Western's Institutional Quality Assurance Process

Western University Canada

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Western's Institutional Quality Assurance Process

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1. Introduction

1.0 Preamble

As part of its ongoing commitment to offering graduate and undergraduate programs of high quality, Western University has adopted the *Quality Assurance Framework* of the Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance. In accordance with this Framework and Western's history of commitment to quality education, the University undertakes to establish, maintain and enhance the academic quality of its programs, in keeping with its academic mission and its institutional degree expectations.

Western is a mature university with well-established processes. These processes have been effective in fostering innovation while maintaining academic excellence. The over-arching structure mandated in the *Quality Assurance Framework* has long been operational at Western, and only minor changes have been necessitated for compliance with the *Quality Assurance Framework*. Consequently, the modifications to Western's processes to create our Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP) were undertaken with the explicit intent of preserving our processes known to be effective and enabling the innovation necessary in today's educational context. Our quality assurance processes reflect our commitment to excellence in undergraduate and graduate education.

1.1 Authorities

Western's Senate is the ultimate authority with respect to ensuring the quality of all academic programs. The Senate Committee on Academic Policy and Awards (SCAPA) and its two subcommittees, the Senate Subcommittee on Program Review – Undergraduate (SUPR-U) and the Senate Subcommittee on Program Review – Graduate (SUPR-G), undertake the program reviews on Senate's behalf and bring all program recommendations to Senate for ultimate consideration and/or approval.

The Provost and Vice-President (Academic), along with the Vice-Provost (Academic Programs & Students)[Registrar] and the Vice-Provost (Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies), have oversight of the undergraduate and graduate quality assurance processes. The Provost is supported by an advisory committee, the Committee on Program Review (COPR), which monitors all aspects of the program review process at Western and advises the Provost regarding compliance and effectiveness and ensures public accountability of the review outcomes. In addition, Western has an established Annual Planning Process in which the academic plans and strategic priorities of each Faculty are reviewed in relation to fiscal resources. This planning process facilitates effective monitoring of program review recommendations.

Western's Institutional Quality Assurance Process and any subsequent revisions to this process are subject to the approval of Senate and the Quality Council, on behalf of the Council of Ontario Universities.

1.2 Contact

The Provost and Vice-President (Academic) is the contact person for the Quality Council and the Council of Ontario Universities.

1.3 Overview and Scope of the Quality Assurance Framework

All undergraduate and graduate programs offered by Western and its affiliated University Colleges (Brescia University College, Huron University College, and King's University College) for which a degree is conferred or a diploma or certificate is awarded are subject to Western's IQAP. In addition, Western's IQAP includes all programs offered jointly between Western and another institution (such as collaborative programs offered by Western and Fanshawe College).

The *Quality Assurance Framework* has four components:

- **Protocol for New Program Approvals** applies to new undergraduate and new graduate programs; in addition to requiring Senate approval, new programs require review and approval by the Quality Council Appraisal Committee.

- **Protocol for Expedited Approvals** applies to the introduction of a new collaborative graduate program or graduate diploma. It also applies to collaborative undergraduate programs, such as 2 + 2 programs with Fanshawe College. Following approval by Senate, such new program or diploma proposals are submitted to the Quality Council for expedited review and approval. **Major modifications** to existing programs are approved by Senate and reported to the Quality Council.

- **Protocol for Cyclical Review of Existing Programs** applies to existing undergraduate and graduate programs and for-credit diploma programs. When possible and desirable, undergraduate and graduate program reviews can be conducted concurrently and may be scheduled to coincide with external accreditation reviews.

- **Protocol for the Audit Process** applies to an audit of Western's own Institutional Quality Assurance Process for the review of undergraduate and graduate programs. The Quality Council has the authority to approve or not approve the auditors' report. The outcome of an audit cannot reverse the approval of program.

1.4 Acronyms

COPR	Committee on Program Review
DAP	Deans' Academic Programs Committee
GEC	Graduate Education Council
IQAP	Institutional Quality Assurance Process
QC	Ontario Universities Council of Quality Assurance / Quality Council

SCAPA	Senate Committee on Academic Policy and Awards
SGPS	School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies
SUPR-G	Senate Subcommittee on Program Review – Graduate Programs
SUPR-U	Senate Subcommittee on Program Review – Undergraduate Programs
VP(APS)[R]	Vice-Provost (Academic Programs and Students)[Registrar]
VP(SGPS)	Vice-Provost (School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies)

1.5 Definitions

Definitions		
	Graduate	**Undergraduate**
Certificate Program	• Not offered at the graduate level.	• A structured set of courses specified by a Department, Faculty or Affiliated University College to allow students to acquire a specific set of skills or competencies. • May be pursued concurrently with, or subsequent to, the completion of a Bachelor's degree. • Should be awarded when the following criteria are met: 1. normally a pre-degree program; 2. normally requiring up to the equivalent of one calendar year or more to complete; and 3. normally consisting of a minimum of 3.0 courses, frequently in combination with a certificate-credit component.
Collaborative/ Joint Program	• A multidisciplinary or interdisciplinary experience offered to students enrolled in one of a number of participating existing graduate programs. • Students are registered in the participating degree program, meeting the requirements of the participating program as well as those of the collaborative program.	• A 2 + 2 (or similar) program with a community college or with another university.
Diploma Program	• A structured set of courses specified by a Program to allow students to acquire a set of skills or competencies. • For-credit diploma program that meets one of the following specifications: ▪ **Type 1:** Awarded when a candidate admitted to a master's program leaves the program after completing a certain proportion of the requirements. Students are not admitted directly to these programs. ▪ **Type 2:** Offered in conjunction with a master's (or doctoral) degree, the admission to which requires that the	• A structured set of courses specified by a Department, Faculty or Affiliated University College to allow students to acquire a specific set of skills or competencies. • Normally post-graduate programs. • Should be awarded when the following criteria are met: 1. normally a post-degree program; 2. normally requiring the equivalent of one calendar year or more to complete; and 3. normally consisting of a minimum of 5.0 courses.

