NIPISSING
U N I V E R S I T Y

**Nipissing University
Institutional Quality Assurance Protocol (NU-IQAP)**

**Governing
Cyclical Program Reviews, New Programs
and
Major Modifications (Program Renewal and Significant Change)**

Recommended to Senate
by the Academic Quality Assurance and Planning Committee

Submitted to the Quality Council of the Council of Ontario Universities
November 27, 2018
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Purpose of Policy

Nipissing's Institutional Quality Assurance Policy (IQAP) governs the development of new programs and the review and revision of existing programs.

Quality assurance is a shared responsibility between the Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance (the Quality Council) and Ontario's universities. This collaboration ensures a culture of continuous improvement and supports a vision of a student-centred education. Quality assurance processes result in an educational system that is open, accountable, and transparent. Bringing Ontario's universities quality assurance practices into line with the latest international quality assurance standards facilitates greater international acceptance of an institute's degrees and improves graduate access to university programs and employment worldwide.

The Quality Council is the provincial body responsible for assuring the quality of degree programs/graduate diploma programs and the integrity of the universities' quality assurance processes as set by the Quality Assurance Framework (QAF). Every publicly assisted Ontario university that grants degrees and diplomas is responsible for ensuring the quality of its programs and for developing a policy that meets the requirements of this Framework.

Based on the Quality Assurance Framework, Nipissing University has created a holistic and integrated approach to quality assurance that is built on the Guiding Principles that inform every aspect of quality assurance and provide broad terms of best practices. The most relevant Principles (4 of the 15) have been included here, as they best reflect the quality assurance processes at the university level, and support Nipissing's approach to continuous improvement.

- **Principle 1 – Experience of the Student**
  The best interest of students is at the core of quality assurance activities. Quality assurance is ultimately about the centrality of the student experience in Ontario. It is about student achievement in programs that lead to a degree or diploma about ensuring the value of the university degree in Ontario, and of ensuring that our highly qualified graduates continue to be strong and innovative contributors to the well-being of Ontario's economy and society.

- **Principle 9 – Transparency**
  The Quality Council operates in accordance with publicly communicated principles, policies, and procedures. Both the Quality Council's assessment process and the internal quality assurance process of individual institutions is open, transparent, and accountable, except as limited by constraints of laws and regulations for the protection of individuals.

- **Principle 13 – Continuous Monitoring and Quality Improvement**
  Quality is not static, and continuous improvement should be a driver of quality assurance and be measurable. An important goal for quality assurance is to reach beyond merely demonstrating quality at a moment in time and to demonstrate ongoing and continuous quality improvement. The Quality Council is committed to sharing effective best practices in quality assurance to assist institutions in their quality improvement work.

- **Principle 14 – Expert Independent Peer Review**
  Whether for new programs or cyclical review of existing programs, expert independent peer review is foundational to quality assurance.

The full set of Principles guide and inform all aspects of quality assurance while each Protocol includes a set of specific and detailed procedures that aligns with the Principles and best practices to ensure the ongoing improvement and enhancement of program offerings, specifically:

- To ensure that educational experiences of students are engaging and rigorous
- To actively monitor and review curriculum, to identify opportunities and develop plans for change, as necessary, to improve the student experience
- To meet evolving standards and measures of quality in the program and in response to the ongoing evolution of the discipline
- To focus on the continuous improvement of those facets of education that most directly impact academic experiences of students
- To ensure the continuing quality and relevance of programs to stakeholders, including the university, students, the public and the government

The IQAP and its associated Procedures establish the requirements and criteria for each of the Protocols and are in compliance with the Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) as developed by the Ontario Council of Academic Vice Presidents (OCAV) and have been adopted by the Council of Ontario Universities (COU).

