**Steps Preceding Submission of New Program Proposal**

**Graduate**

**Note on Quality Assurance**

All new graduate programs at Western must adhere to the Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance’s Quality Assurance Framework (QAF). This provincially mandated framework outlines the standards and evaluation criteria for ensuring academic program quality across Ontario’s universities. As such, the proposal process — including the Letter of Intent, New Program Proposal (Volume I), and subsequent review stages — is designed to demonstrate how a new program meets the requirements of the QAF, including alignment with degree-level expectations, program learning outcomes, and continuous improvement mechanisms. Understanding this context will help guide your responses in both early planning and formal proposal development.

**Overview**

Developing an entirely new degree program is an exciting academic initiative that supports the teaching and research priorities of a Faculty/division. The process is governed by the Western’s Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP).

The first point of contact for faculty considering such an initiative should be the appropriate Dean’s Office.

**Process for New Graduate Degree Programs**The School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (SGPS) shepherds the new Graduate program approval process and is the main point-of-contact for those who are developing a new Graduate program(s).

The development of a new program can take between 8- 18 months progress from development to final approval. The process may be shorter for programs that do not require an external reviewers’ site visit (i.e., collaborative specializations and graduate diplomas).

Each new program proposal requires many levels of approval, including Department/School, Faculty Graduate Committee, Faculty Council, Subcommittee on Program Review - Graduate (SUPR-G), Senate Committee on Academic Curriculum and Awards (ACA) Senate, Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance (Quality Council), and the Ministry of Colleges and Universities (MCU).

**Steps in Preparation of a New Program Proposal**

* As early as possible, discussions regarding ideas for a new graduate program should include the Department Chair / School Director and the Dean
* The next step is the development of a Letter of Intent
  + Contact SGPS for template
* At this point, it is helpful to clearly identify the faculty member(s) with primary responsibility for preparation of the new program proposal.
* The Letter requires endorsement by the appropriate Associate Dean (Graduate) as an indication of support for the academic elements of the program.
* The Letter requires endorsement by the Dean as an indication of support for the additional resource requirements that may be necessary.
* The Letter of Intent is then submitted to Candace Loosley, Administrative Coordinator, SGPS

Once a Letter of Intent is received, SGPS will consult with the Associate Vice-Provost, SGPS, the faculty member(s) with primary responsibility for preparation of the new program proposal, the Associate Dean Graduate of the Faculty and any other appropriate academic support units. SGPS will then respond to the primary contact for the new program with feedback and directions to prepare the first draft of the new Program Proposal (Volume I).

* At this stage, the Dean (or Associate Dean Graduate ) should be consulted regarding the Faculty’s process for approving/supporting proposals for new graduate programs.
  + The Dean has responsibility for ensuring that the new program is included in the Faculty’s annual planning process.
* The Dean should include the new program in the Faculty’s annual planning and budgeting process, clearly identifying the program and any associated resource or funding needs in the planning document. The Dean should indicate how the new program relates to the Faculty’s academic priorities as articulated in the Faculty Academic Plan.
* The faculty member(s) with primary responsibility for preparation of the new program proposal and the Dean will meet with Office of Institutional Planning & Budgeting (IPB) and the Vice Provost, SGPS to clearly articulate tuition and other costs. The Dean (along with the Faculty Financial Officer or Executive Officer, as necessary) works with the Office of Institutional Planning & Budgeting to ensure budgetary plan for the new program.
* Through the annual planning process, the Dean will secure the support and budgetary approval of the Provost in proceeding with the process for implementing the new program.
* Once the support of the Department Chair / School Director and Dean has been obtained, the faculty member(s) with primary responsibility for the new program proposal preparation should:
* Consult with the appropriate representatives from other Faculties who are partnering on the program, or who may be affected by the new program
* The New Program Proposal (Volume I) should be prepared in close consultation with SGPS, working primarily with the Vice-Provost or Associate Vice-Provost.
* Drafts of the New Program Proposal (Volume I) should be submitted to the Associate Vice-Provost for review, prior to preparation of the final version and submission to SUPR-G. The primary contact should be prepared to answer questions and incorporate requested clarifications and changes into the new program proposal, as needed.

The final version of Volume I (New Program Proposal), Volume II (Faculty CVs), and Volume III (Proposed Reviewers), as well any supporting documentation are submitted to SGPS

**Steps in the Approval of a New Program**

The New Program Proposal (Volume I) cannot be presented to SUPR-G, until approved by the Faculty, the AVP/VP, SGPS.

* The New Program Proposal (Volume I) should be submitted to the Vice-Provost or Associate Vice-Provost, who is responsible for submitting the documents to SUPR-G. Submission of the final new program proposal to the Vice-Provost or Associate Vice-Provost should be accompanied by a letter / email from the Dean(s) indicating support for the proposed program and an indication that any Faculty requirements (such as approval of the proposal by Faculty Council) have been fulfilled.
* The New Program Proposal (Volume I) must be approved at SUPR-G before a site visit is scheduled.
  + *If the new program is a Graduate Diploma, it will follow the Expected Approval process outlined by the Quality Council – no external review is required. Once approved through SUPR-G and Senate, the New Program Proposal (Volume I) and Faculty CVs (Volume II) are sent electronically to the Quality Council by the OAQE.*
* Co-ordination of a two-day site visit will be arranged by SGPS and the Faculty proposing the new program. The review team will consist of two external reviewers and one internal faculty member of the University (normally an Associate Dean Graduate), and one student member of the University.
* The external reviewers are selected from those suggested by the program in Volume III (see criteria for choosing arm’s length reviewers). The external reviewers and internal reviewer are selected by the co-chairs of SUPR-G, after a call for volunteers as a SUPR-G meeting agenda item.
* During the site visit, the external review team will evaluate the proposed program against set criteria. Within two weeks of the site visit, the external review team will submit a report, using the External Reviewers' Report template.
* After the External Reviewers' Report is received, the VP SGPS and AVP SGPS will review it and seek clarification from the reviewers, if needed. The final report will be shared with the Dean, Associate Dean Graduate, and with the primary contact.
* The primary contact for the new program and the Dean will prepare a response to the reviewers’ recommendations and revise the New Program Proposal (Volume I), as needed. Depending on the number and significance of the revisions, the proposal may need to be re-approved by SGPS and the OAQE before the proposal goes to SUPR-G, ACA, and then Senate for approval.
* Once approved through SUPR-G and Senate, the New Program Proposal (Volume I) and Faculty CVs (Volume II) are sent electronically to the Quality Council by the OAQE.
* Once the proposal has been approved by the Quality Council, IBP will submit the program proposal electronically to the Ministry of Colleges and Universities (MCU) for approval. MCU approval typically takes 4-6 months or longer. MCU approves two key aspects of new programs: the proposed tuition rate and approval that domestic enrolment in the program will be eligible for operating grant (students are only eligible for OSAP if their program is MCU-approved).

Advertising a New Program

* After the New Program Proposal has been submitted to the Quality Council, SGPS will notify the Department/School that they may begin to advertise the new program. However, any announcements or ads 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."