	candidate be already admitted to the master's (or doctoral) program. This represents an additional, usually interdisciplinary, qualification. ▪ **Type 3:** A stand-alone, direct-entry program, generally developed by a unit already offering a related master's or doctoral degree, and designed to meet the needs of a particular clientele or market.	
Field	• An area of strength, specialization or concentration within a program that is approved through the review process.	• Not offered at the undergraduate level.
Major Modification	• A significant change in program requirements, which may include: o a significant change to the learning outcome(s) of the program ▪ a significant change to the learning outcome(s) is one that changes, broadens or limits the subsequent career or educational opportunities of the graduates (e.g., a master's program currently aimed at educating doctoral program-bound graduates revises its curriculum to yield master's graduates with practical experience in applied areas directly relevant to professional careers) o elimination, introduction, or replacement of a thesis requirement o introduction of a course-based option o replacement of a course-requirement with a practical or experiential requirement o creation, deletion or renaming of a field.	• Introduction of new module (honors specialization, specialization, or major) that comprises primarily existing courses and that is offered with existing faculty expertise and resources. • Introduction of a new diploma or certificate program. • Any change to an existing program that affects the learning outcome(s) of the program. o a significant change to the learning outcome(s) is one that changes, broadens or limits the subsequent career or educational opportunities of the graduates. • Any change that is considered more substantive than what is appropriate for Western's Deans Academic Process (DAP) for review and approval.
Minor Revision	• A change to the content or title of a course. • A change that does not affect the program requirements or learning outcomes.	• Submissions to DAP (the Deans' Academic Programs Committee or "Virtual Committee" of SCAPA), which: ▪ introduce, revise or withdraw a course ▪ change the weight of a 1.0 (full) course to a 0.5 (half) course, or vice versa. (This is done by withdrawing one course and introducing a new one in its place with a new number. The former course is listed as an antirequisite.) ▪ change the essay designation on a course, e.g., A/B to F/G or vice versa ▪ delete, change, or add an antirequisite, prerequisite or corequisite • Introduction of a new module that has requirements and learning outcomes

		substantially the same as an existing module. • Introduction of a new minor module that comprises primarily existing courses that is offered with existing faculty expertise and resources • Minor course changes include: ▪ changes to titles or descriptions of courses which do not substantively change the course content ▪ changes to course hours
Module	• Not offered at the graduate level.	• A structured set of courses specified by a Department, Faculty or Affiliated University College to fulfill the requirements of an Honors Specialization, Specialization, Major or Minor. Modules are the central components that determine the disciplinary character of a degree. Students can combine different modules from different subjects, departments and Faculties to construct individualized, interdisciplinary degrees. • **Honors Specialization module**: ▪ Comprised of 9.0 or more courses designated by a Department, Faculty or Affiliated University College; available only in an Honors Bachelor Degree (Four-Year). • **Specialization module**: ▪ Comprised of 9.0 or more courses designated by a Department, Faculty or Affiliated University College; available only in a Bachelor Degree (Four-Year). • **Major module**: ▪ Comprised of 6.0 or 7.0 courses designated by a Department, Faculty or Affiliated University College. This module is available in the Bachelor Degree (Four-Year), the Bachelor Degree (Three-Year), and the Honors Bachelor Degree (Four-Year). • **Minor module**: ▪ Comprised of 4.0 or 5.0 courses designated by a Department, Faculty or Affiliated University College. A degree with a single Minor is not available. A Minor may be combined with another Minor in a Bachelor Degree (Three-Year) or a Minor module may be taken as an additional module within the Honors

		Bachelor Degree (Four-Year), the Bachelor Degree (Four-Year), or the Bachelor Degree (Three-Year).
New Program	• Any degree or program currently approved by Senate which has not been previously approved by the Quality Council or its predecessor. • A "new program" is brand new; the program has substantially different program requirements and substantially different learning outcomes from those of any existing program offered at Western. • A new master's or doctoral program (e.g., introduction of a PhD Program in Film Studies). • A new professional master's program in an area where Western already has a thesis/research-based master's program (e.g., introduction of a MA in Professional Writing).	• Any degree, degree program, or specialization currently approved by Senate which has not been previously approved by the Quality Council or its predecessor. • A "new program" is brand new; the program has substantially different program requirements and substantially different learning outcomes from those of any existing program offered at Western. • A new program is a program consisting primarily of new courses offered predominantly by new faculty members who are recruited to provide the program area expertise previously lacking at Western. In addition to the need for new faculty members, new programs also require additional resources, such as space and library collections. • A new program could be: ▪ A new degree program (e.g., BHSc – Bachelor of Health Sciences). ▪ A new disciplinary program (e.g., BSc in Oceanography). ▪ A new module, if the module has requirements and learning outcomes that are substantially different from those of any existing module.

Western's Institutional Quality Assurance Process
Levels of Approval

Program / Review		Internal Reviewers	External Consultants	SUPR-U	SUPR-G	SCAPA	Senate	Quality Council
New Program (New Graduate Program; New Undergraduate Degree Program or Disciplinary Program)	Graduate	2	2	-	for recommendation	for approval	for approval	for approval
	Undergraduate	2	2	for recommendation	-	for approval	for approval	for approval
Periodic Appraisal (All existing Graduate & Undergraduate Programs)	Graduate	2	2	-	for recommendation	for approval	report	report
	Undergraduate	2	2	for recommendation	-	for approval	report	report
Expedited Review (Graduate: New Collaborative Program, New Diploma)	Graduate		-	-	for review and recommendation	for approval	for approval	for approval
(Undergraduate: New Collaborative Program or 2+2 with community college or other university)	Undergraduate	2	-	for recommendation		for approval	for approval	For approval
Major Modification (Change in Graduate Program Requirements, Change in Field(s);	Graduate		-	-	for recommendation	for approval	for approval	report
Introduction of Undergraduate Diploma or Certificate; Introduction of Undergraduate Module- except Minor)	Undergraduate	-	-	for recommendation	-	for approval	for approval	report

SUPR-U Senate Subcommittee on Undergraduate Program Review
SUPR-G Senate Subcommittee on Graduate Program Review
SCAPA Senate Committee on Academic Policy and Awards

2. New Program Approvals

2.0 Preamble

Proposals for all new undergraduate and graduate programs, regardless of whether the University will be applying for provincial funding, require review and approval by Western's Senate and must be approved by the Quality Council.

2.1 Evaluation Criteria

2.1.1 Objectives

a) consistency of the program with Western's mission, values, strategic priorities, and academic plans;
b) clarity and appropriateness of the program's requirements and associated learning outcomes in relation to the undergraduate degree level expectations or the graduate level degree expectations;
c) appropriateness of the degree nomenclature.

2.1.2 Admission Requirements

a) appropriateness of the program's admission requirements for the learning expectations established for the program;
b) sufficient explanation of alternative or additional requirements, if any, beyond the minimum standards of the University, Faculty, or School.

2.1.3 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 the program length that ensures that the program requirements can reasonably be met within the proposed time period (with a maximum of 6 terms for master's programs and 12 terms for doctoral programs).

2.1.4 Program Content

a) how the curriculum addresses the current state of the discipline or field of study;
b) identification of any unique curriculum or program innovations or creative components;
c) for research-focused graduate programs, indication of the nature and appropriateness of the major research requirement;

d) for graduate programs, indication that at least two-thirds of the course requirements are graduate level.