Protocols governed by the IQAP include:

- **Cyclical Program Review – Section 1**
- **New Program Protocol - Section 2**
- **Expedited Approval Protocol - Section 3**
- **Major Modification Protocol (Program Renewal and Significant Change) – Section 4**
- **Audit Protocol – Section 5**

Acronyms you may encounter in the document:

ACC Academic Curriculum Committee
AQAPC Academic Quality Assurance and Planning Committee
ARCC Academic Regulations and Curriculum Committee
COU Council of Ontario Universities
DLEs University Degree Level Expectations
FAR Final Assessment Report
GDLEs Graduate Degree Level Expectations
GSC Graduate Studies Council
IQAP Institutional Quality Assurance Policy
IP Implementation Plan
IRC Internal Review Committee
OCAV Ontario Council of Academic Vice Presidents
OIPA Office of Institutional Planning and Analysis
QAF Quality Assurance Framework
UDLEs Undergraduate Degree Level Expectations

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Scope and Purpose of Protocols

Cyclical Program Review Protocol (CPR)

The purpose of this protocol is to assess the quality of existing academic programs and identify ongoing improvements, resulting in Final Assessment Report (FAR) and an Implementation Plan (IP) that will become the basis of a continuous improvement process through the monitoring of key performance indicators. Cyclical program review is a self-regulatory process subject to periodic audit by the Quality Council.

- All existing undergraduate degree programs, graduate degree programs, and for-credit graduate diploma programs will be subject to a periodic Cyclical Program Review conducted at a minimum once every eight years. The Office of the Provost may request a review prior to the eighth year.
- Programs that have been closed or for which admission has been suspended are out of the scope of this review.
- Cyclical Program Review is a self-regulatory process subject to periodic audit by the Quality Council with the express purpose of assessing the quality of existing academic programs and identifying ongoing improvements.

New Program Protocol

The purpose of this protocol is to ensure that new academic programs are developed using internationally accepted practices and are based on the Degree Level Expectations that identify expectations of performance by graduates at a specified level of learning, e.g., Bachelor, Master and Doctoral.

- This protocol applies to new undergraduate and new graduate programs whether offered by one institution or jointly with another institution.
- New degree programs require approval by the Quality Council.

Expedited Approval Protocol

The purpose of this protocol is to enable universities to secure approvals more efficiently for changes that are considered less wide-ranging than new programs and do not require an external review.

- The scope of this protocol will apply to new for-credit graduate diplomas (Types 2 and 3), major modifications that may require Quality Council approval, as well as the creation of a new standalone degree from an existing field in a graduate program.
- Final approval for this protocol rests with the Quality Council Appraisal Committee

Major Modification Protocol

The purpose of this protocol is to allow for timely program renewal of existing programs on an ongoing and continuous basis. Academic units are encouraged to actively evaluate and identify revisions and modifications to curriculum and experiences that can be implemented at the University level. Major modifications will be reported annually to Quality Council.

- The scope of this protocol will include significant changes made to existing programs that are considered less than a new program and greater than a minor modification.
- The Provost will be the final arbiter in determining if a major modification should be considered a new program.

Audit Protocol

The purpose of the Audit, to be conducted by the Quality Council once every eight (8) years, is to ensure transparency and accountability in the development and review of academic programs, and to assure stakeholders (students, citizens, and the government) of the international standards of Nipissing's quality assurance processes.

- This protocol will monitor the extent to which the University has improved/enhanced its quality assurance processes and practices, created an ethos of continuous improvement, and developed a

culture that supports program-level learning outcomes and student-centered learning.
- The Audit will include an evaluation of past and current practices, a review of institutional changes made in policy, procedures, and practices in response to recommendations from the previous audit, confirmation that university's practices comply with its ratified IQAP and a review of the university's approach to continuous improvement of programs.

Responsibilities and Supports

Provost and Vice President, Academic (Provost)
The Provost and Vice President, Academic (from here on in referred to as Provost) is the administrative authority responsible for the University's quality assurance policy and procedures and serves as Nipissing's authoritative contact with the Quality Council. The Provost is the arbiter in deciding whether a proposal constitutes a new program or a major modification. The Office of the Provost supports the day-to-day workings of the processes governed by the IQAP.

Deans
The Deans are responsible for the following:
- **For Cyclical Review** – ensures that Chairs/Directors or academic units, scheduled to undergo cyclical program review, understand their roles and responsibilities; sign off on the Self-Study and Appendices; consult with the Office of Provost on the ranking of external reviewers; provide a Decanal Response to the External Reviewers' Report and Departmental Response; consult on the Implementation Plan; and, ensure academic units are considering and acting on the recommendations requiring action. The Dean will be responsible for ensuring that the academic unit submits the follow-up Monitoring Report in accordance with the deadline provided in the Final Assessment Report

- **For New Programs** – provide guidance and support for the development of new program proposals; ensure broad consultation (with interested parties including faculty, academic units and decanal councils); approval of budgets and proposed resources, review and sign-off on the Program Proposal and Appendices; consult with the Office of the Provost on the ranking of external reviewers; and completion and submission of Monitoring Reports.

