviews as defined in 2 and 3 above;

- e) the Auditors' recommendations.

4.3.2 Report

- a) The Auditors prepare a draft report and send a copy to the institution. This consultation is intended to ensure that the report does not contain errors of fact.
- b) The institution may submit any comments that it considers appropriate in response to the draft report. Such comments become part of the official record and may be used by the Auditors to revise their report prior to submission to UPRAC.
- c) UPRAC submits the report to OCAV which shall dispose of it as specified in article 5.2 of Bylaw 1 of the OCAV Constitution (see Appendix 2).

4.3.3 Follow-up on the recommendations

Within a year of publication of the final report, the institution must inform OCAV, through the Auditors, of the steps taken as a result of the recommendations in the report.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Review of Multidisciplinary and Interdisciplinary Programs (Ref. Section 3.5)

For the purposes of this document, multi- or interdisciplinary undergraduate programs may be considered to fall under three different categories:

- 1 programs that have a multi- or interdisciplinary content, but that exist as an independent, free-standing entity within the university, with a core faculty devoted to the program. This core faculty is usually supplemented by faculty from other disciplines who participate on an as-needed basis. These programs should be fully reviewed through the university's undergraduate program review process like any disciplinary program.
- 2 double majors or double honours programs should be reviewed as part of each of the contributing programs.
- 3 programs that are made available to students (usually in limited numbers) by combining offerings from two or more disciplines. These programs generally do not have a dedicated core faculty. Often, but not always, they are the responsibility of a coordinator or a coordinating committee. These programs need some attention in the review cycle of the university.

It would be unreasonable for OCAV to expect that such programs would individually receive the same kind of review as their "parent" programs. Nevertheless, such offerings must be assessed for their quality on a regular basis.

Inasmuch as the "parent" programs themselves are reviewed, the opportunity should be taken to use the substantive review of one of the "parents" to review the multi- or interdisciplinary program. Therefore, each of this type of multi- or interdisciplinary program should be attached to one of the parent programs for the purpose of review. To avoid losing sight of these programs, the attachment for the purpose of review should be permanent; that is, the actual affiliation of the current program coordinator should have no bearing on the designation of the academic unit charged with the review.

Each of these undergraduate interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary programs must be assigned a clearly indicated "parent" unit with responsibility to ensure that programs under its aegis undergo a periodic review.

The reviews of these programs must be included in the schedule of reviews prepared by the institution.

The elements of the review should be simpler than those of a free-standing program, as many elements will have been assessed through the review of the individual "parent" programs. They could consist of the following:

- a description of the program and a rationale for its existence;
- evidence that all contributing units are assessed on a regular basis and the date at which each has been assessed;
- a description of the manner in which the program is managed;
- details of the curriculum and evidence that the academic requirements are aligned with those of the contributing programs;
- evidence that there is demand for the program (i.e., appropriate use of existing resources);
- outcomes of the program.

Appendix 2: Excerpts from OCAV Bylaw 1. (Ref. Section 4.3)

- 3.3 The primary function of Auditors shall be to audit the processes used by universities for the assessment of their existing undergraduate programs and for the implementation of new undergraduate programs, and to prepare reports on their findings for submission by the Undergraduate Program Review Audit Committee to OCAV.
- 3.4 In their reports, the Auditors shall comment on the processes in place at universities, and their appropriateness, and may propose measures for

improvement. Additionally, the Auditors shall review the reports submitted by universities in response to recommendations of previous audits.

5. Disposition of Reports

5.1 In its review of each Audit Report, OCAV shall consider such points as:

- a) whether or not the university has had adequate opportunity to submit data and documentation regarding its evaluation process;
- b) whether or not the Auditors carried out the audit according to the methodology laid down in the Guidelines established by OCAV;
- c) whether or not the university had adequate opportunity to respond to the Audit Report;
- d) whether or not the university had adequate opportunity to argue its position with the Auditors.

5.2 Following OCAV's review of the report and, if necessary, consultation with the Auditors, and being satisfied that the UPRAC Audit Guidelines have been followed, OCAV shall receive the report by majority vote. It shall be transmitted by the COU secretariat to the institution concerned, COU and to MTCU.

Appendix 3: University Undergraduate Degree Level Expectations

Preamble:

The globalization of higher education has led to the need to be able to compare and contrast the variety of qualifications granted by academic institutions for credit transfer, graduate study preparation and professional qualification. Similarly, jurisdictions with decentralized systems are looking for ways to measure academic equivalencies. In addition, in order to be able to evaluate and monitor the effectiveness of all aspects of instruction, institutions, accrediting authorities and funding bodies have begun to clarify the outcomes expected of graduates. In response to a national initiative to state degree expectations, the Executive Heads of Ontario's publicly assisted universities asked OCAV to prepare a framework to reflect expectations of performance by the graduates of the Baccalaureate/Bachelors programs of Ontario's publicly assisted universities. The document, "Guidelines for University Undergraduate Degree Level Expectations," developed by the Ontario Council of Academic Vice-Presidents was subsequently endorsed by the Council of Ontario Universities on December 16, 2005.