2.1.5 Mode of Delivery

Appropriateness of the proposed mode(s) of delivery to meet the intended program learning outcomes and degree level expectations

2.1.6 Assessment of Teaching and Learning

a) appropriateness of the proposed methods for the assessment or student achievement of the intended learning outcomes and degree level expectations;
b) completeness of plans for documenting and demonstrating the level of performance of students, consistent with OCAV's statement of degree level expectations.

2.1.7 Resources for All Programs

a) adequacy of the academic unit's planned use 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;
c) evidence that there are adequate resources to support the quality of scholarship and research activity expected of the undergraduate or graduate students, including:
    i. library resources and support;
    ii. information technology;
    iii. laboratory resources and access.

2.1.8 Resources for Graduate Programs

a) evidence that faculty have the scholarly/research or professional/clinical expertise needed to sustain the program, promote innovation, and foster an intellectual climate;
b) for research-based graduate programs, evidence that financial support for students will be sufficient to ensure adequate quality and numbers of students;
c) evidence of appropriate instruction and supervisory qualifications and capacity.

2.1.9 Resources for Undergraduate Programs

a) evidence of, or planning for, adequate numbers of faculty and staff to achieve the goals of the program;
b) plans and commitment to provide the necessary resources as needed to implement the program;

c) planned or anticipated class sizes;
d) opportunities for, and supervision of, experiential learning (if required);
e) the role of adjunct or part-time faculty.

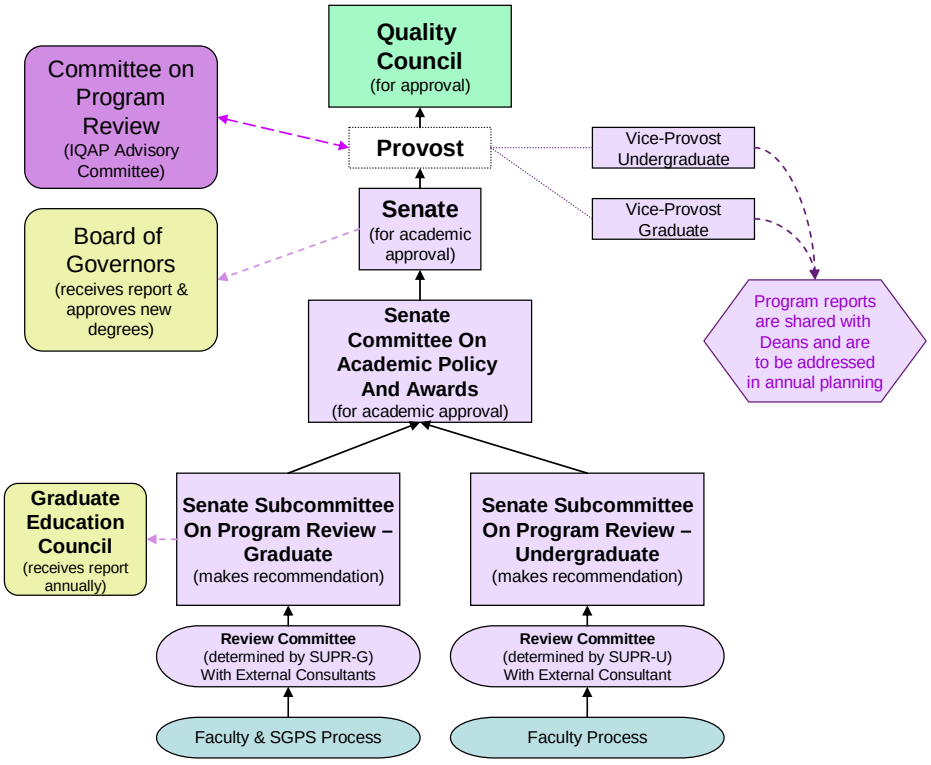
2.1.10 Quality and Other Indicators

a) indicators that provide evidence of quality of the faculty (e.g., qualifications, research impact, teaching effectiveness, innovation, scholarly record, appropriateness of collective faculty expertise to contribute substantively to the program);
b) evidence of a program structure and faculty research/scholarly achievement that will ensure the intellectual/scholarly quality of the student experience.

2.2 Institutional Process

2.2.1 Steps

Western's IQAP Process for New Programs



1. The proposal is developed by the academic unit and subject to the Faculty's internal approval process. The new program proposal is identified in the Faculty's annual planning document.

2. The proposal for a new program is received by SUPR-U/SUPR-G; SUPR-U/SUPR-G appoints internal reviewers and external consultant(s) to review the proposal and conduct a site visit. The external consultant(s) submits a written report of the review; the internal reviewers prepare a summary report of the review for SUPR-U/SUPR-G.
3. On the basis of the external consultants' report, the academic unit's response to the report, and the internal reviewers' summary, SUPR-U/SUPR-G makes a recommendation to SCAPA.
4. SCAPA reviews the report of SUPR-U/SUPR-G and if approved, forwards to Senate.
5. Senate approves the new program.
6. Provost's Office submits the proposal to the Quality Council for approval.
7. The proposal is submitted to the Ministry of Training, Colleges, and Universities for funding purposes.
8. The new program is monitored by the University through the annual planning process.
9. The first cyclical review occurs within eight years of the first enrolment into the program.

2.2.2 Program Proposal Brief

For proposed new graduate programs, academic units must submit a completed "Notification of Proposed New Program or Modification to Current Program" form to the School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies. Following review of the notification and discussion of the proposed program with the Vice-Provost (Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies), the unit must prepare a New Program Proposal Brief for review conducted by SUPR-G.

For proposed new undergraduate programs, academic units must prepare a "Form for Proposal of a New Program" for review by SUPR-U.

2.2.3 External Consultants

All proposals for new programs will be subject to review by external consultants. For new undergraduate programs, two external consultants will be chosen by the Chair of SUPR-U. In addition to reviewing the program brief, the consultants will normally conduct an on-site review, accompanied by two internal reviewers selected by SUPR-U. Subject to approval of the Provost, a desk audit or video-conference method may be undertaken if decided by the external consultant.

For new graduate programs, two external consultants will be chosen by the Chairs of SUPR-G in consultation with the Vice-Provost (Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies). In addition to reviewing the program brief, the consultants will conduct an on-site review, accompanied by two internal reviewers selected by SUPR-G.

Consultants will normally be associate or full professors, preferably with some program administration experience, and must be at "arms length" from the program under review.