Academic Units
Academic Unit refers to a department or a school. Reference to a 'Chair of a department' in this policy is taken to include a Chair or Director of an undergraduate or graduate program, department or a school. Academic units will be responsible for the following:

- **For Cyclical Review** – Academic Units will be responsible for: writing the Self-Study and Appendices for degree programs/diplomas under their responsibility for cyclical program; nominating external reviewers, participating in the site visit; responding to the External Reviewers' Report; implementing and reporting on recommendations identified for action in the Implementation Plan of the Final Assessment Report; and providing a Monitoring Report.

- **For New Programs** – Academic units are often the proponents of new academic programming and are significantly involved in the development and consultation processes for new program proposals.

Provost's Council (PC)
PC is the senior administrative committee that reviews and approves initial proposals for, major modifications and new programs.

Registrar's Office (RO)
The Registrar's Office provides the first stage of consultation to ensure major and minor modifications and new degree programs follow the university degree structures.

Senate
Senate is responsible for:
- approving the Institutional Quality Assurance Policy and any subsequent revisions,
- approving new degree programs, new graduate diplomas, major modifications to existing programs.

Senate receives:
- information on Final Assessment Reports on Cyclical Program Reviews,
- notification that the cyclical review process is completed,
- notification that Monitoring Reports for new programs have been reviewed and accepted by AQAPC.

Academic Quality Assurance and Planning Committee (AQAPC)
AQAPC, a committee of Senate, is responsible for long-range academic planning, including quality assurance, in accordance with the overall academic objectives of the University and or making recommendations to Senate as necessary and appropriate. AQAPC reviews and recommends for approval to Senate all new degree programs and graduate diplomas. AQAPC – (1) initial review of program proposals prior to external review; (2) final review and approval of program documentation following external review and makes recommendations to Senate; and (3) review of Monitoring Reports. AQAPC is also responsible for recommending to Senate the termination of an existing degree program.

Provision of Support

Teaching Hub (TH)
The Teaching Hub provides workshops and consultations to academic units to assist in the articulation of program objectives, program-level learning outcomes and mapping of curricula against degree level expectations.

Registrar's Office
The Registrar's Office provides support to academic units to ensure adherence to program and degree structures.

Deans
The Deans are responsible for the following:
- **For Cyclical Review** – provides guidance and support to academic units undergoing a cyclical review; consults with academic units on recommendations identified for action and ensures that recommendations are being carried out prior to submission of the Implementation Plan.
- **For New Programs** – provides guidance and support for the development of new programs.

Finance Office
At the request of the Academic Unit, the Dean(s) or Provost, the Associate Vice President Finance will review and consult on budgets for new program proposals.

Library
The Library will provide a Statement of Support for new degree programs and for degree programs undergoing cyclical review. The Office of the Provost will provide the University Librarian with a list of programs coming up for cyclical review.

Office of Institutional Planning and Analysis (OIPA)
- **For Cyclical Review**: OIPA collects, aggregates, and distributes institutional data to assist undergraduate academic units in writing their Self-Studies, including but not limited to enrolment, retention and graduation data as well facilitating current student and alumni surveys. This ensures data being used for

the Self-Studies are both accurate and consistent across university degree programs. Programs are responsible for providing an analysis of the data. OIPA will aim to provide data by the beginning of May of the spring that academic units are preparing their Self-Studies. The Office of the Provost will notify OIPA of upcoming reviews.

- **For New Programs:** At the request of the Academic Unit for new programs, OIPA will review and consult on budgets for new program proposals.

Research Office

At the request of the Office of the Provost or the Academic Unit, the Office of Graduate Studies and Research will provide information on faculty and related research funding.

School of Graduate Studies

- **For Cyclical Review of Graduate Programs**: the School of Graduate Studies will provide relevant graduate data, including but not limited to enrolment and retention, for graduate programs coming up for cyclical program review. This ensures data being used for the Self-Studies are both accurate and consistent across university degree programs. Programs will be responsible for providing an analysis of the data. The Office of the Provost will notify the School of upcoming reviews.