The degree level expectations in OCAV's "Guidelines" elaborate the intellectual and creative development of students and the acquisition of relevant skills that have been widely, yet implicitly, understood. Here they are explicitly stated. Ontario's universities have agreed to use OCAV's "Guidelines" as a threshold framework for the expression of their own degree level expectations, which will be consistent with this document -- or may indeed go beyond it. In articulating its statement of degree level expectations, each institution is free to use language that reflects its own mission, ethos, values and culture.

Ontario Council of Academic Vice Presidents (OCAV)
Guidelines for University Undergraduate Degree Level Expectations

	Baccalaureate/Bachelor's Degree <i>This degree is awarded to students who have demonstrated:</i>	Baccalaureate/Bachelor's Degree: Honours <i>This degree is awarded to students who have demonstrated:</i>
1. Depth and Breadth of Knowledge	<p>a) a general knowledge and understanding of many key concepts, methodologies, theoretical approaches and assumptions in a discipline</p> <p>b) a broad understanding of some of the major fields in a discipline, including, where appropriate, from an interdisciplinary perspective, and how the fields may intersect with fields in related disciplines</p> <p>c) an ability to gather, review, evaluate and interpret information relevant to one or more of the major fields in a discipline</p> <p>d) some detailed knowledge in an area of the discipline</p> <p>e) critical thinking and analytical skills inside and outside the discipline</p> <p>f) the ability to apply learning from one or more areas outside the discipline</p>	<p>a) a developed knowledge and critical understanding of the key concepts, methodologies, current advances, theoretical approaches and assumptions in a discipline overall, as well as in a specialized area of a discipline</p> <p>b) a developed understanding of many of the major fields in a discipline, including, where appropriate, from an interdisciplinary perspective, and how the fields may intersect with fields in related disciplines</p> <p>c) a developed ability to: i) gather, review, evaluate and interpret information; and ii) compare the merits of alternate hypotheses or creative options, relevant to one or more of the major fields in a discipline</p> <p>d) a developed, detailed knowledge of and experience in research in an area of the discipline</p> <p>e) developed critical thinking and analytical skills inside and outside the discipline</p> <p>f) the ability to apply learning from one or more areas outside the discipline</p>
2. Knowledge of Methodologies	<p>... an understanding of methods of enquiry or creative activity, or both, in their primary area of study that enables the student to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • evaluate the appropriateness of different approaches to solving problems using well established ideas and techniques; and • devise and sustain arguments or solve problems using these methods. 	<p>... an understanding of methods of enquiry or creative activity, or both, in their primary area of study that enables the student to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • evaluate the appropriateness of different approaches to solving problems using well established ideas and techniques; • devise and sustain arguments or solve problems using these methods; and

		describe and comment upon particular aspects of current research or equivalent advanced scholarship.
3. Application of Knowledge	<p>a) the ability to review, present, and interpret quantitative and qualitative information to:</p> <p>i) develop lines of argument;</p> <p>ii) make sound judgments in accordance with the major theories, concepts and methods of the subject(s) of study; and</p> <p>b) the ability to use a basic range of established techniques to:</p> <p>i) analyse information;</p> <p>ii) evaluate the appropriateness of different approaches to solving problems related to their area(s) of study;</p> <p>iii) propose solutions; and</p> <p>c) the ability to make use of scholarly reviews and primary sources.</p>	<p>a) the ability to review, present and critically evaluate qualitative and quantitative information to:</p> <p>i) develop lines of argument;</p> <p>ii) make sound judgments in accordance with the major theories, concepts and methods of the subject(s) of study;</p> <p>iii) apply underlying concepts, principles, and techniques of analysis, both within and outside the discipline;</p> <p>iv) where appropriate use this knowledge in the creative process; and</p> <p>b) the ability to use a range of established techniques to:</p> <p>i) initiate and undertake critical evaluation of arguments, assumptions, abstract concepts and information;</p> <p>ii) propose solutions;</p> <p>iii) frame appropriate questions for the purpose of solving a problem;</p> <p>iv) solve a problem or create a new work; and</p> <p>c) the ability to make critical use of scholarly reviews and primary sources.</p>
4. Communication Skills	... the ability to communicate accurately and reliably, orally and in writing to a range of audiences.	... the ability to communicate information, arguments, and analyses accurately and reliably, orally and in writing to a range of audiences.
5. Awareness of Limits of Knowledge	... an understanding of the limits to their own knowledge and how this might influence their analyses and interpretations.	... an understanding of the limits to their own knowledge and ability, and an appreciation of the uncertainty, ambiguity and limits to knowledge and how this might influence analyses and interpretations.
6. Autonomy and Professional Capacity	<p>a) qualities and transferable skills necessary for further study, employment, community involvement and other activities requiring:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the exercise of personal responsibility and decision- 	<p>a) qualities and transferable skills necessary for further study, employment, community involvement and other activities requiring:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the exercise of initiative, personal responsibility and accountability in

	<p>making;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • working effectively with others; <p>b) the ability to identify and address their own learning needs in changing circumstances and to select an appropriate program of further study; and</p> <p>c) behaviour consistent with academic integrity and social responsibility.</p>	<p>both personal and group contexts;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • working effectively with others; • decision-making in complex contexts; <p>b) the ability to manage their own learning in changing circumstances, both within and outside the discipline and to select an appropriate program of further study; and</p> <p>c) behaviour consistent with academic integrity and social responsibility.</p>
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 Working Group on University Undergraduate Degree Level Expectations
 Ontario Council of Academic Vice-Presidents

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