"Arms length" reviewers have no family ties, partnership links, supervisory relationships or other relationships with anyone in the program being reviewed. A conflict of interest would exist in cases where the proposed consultant has collaborated or published with a member of the program within the past seven years, has an administrative or family link with a member of the program being reviewed, has been a supervisor or supervisee (graduate or postdoctoral) of a member of the program being reviewed within the past seven years, is a former member of the program being reviewed, is a friend of a member of the program being reviewed, or has been a recent (within the past five years) visiting professor in the program being reviewed.

2.2.4 External Consultants' Report

The external consultants will normally provide a joint report that appraises the standards and quality of the proposed program and addresses the criteria in 2.1. The consultants will be instructed to submit the report to the Chair of SUPR-U / SUPR-G within two weeks of the on-site visit.

In addition to addressing the evaluation criteria (as described in Section 2.1), the external consultants will also be invited to comment on any innovative aspects of the proposed program and to recommend any modifications for improvement.

The report of the external consultants will be shared with the relevant Dean(s) and Chair(s) or Director(s) of the proposing academic unit(s) and their response to the report will be requested. In addition, the report will be shared with the Vice-Provost (Academic Programs and Students) [Registrar] or the Vice-Provost (Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies), who may also provide a written response.

2.2.5 Institutional Approval

SUPR-U/SUPR-G will review the proposal, the report of the external consultants, the academic unit's response to the report, and the summary by the internal reviewers, relative to the criteria in Section 2.1 and will make a recommendation regarding approval to the Senate Committee on Academic Policy and Awards (SCAPA). SCAPA will review the recommendation from SUPR-U/SUPR-G and if approved, will provide its recommendation Senate.

2.2.6 Quality Council Secretariat

Following Senate's approval of the new program, the New Program Proposal Brief (for a graduate program) or the Form for Submission of a New Program (for an undergraduate program), along with the report of the external consultant(s) and the academic unit's response, and the summary of the internal reviewers, will be submitted to the QC from the Office of the Provost and Vice-President (Academic).

2.2.7 Announcement of New Programs

Following SUPR-U/SUPR-G's approval that the new program proceed to a full review, Western will announce its intention to offer a new undergraduate or graduate program in advance of approval by the Quality Council. The announcement must contain the following statement: "Prospective students are advised that offers of admission to a new program may be made only after the university's own quality assurance processes have been completed and the Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance has approved the program."

2.2.8 Implementation Window

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

2.2.9 First Cyclical Review

The first cyclical review of the program will be conducted no more than eight years after the date of the program's initial enrolment and normally in accordance with Western's program review schedule.

2.2.10 Monitoring

The program will be monitored through the Annual Planning Process. A section of the Faculty's annual planning document will be devoted to commenting on progress of the new program.

2.2.11 Final Process

Western will undergo an audit process conducted by the Audit Committee of the Quality Council. At least one of the undergraduate and one of the graduate programs selected for the audit sample will be a new program or a major modification to an existing program approved within the period since the previous audit. The audit cannot reverse the approval of a program.

3. Expedited Approvals

3.0 Preamble

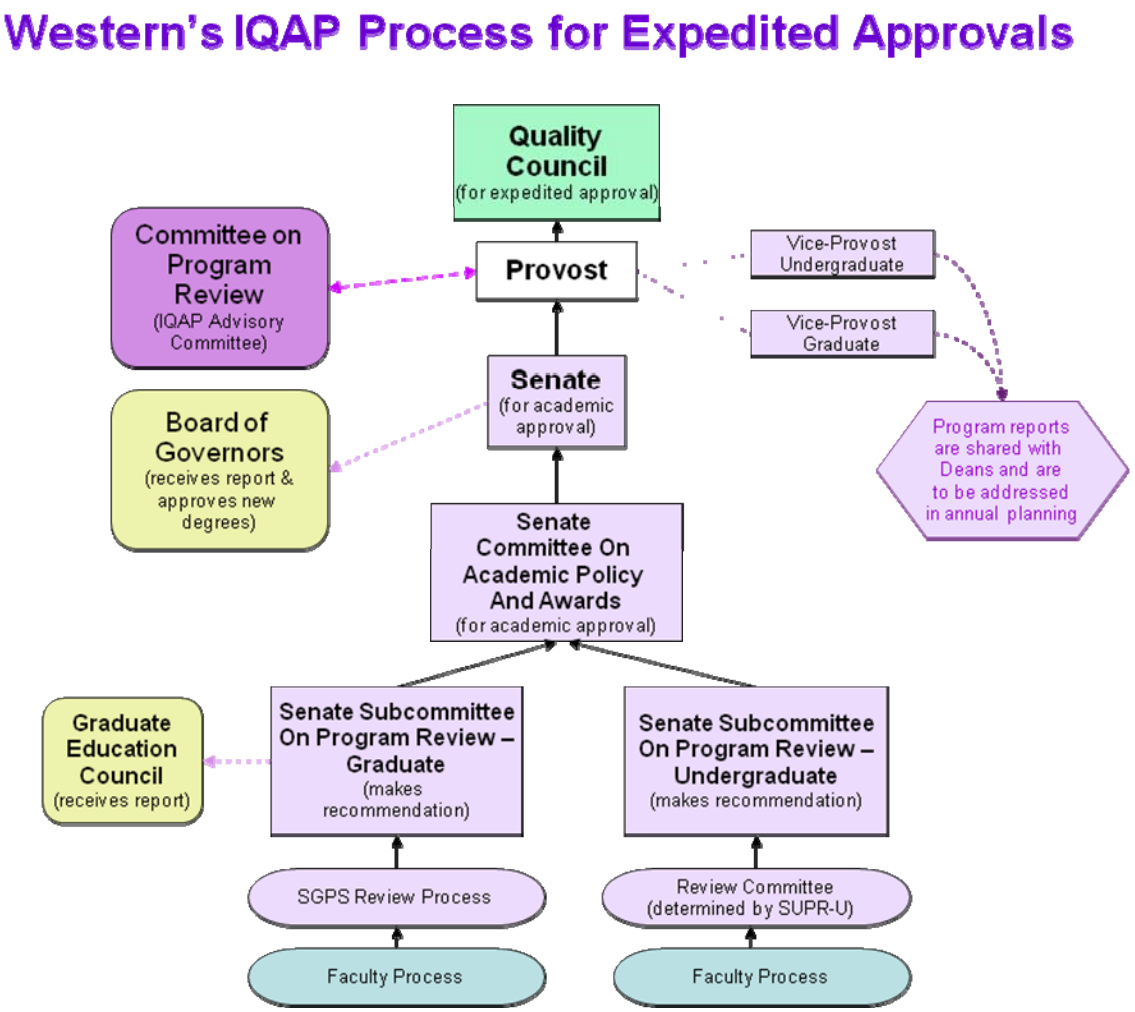
The process for Expedited Approvals will apply when:

a) proposing a new undergraduate collaborative or 2 + 2 program (with a community college or other university);
b) proposing a new graduate collaborative program;
c) proposing a new graduate for-credit diploma.