Templates

The Office of the Provost develops and posts templates that, where appropriate, clearly reflect the Evaluation Criteria outlined in the QAF. Available templates will include the following:

- **For Cyclical Reviews**: Self-Study, Nomination of External Reviewers, External Reviewers' Report, Monitoring Reports
- **For New Degree Programs**: Program Proposal, Nomination of External Reviewers, External Reviewers' Report, Monitoring Reports

Workshop

Each fall, the Office of the Provost holds a workshop for academic units who will undergo a cyclical review in the following year. Normally chairs/directors will attend the workshop. Deans may also attend. The workshop provides an overview of the cyclical review process and guidance in completing the self-study and appendices.

Section 1 – Cyclical Program Review Protocol

1.1 Prelude

Periodic cyclical reviews will be conducted of all undergraduate and graduate degree programs, as well as for-credit graduate diploma programs. Undergraduate and related graduate degree programs will be reviewed concurrently, as determined by the unit, but will appear separately on the schedule of reviews. Programs that have been closed or have had admissions suspended will not be part of the cyclical review process.

The Review will look closely at the key performance indicators including:
- performance by graduates at specified levels of learning (DLEs);
- clearly identified program objectives,
- articulation of program-level learning outcomes
- student achievement of the learning outcomes.

Specifically, the cyclical review process will look at the program's approach to and plans for continuous improvement of the program to ensure that educational experiences offered to students are engaging and rigorous, and that plans for monitoring the program are sufficient to ensure continuous improvement.

Continuous improvement factors significantly in the Cyclical Program Review Protocol, therefore, those facets of education that most directly impact the academic experiences of students will be considered.
- The Self-Study and External Reviewers' Reports will provide internal and external perspectives on the program's objectives, program-level learning outcomes and graduate outcomes.
- Degree level expectations, combined with the expert judgment of external disciplinary scholars, will provide the benchmarks for assessing a program's standards and quality.
- The internal response to the external report will identify changes required to maintain the quality of the academic programs and will be identified through the Final Assessment Report (FAR) and associated Implementation Plan (IP).

Broad Outcomes of the Cyclical Program Review will include recommendations:
- to ensure the continuous improvement of the program
- to provide information to help make decisions for improvements or enhancements
- to provide benchmarks for assessing program's standards and quality
- to ensure that curriculum remains relevant, current and effective
- to provide assurance of quality to students, partners and government

The key outcomes in this process will be the Final Assessment Report (FAR) and the Implementation Plan (IP), both of which will become the basis of a continuous improvement process through the monitoring of key performance indicators.

The FAR provides an institutional synthesis of the external evaluation of the program and strategies for continuous improvement, and:
- identifies significant strengths of the program;
- identifies opportunities for further program improvement and enhancement with a view towards continuous improvement;
- lists all recommendations of the external reviewers, separate internal responses and assessments
- incudes any additional recommendations requiring action
- identifies who is responsible for approving the recommendations

The IP:
- sets out and prioritizes the recommendations that are selected for implementation
- identifies who is responsible for acting on the recommendations
- provides specific timelines for acting on and monitoring the implementation of the recommendation

1.2 Schedule of Reviews

The Office of the Provost establishes and maintains a Schedule of Review dates that consists of the university's full complement of undergraduate and graduate degree programs, as well as graduate diplomas. Each program must be reviewed every eight years. The Office of the Provost may request a review prior to the eighth year. New programs will be subject to an interim monitoring process after the program's first enrolment (approximately in year 4) with the first cyclical review scheduled no more than 8 years from the first enrolment.

A master list of Nipissing's review schedule will be posted to the website of the Office of the Provost. The list includes all independent offerings for each program. The plan identifies the academic unit responsible for each degree program, year of next review and year of previous review, if applicable.

Note: The Schedule of Reviews indicates the year in which the site visit will take place and academic units are expected to begin preparing review documentation in the academic year prior to the site visit.

Undergraduate and related graduate programs. Undergraduate and related graduate degree programs will be reviewed concurrently, as determined by the unit, and approved by the Provost and Dean, but will appear separately on the schedule of reviews.

Multiple Locations and/or Modes of Delivery. In cases where a degree program is delivered in more than one location with different faculty and resources or is offered through more than one mode of delivery, each distinct offering will occur on the master list of degree programs, though reviews of related degree programs will normally occur concurrently.

Joint Programs with Other Institutions. The University will work with other Quality Assurance offices to identify the date for review where a program is offered in partnership with another university and/or college, and with institutions federated and affiliated with the university.