The expedited proposal process does not require external consultants.

3.1 Institutional Process

3.1.1 Steps



1. The proposal is developed by the academic unit and subject to the Faculty's internal approval process. The proposal is identified in the Faculty's annual planning document. For graduate programs, the School of Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies conducts a review prior to submission to SUPR-G.
2. The proposal is received by SUPR-U/SUPR-G. SUPR-U appoints internal reviewers to review the proposal. The internal reviewers complete a summary report template of the review for SUPR-U .
3. On the basis of the recommendations and submission from SUPR-G (internal reviewers' summary- SUPR-U), SUPR-U/SUPR-G makes a recommendation to SCAPA.
4. SCAPA reviews the report of SUPR-U/SUPR-G and if approved, forwards to Senate.
5. If approved by Senate, Provost's Office submits the proposal to the Quality Council for approval.
6. The proposal is submitted to the Ministry of Training, Colleges, and Universities for funding purposes.
7. The new program is monitored by the University through the annual planning process.
8. The first cyclical review occurs within eight years of the first enrolment into the program.

3.1.2 Proposal Brief

The proposal brief will describe the new program, diploma or field including, as appropriate, reference to learning outcomes and the academic unit's resources. The proposal will provide rationale for the new program, diploma or field and will include the following criteria, as applicable:

- Objectives
- Admission requirements
- Program structure
- Program content
- Mode of delivery
- Assessment of teaching and learning
- Resources
- Quality and other indicators

3.2 Expedited Approval Process

Once Senate approval has been obtained, the proposal brief will be submitted by the Provost to the Quality Council Appraisal Committee for consideration. The QC Appraisal Committee will determine:

a) that Western can proceed with the proposed new program/diploma/field; or
b) that further consultation with Western is required.

Within 45 days of receipt of a final and complete submission from Western, the Executive Director of the QC will report the outcome of the expedited approval process to the Provost and to the QC.

3.3 Major Modifications to Existing Programs

Major modifications to existing programs include one or more of the following:

a) Introduction of a new undergraduate module (honors specialization, specialization, major) that comprises primarily existing courses and that is offered with existing faculty expertise and resources (**Note**: if the proposed module has requirements and learning outcomes that are substantially different from those of any existing module, it must be reviewed as a New Program).

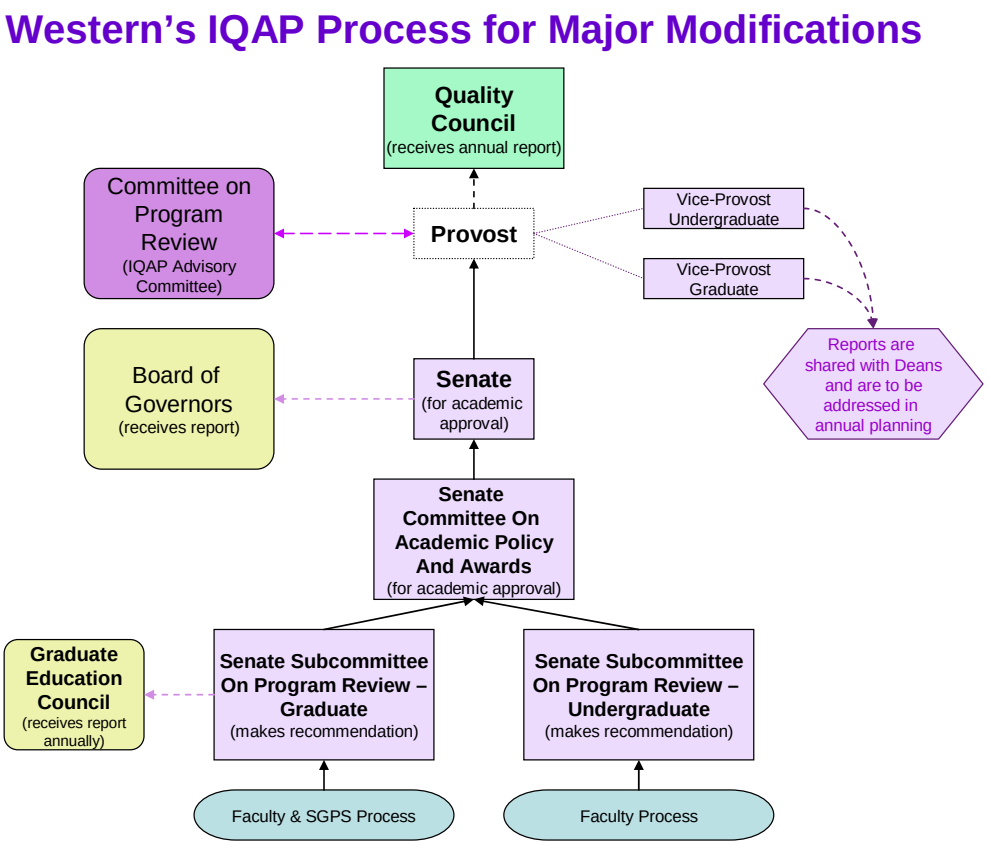
b) a change in program requirements that differ significantly from those existing at the time of the previous cyclical review or the introduction of the program, including, for example:
   - the merger of two or more existing programs
   - the introduction of a combined program option
   - the introduction or deletion of a thesis requirement
   - the introduction or deletion of a laboratory requirement
   - the introduction or deletion of a practicum, work-experience, internship, or portfolio requirement
   - creation, deletion or renaming of a field in a graduate program;

c) changes to program content, other than those listed in a) above, that affect the learning outcomes, but do not meet the threshold for a new program;

d) significant changes to the faculty engaged in delivering the program and/or to the essential physical resources, including, but not limited to changes in the mode of delivery of the program; examples may include:
   - introducing an existing program at an additional site
   - introducing an on-line version of an existing program
   - introducing a part-time option in an existing full-time graduate program.

The list above is not intended to be inclusive and it may, at times, be difficult to determine whether a proposed change constitutes a "significant change". In such situations, SUPR-U/SUPR-G will serve as the arbiter in determining whether a proposed change constitutes a major modification or a minor change. In addition, SUPR-U/SUPR-G may, at its discretion, request that the Quality Council review a major modification proposal through the Expedited Approval process.

3.3.1 Steps



1. The proposal is developed by the academic unit and subject to the Faculty's internal approval process.
2. The proposal is received by SUPR-U/SUPR-G. SUPR-U/SUPR-G makes a recommendation to SCAPA.
3. SCAPA reviews the recommendation of SUPR-U/SUPR-G and makes a recommendation to Senate. .
4. If approved by Senate, the Provost's Office includes the major modifications in an annual report to the Quality Council for approval.

3.4 Annual Report to the Quality Council

All major modifications to existing programs that were approved through Western's internal review and approval process will be included in an Annual Report to the QC, submitted by the Office of the Provost and Vice-President (Academic).

4. Cyclical Program Reviews

4.0 Preamble

Western's protocol for Cyclical Program Reviews has 5 principal components:

a) the self-study;
b) external evaluation (including site-visit) with a report, and internal responses from the academic unit and Dean to the report;
c) institutional evaluation of the self-study and the external evaluation contributing to recommendations for program quality improvement;
d) recommendations for improvement and plans for implementing recommendations;
e) ongoing monitoring of implementation plans through the Annual Planning Process.

4.1 Schedule of Reviews

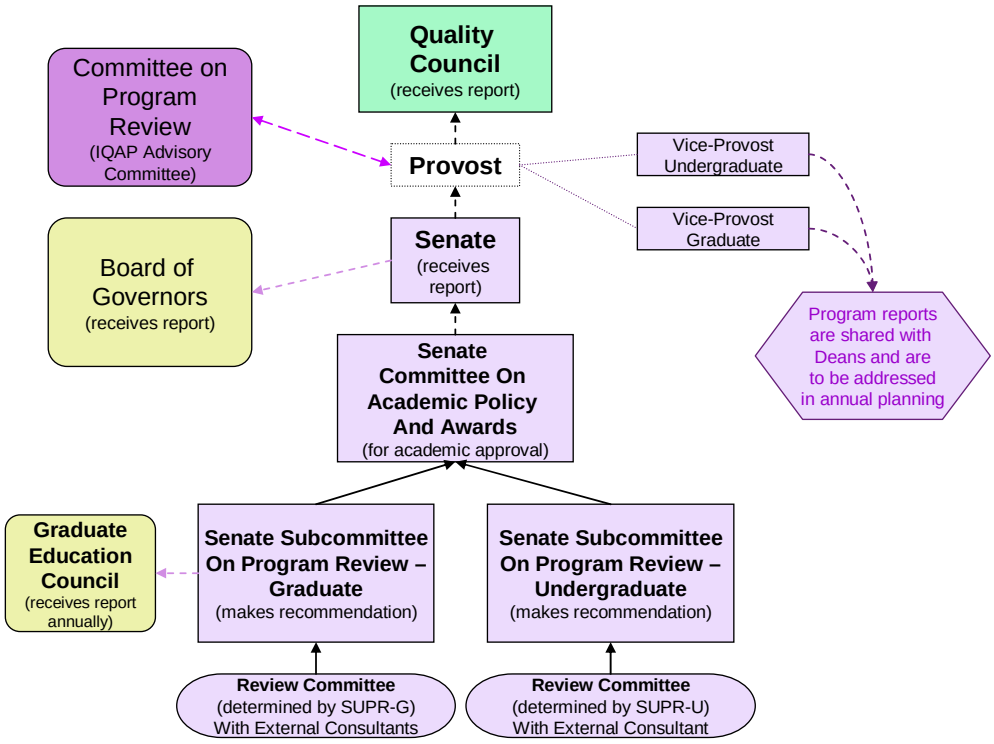
. The schedule of cyclical program reviews ensures that the period between reviews does not exceed eight years. The schedule is designed to allow the undergraduate and graduate programs within an academic unit to be reviewed concurrently; however, although the reviews will occur concurrently, they will normally undergo separate review processes with different external consultants.

The review schedule includes all collaborative, joint, and interdisciplinary programs. In addition, the programs offered by Western's affiliated university colleges are included in the schedule. Joint programs that involve more than one institution will identify a lead institution to prepare the self-study document, consulting and obtaining relevant input from all participating institutions.

4.2 Protocol for Cyclical Program Reviews

The Provost and Vice-President (Academic) is responsible for Cyclical Program Reviews and for reporting their outcomes to the QC. In the review of undergraduate programs, the Provost is supported by the Vice-Provost (Academic Programs and Students) [Registrar]. In the review of graduate programs, the Provost is supported by the Vice-Provost (Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies). The Committee on Program Review advises the Provost on all matters related to undergraduate and graduate program review.

4.2.1 Steps



1. The self-study brief is developed by the program with support from the School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (for graduate programs) or from Institutional Planning (for undergraduate programs).
2. The brief is received by SUPR-U/SUPR-G. SUPR-U/SUPR-G appoint internal reviewers and external consultants to review the brief and conduct a site visit. The external consultants submit a joint written report of the review; the internal reviewers complete a summary report template of the review for SUPR-U/SUPR-G.
3. On the basis of the external consultants' report, the academic unit's response to the report, and the internal reviewers' summary, SUPR-U / SUPR-G submits the summary report to SCAPA (and shares this report with the program and Dean). This report includes acknowledgement of program innovations and recommendations for program improvements.
4. SCAPA reviews the report of SUPR-U/SUPR-G and makes a recommendation. SCAPA submits to Senate for information.

5. The Provost, through the Vice-Provosts, ensures that recommendations for improving the program and a plan for their implementation are shared with the Dean of the program's Faculty.
6. Provost's Office includes the outcome of the cyclical review in the annual report to the Quality Council.
7. Implementation of the recommended improvements is monitored by the University through the Annual Planning Process.

4.2.2 Self-Study

The self-study will comprise a broad, reflective, critical and forward-looking analysis of the program. It will reflect the involvement and consultation of faculty, staff and students of the program being reviewed, and it will include data on university recognized indicators. In large part, these data will be provided by, or corroborated by, the School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (for graduate programs) or Institutional Planning (for undergraduate programs).

The self-study document will address:

- Objectives of the program;
- Program regulations;
- Consistency of the program's learning outcomes with the University's mission and with degree level expectations, and how the program's graduates achieve those outcomes;
- Fields of specialization (for graduate programs with fields);
- Special matters and/or innovative features of the program;
- Concerns or matters raised in the previous review of the program;
- Program-related data and measures of performance, where applicable and available;
- Financial support for students (as applicable for graduate programs);
- Areas for improvement identified through the self-study;
- Opportunities for enhancement;
- Academic services and resources that contribute to the academic quality of the program, including library resources and support;
- Enrolments, graduations, and withdrawals;
- Employment or subsequent academic pursuits of graduates;
- Publications of current students and recent graduates (for graduate programs);
- How faculty, staff, and students were included in the self-study;
- Indicators relevant to the evaluation criteria (as identified in Section 4.3);
- The integrity of the data included.