1.3 Principal Components and Timelines

The Cyclical Program Review takes place over a three-to-five-year period and centres around five components.

a) **Principal Components**
- **Self-Study** – a critical self-appraisal of the strengths and weaknesses and a plan for continuous improvement for the degree program from the perspective of members of the academic unit responsible for delivery of the degree program
- **External Reviewers' Report** – external evaluation of program quality by disciplinary/interdisciplinary experts including recommendations for the improvement of the degree program
- **Internal Responses by both the Program and Dean(s)** – provides internal perspective in response to External Reviewers' Report
- **Final Assessment Report and Implementation Plan** – institutional evaluation by AQAPC based on the review of the Self-Study, the External Reviewers' Report, and the Responses by the academic unit(s) and the Dean(s); will include a Summary and an Implementation Plan.
- **Monitoring Report** – follow-up reporting on the principal findings of the review and the implementation

of the recommendations. The academic unit will provide detailed reporting on each recommendation identified as requiring action.

b) **Timeline:**
- Year 1– Preparation of Self-Study and Appendices (in academic year prior to site visit)
- Year 2– Site Visit (takes place in academic year indicated on Schedule of Reviews) and External Reviewers' Report submission
- Year 2– Program and Decanal Responses (prepared in response to External Reviewers' Report)
- Year 2– Final Assessment Report and Implementation Plan
- Years 3-5 – Monitoring Report (academic unit will follow up on recommendations identified for action in Implementation Plan)

1.4 Relationship with Accreditation Processes

In the case of programs which must also receive review by a professional accreditation body (e.g. Business, Nursing, Social Work, etc.), some review documents may be substituted for or added to those prescribed by this policy if all information required by the policy is contained and appended. The Provost will make a determination of the suitability of accreditation documents for the purposes of program review. In these cases, adaptations may be made for certain components of the program review process, but only when these elements are fully consistent with the requirements established in this Protocol.
A Record of Substitution or Addition (for elements of the CPR that are substituted or augmented with elements from an accreditation review, together with a description of the grounds on which such substitution/augmentation decisions were made), including rationales for each, must be kept and is subject to audit.

1.5 Joint Degree Programs

In cases where a Nipissing degree program is offered jointly or in partnership with another institution, the Office of the Provost will work with the partner institution's counterpart office to ensure that the requirements of both institutions' quality assurance policies and procedures will be met in a way that avoids duplication and streamlines the process as much as possible. In cases where Nipissing's processes are different from the partner institution, all efforts will be made to comply with the QAF.

Specifically:
- There will be a single Self-Study that will explain how input was received from faculty, staff and students at each partner institution.
- Each partner institution will be involved in nominating, selecting and ranking of external reviewers.
- Each partner institution may include an internal representative that will participate in the site visit with the external reviewers.
- Site visits will include all partner universities and, at least where partners are institutions in Ontario, will include all sites.
- There will be a single Response to the External Reviewers' Report, prepared jointly by members of the academic units of each partner institution. There will be a single Decanal Response prepared jointly by the Deans of each partner institution.
- There will be a single Final Assessment Report (FAR) and an Implementation Plan (IP).
- The FAR will be subject to the governance processes at each partner institution and will require approval by both institutions.
- Partner institutions will agree on an appropriate monitoring process for the Implementation Plan.
- The FAR and the Implementation Plan will be posted on the websites of affiliated institutions.

1.6 Steps in the Cyclical Program Review Process

Site visits will be conducted in the fall or the winter. The timing of the visit will determine the deadline for completing review documentation.

Date of Site Visit	External Reviewer Nomination	Completion of Self-Study & Appendices	
	To Dean & Office of Provost	To Dean	To Office of Provost
Fall (Sept – Dec)	March 1	August 1	September 1
Winter (Jan – Mar)	May 1	October 1	November 1