Where appropriate, input of others deemed to be relevant may be included in the self-study brief. For example, input from graduates of the program, professionals, industry representatives, and employers may be included.

The Vice-Provost (Academic Programs and Students), or his/her delegate, will review and approve the self-study report for undergraduate programs undergoing cyclical reviews. The Vice-Provost (Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies), or his/her delegate, will review and approve the self-study report for graduate programs undergoing cyclical review.

4.2.3 Evaluation

4.2.3.1 The Review Team

The evaluation will include internal and external reviewers. For cyclical program reviews, the review team will normally include:

a) one faculty member internal to Western, but not a member of the academic unit under review;
b) one undergraduate or graduate student who is not from the program being reviewed;
c) Two faculty members external to Western.

The faculty member internal to Western and the student comprise the internal reviewers. The Chair of SUPR-U or SUPR-G may invite additional members of the Review Team if circumstances warrant.

All members of the review team will be at "arm's length" from the program under review. Internal reviewers will not be from the program being reviewed. Additional conflicts of interest may include family ties, partnership ties, supervisory relations or other types of relationships with individuals in the program being reviewed. Any such relationships must be declared to determine the potential for conflict of interest. The Chair of SUPR-U/SUPR-G, in consultation with the Provost, will evaluate the potential for conflict of interest.

External consultants will normally be associate or full professors, preferably with some program administration experience, and must be at "arms length" from the program under review. "Arms length" reviewers have no family ties, partnership links, supervisory relationships or other relationships with anyone in the program being reviewed. A conflict of interest would exist in cases where the proposed consultant has collaborated or published with a member of the program within the past seven years, has an administrative or family link with a member of the program being reviewed, has been a supervisor or supervisee (graduate or postdoctoral) of a member of the program being reviewed within the past seven years, is a former member of the program being reviewed, is a friend of a member of the program being reviewed, or has been a recent (within the past five years) visiting professor in the program being reviewed.

The Chair of SUPR-U/SUPR-G will appoint the internal reviewers. For program reviews, the faculty member internal reviewer will be selected by SUPR-U/SUPR-G. Student members of

the review teams will be selected from a list of student volunteers and student members of SUPR-U/SUPR-G.

The Chair(s) of SUPR-U/SUPR-G, will select the external consultants from the list of potential consultants provided by the program.
All members of the Review Team will receive the program's self-study. In addition, they will be provided with a volume containing the CVs of all of the full-time faculty members in the program under review.

The Chair of SUPR-U/SUPR-G has the responsibility to ensure that the Review Team will:

a) understand it role and obligations;
b) identify and commend the program's notably strong and creative attributes;
c) describe the program's strengths, areas for improvement, and opportunities for enhancement;
d) recommend specific steps to be taken to improve the program, distinguishing between those that the program can itself take and those that require external action;
e) recognize the University's autonomy to determine priorities for funding, space, and faculty allocation;
f) respect the confidentiality required for all aspects of the review process.

These expectations will be shared with the Review Team in the form of written instructions and through face-to-face meetings.

4.2.3.2 The Site Visit

For undergraduate programs, the site visit will be arranged by the Office of the Vice-Provost (Academic Programs and Students) [Registrar] in collaboration with the academic unit. The visit will normally be for one full day. The internal reviewers will participate with the external consultant in all aspects of the site visit. The visit will include meetings with:

- the Vice-Provost (Academic Programs and Students) [Registrar], at the beginning of the site visit
- the Vice-Provost (Academic Planning, Policy and Faculty)
- the University Librarian and/or Assistant/Associate University Librarian
- the Dean and/or Associate Dean of the program undergoing review
- the Undergraduate Chair of the program undergoing review
- the Department/School Chair or Director of the program undergoing review
- faculty members of the program undergoing review
- undergraduate students of the program undergoing review
- support staff of the program undergoing review.

For graduate programs, the site visit will be arranged by the Office of the Vice-Provost (Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies) in collaboration with the program. The visit will normally be for two days and the internal reviewers will participate with the external consultants in all aspects of the site visit. The visit will include meetings with:

- the Vice-Provost (Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies) and/or the Associate Vice-Provost (Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies), at the beginning of the site visit and again at the end of the site visit
- the Vice-Provost (Academic Planning, Policy and Faculty)
- the University Librarian and/or Assistant/Associate University Librarian
- the Dean and/or Associate Dean of the program undergoing review
- the Graduate Chair of the program undergoing review
- the Department/School/Centre Chair or Director of the program undergoing review
- faculty members of the program undergoing review
- graduate students of the program undergoing review
- support staff of the program undergoing review.

For both undergraduate and graduate reviews, the review team will be free to seek information from other sources and to suggest other individuals and groups with whom to meet during the site visit.

4.2.3.3 The Report of the External Consultants and the Internal Reviewers' Summary

The external consultants will normally provide a joint report that appraises the standards and quality of the program and addresses the evaluation criteria in Section 4.3. The consultants will be instructed to submit a joint report to the Chair of SUPR-U/SUPR-G within two weeks of the on-site visit.

The report of the external consultant(s) will be shared with the relevant Dean(s) and unit/program Chair(s) or Director(s) and their response to the report will be requested. In addition, the report will be shared with the Vice-Provost (Academic Programs and Students) [Registrar] or the Vice-Provost (Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies), who may provide a written response. The response of the Dean(s) and/or Chair(s)/Director(s) will comment on:

a) the plans and recommendations proposed in the self-study;
b) the recommendations advanced in the report of the external consultant(s);
c) the program's response to the report of the external consultant(s).

and will describe:

d) any changes in organization, policy or governance that would be necessary to meet the recommendations;
e) the resources, financial and otherwise, that would be provided in supporting the implementation of selected recommendations; and
f) a proposed timeline for the implementation of any of those recommendations.

The internal reviewers will complete a summary template of the onsite visit. , SUPR-U/SUPR-G will receive the summary, in addition to the report of the external consultants and the responses to the report. The summary will:

a) identify significant strengths of the program;
b) identify opportunities for program improvement and enhancement;
c) prioritize recommendations for implementation and indentify who is responsible for acting on the recommendations; indentify what resources are implicated in the recommendations and who has responsibility for these resources; and
d) provide the timeline for implementing recommendations.

Note: the report may also contain a confidential section

4.2.3.4 Report to SCAPA and Senate

SUPR-U/SUPR-G will review the report of the external consultant(s), the response(s) to the report, and the summary of the internal reviewers. SUPR-U/SUPR-G may consult with the Vice-Provost (Academic Programs and Students) [Registrar], the Vice-Provost (Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies), or the Provost in its evaluation of a program's review. SUPR-U/SUPR-G will forward it's final recommendation to SCAPA.

SCAPA will review the summary report from SUPR-U/SUPR-G. SCAPA may seek clarification or additional information from SUPR-U/SUPR-G prior to acceptance of the report. The summary report, exclusive of any confidential information, will be provided to the program and to the Dean(s) responsible for the program. A copy of the summary report will also be sent to the Quality Council. Implementation of the recommendations included in the report will be monitored through the Faculty Annual Planning Process where the Dean will be required to report on steps taken to address the recommendations in the Summary Report. SCAPA will submit the report to Senate for information

Following Senate's receipt of the summary report, the University will post the executive summary of the review on the University's webpage. Implementation of the recommendations resulting from the review will be monitored through the Annual Planning Process.

The Provost, in consultation with the University Secretariat, the Vice-Provost (Academic Programs and Students) [Registrar], the Vice-Provost (Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies), and the Faculty Dean, will determine to what extent the public will have access to:

- the information made available for the self-study;
- the self-study report;
- the report of the external consultant(s);
- the responses to the report of the external consultant(s); and
- the summary of the internal reviewers.

4.2.3.5 Annual Report to the Quality Council

Western will provide an annual report to the QC that includes the executive summary of the final assessment for all cyclical program reviews conducted during the year, as well as all major modifications approved by Senate during the year.

4.2.3.6 Accreditation Reviews

Cyclical program reviews may be scheduled to coincide with accreditation reviews. The normal period between reviews may be shortened to allow a program's cyclical review to coincide with an accreditation review; however, synchronization of the cyclical review and accreditation review will only be permitted in cases where the maximum period between cyclical reviews does not exceed eight years.

Although cyclical program reviews may be scheduled to coincide with accreditation reviews, accreditation reviews will not take the place of cyclical reviews. A cyclical program review will normally be conducted in addition to the accreditation review to ensure full consideration of all aspects of the cyclical review.

4.2.3.7 Western's IQAPWebsite

Western has established an institutional website that describes our processes and committee structures and mandates in detail. The website includes instructions for external consultants and internal reviewers. Templates for proposal briefs and review briefs are also included. The website:

- provides guidance on the conduct of rigorous, objective and searching self-studies;
- establishes the criteria for the nomination and selection of arm's length external reviewers;
- identifies responsibilities for the collection, aggregation and distribution of institutional data and outcome measures required for self-studies;
- specifies the format required for the self-study and review reports; and
- sets out the institutional cycle for the conduct of graduate and undergraduate program reviews.

4.3 Evaluation Criteria

4.3.1 Objectives

a) consistency of the program with Western's mission, values, strategic priorities, and academic plans;
b) clarity and appropriateness of the program's requirements and associated learning outcomes in relation to the undergraduate degree level expectations or the graduate level degree expectations.

4.3.2 Admission Requirements

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

4.3.3 Program Structure and Curriculum

a) how the curriculum addresses the current state of the discipline or field of study;
b) identification of any unique curriculum or program innovations or creative components;
c) mode(s) of delivery to meet the program's identified learning outcomes are appropriate and effective;
d) for research-focused graduate programs, evidence that the nature of the major research requirement is appropriate;
e) for graduate programs, evidence that at least two-thirds of the course requirements are graduate level;
f) for graduate programs, evidence that the program length ensures that the program requirements are reasonably met within the expected time period (with a maximum of 6 terms for master's programs and 12 terms for doctoral programs).

4.3.4 Assessment of Teaching and Learning

a) evidence that the methods for assessing student achievement of the learning outcomes are appropriate and effective;
b) evidence of the appropriateness and effectiveness of the methods of teaching and assessment in demonstrating achievement of the program learning objectives and the degree level expectations.

4.3.5 Resources for All Programs

a) adequacy of the academic unit's human, physical, and financial resources to the support the program;
b) participation of a sufficient number and quality of faculty who are competent to teach and/or supervise in the program;

c) evidence that resources adequately support the quality of scholarship and research activity expected of the undergraduate or graduate students, including:
   i. library resources and support;
   ii. information technology;
   iii. laboratory resources and access.

4.3.6 Resources for Graduate Programs

a) evidence that faculty have the scholarly/research or professional/clinical expertise needed to sustain the program, promote innovation, and foster an intellectual climate;
b) for research-based graduate programs, evidence that financial support for students is sufficient to ensure adequate quality and numbers of students;
c) evidence of appropriate instruction and supervisory qualifications and capacity;
d) evidence that the program structure and curriculum supports timely completion.

4.3.7 Resources for Undergraduate Programs

a) evidence of adequate numbers of faculty and staff to achieve the goals of the program;
b) evidence of class sizes appropriate for learning objectives;
c) evidence of opportunities for, and supervision of, experiential learning (if required).

4.3.8 Quality and Other Indicators

In addition to the evaluation criteria above, the reviews should include relevant information (as available) regarding:

Faculty: qualifications; research and scholarly record; honours and awards; class sizes; proportion of classes taught by full-time faculty; commitment to student mentoring (graduate programs);

Program: evidence of a program structure and faculty research that will ensure the intellectual quality of the student experience;

Students: applications and registrations; success rates in provincial and national scholarship competitions and awards; academic awards; rates and timing of attrition; final-year academic achievement; time-to-completion; graduation rates; scholarly output (graduate programs); time to completion (graduate programs); student in-course reports on teaching; and

Graduates: graduation rates; employment and post-graduate study; "skills match" and alumni reports on program quality when available and when permitted by FIPPA.

4.3.9 Quality Enhancement

Initiatives that have been implemented to improve the quality of the program and the associated learning outcomes and teaching environment

5. Quality Council Audit Process

Once every eight years, Western will participate in an audit to determine whether or not the institution, within the review cycle, has acted in compliance with the provisions of its *IQAP* as ratified by the QC.

No fewer than three auditors, selected by the Executive Director of the QC, will conduct an institutional audit. Typically four undergraduate and four graduate program reviews will be selected for audit. At least one of the undergraduate programs and one of the graduate programs will be a New Program or Major Modifications to an Existing Program approved within the period since the previous audit. The audit cannot reverse the approval of a program to commence.

The audit will be comprised of a desk audit and on-site visit over two to three days as needed. The auditors will prepare a report that will make suggestions and recommendations and, where appropriate, identify causes for concern. A summary of the auditors' findings, together with a record of the recommendations, will be published on the QC's website and communicated to Western for publication on its website.

Within one year of receiving the final auditors' report, Western will report to the QC on steps taken to address the recommendations. In consultation with the auditors, the QC reserves the right to recommend a course of action if the University's follow-up is deemed unsatisfactory. An auditors' summary of the scope and adequacy of the University's response will be posted on the QC website and communicated to the University community, OCAV, COU and MTCU for information.