Steps	Description	Documentation Required for Auditing Purposes	Responsibility
Step 1	Notification of Cyclical Program Review	• Notification Letter	Provost's Office
Step 2	Workshop/Orientation Session	• Agenda • Presentation	Provost's Office
Step 3	Preparation and Collection of Data for Self-Study & Appendices • Establish an Internal Review Committee (IRC) • Review/revision of Program Objectives, Program-Level Learning Outcomes, Curriculum Mapping • Conduct surveys of current students and alumni • Collect and compile Course Syllabuses and Curriculum Vitae • Receive Data from OIPA/Grad Office/Research Office and Library Statement of Support • Analyse Data		Academic Unit
Step 4	Nomination, Ranking and Selection of External Reviewers • Nomination and Ranking • Letters of Invitation	• Nomination Form • Letter of Invitation	• Academic Unit • Provost's Office
Step 5	Role and Selection of Internal Representative (optional)	• No Documentation	Provost's Office
Step 6	Writing and Completion of Self-Study using Template	• Self-Study and Appendices	Academic Unit
Step 7	Dean Sign-Off on Self-Study and Appendices	• Signature on Self-Study (included with Step 6 documentation)	Dean
Step 8	AQAPC Reviews Self-Study and Appendices	• Compliance Checklist	Provost's Office

Step 9	Site (Virtual) Visit and Instructions	• Site (Virtual) Visit Schedule • Reviewer Instructions	Provost's Office
Step 10	External Reviewers' Report	• External Reviewers' Report	External Reviewers
Step 11	Program Response to External Reviewers' Report	• Program Response	Academic Unit
Step 12	Decanal Response to External Reviewers' Report	• Decanal Response	Dean
Step 13	Development of Final Assessment Report and the Implementation Plan to be shared with the Dean and the unit prior to distribution	• FAR • IP	Provost
Step 14	FAR Approval and Distribution	• FAR with Provost's Signature • QC Letter of Review	Provost's Office
Step 15	Monitoring Report by Academic Units *(Completed 2 years after site visit)*	• Monitoring Report	Academic Unit
Step 16	Dean Signs Off Monitoring Report	• Signature on Monitoring Report (included with Step 15 documentation)	Dean
Step 17	AQAPC Reviews Monitoring Report	• AQAPC Minutes	Provost's Office
Step 18	Notification that the Review is Complete	• Letter of Completion	Provost's Office

Step 1 – Notification of Cyclical Program Review

In the academic year prior to site visit, the Office of Provost notifies the academic units of degree programs that will be reviewed in the following year. This notification will specifically indicate distinct offerings for each program.

Step 2 – Workshop/Orientation Session

The Provost's Office organizes workshop(s) for academic units to review cyclical review process and required steps to complete self-study and appendices.

Step 3 – Preparation & Collection of Data for Self-Study & Appendices

Establish an Internal Review Committee (IRC) to prepare the self-study document. The role of the IRC is to prepare the self-study document based on broad consultation with faculty, students and staff and to respond to the external reviewer report based on input from the academic unit. The IRC will select its Chair. The composition of the IRC will consist of a minimum of one faculty member from the program under review, a faculty member from another program who is at arm's length from the program under review, and one upper-year student and one student from first or second year who are majoring in the program under review.

In the academic year prior to the site visit, the academic unit will:
• Develop/review/revise Program Objectives, Program-Level Learning Outcomes, Curriculum Mapping

- Conduct surveys of current students and alumni
- Collect and compile Course Syllabi and Curriculum Vitae
- Receive data from OIPA, Grad Studies, Office of Research
- Receive Library Statement of Support
- Begin/complete analysis of data

A number of supports are available to assist academic units in the preparation and completion of cyclical review documentation. See **Provision of Support**

Step 4 – Nomination, Ranking and Selection of External Reviewers

- For Fall site visits (September to December) – Nomination Form due March 1st
- For Winter site visits (January to March) – Nomination Form due May 1st

Number of Reviewers Required

Degree Program	External Reviewers
Undergraduate	2 reviewers
Graduate	2 reviewers
Concurrent Undergraduate and Graduate	2-3 reviewers

a) **Qualifications of External Reviewers**
- Be Associate or Full Professors
- Have suitable disciplinary expertise, qualifications, and experience in developing, assessing and/or managing degree programs
- Have combined professional experience to cover the majority areas of study and/or fields of expertise
- At least one of the reviewers will have expertise in teaching and learning – content and program delivery, assessment/evaluation, curriculum mapping, and learning outcomes
- In the case of graduate degree programs, have experience with graduate teaching and supervision
- Be at arm's length.

b) **Arm's Length Requirement**
An arm's length peer reviewer is an external disciplinary expert who has not been a supervisor, collaborator, departmental colleague (past or present) or co-author of faculty members in the previous six years, and who does not have personal connections with members of the academic unit or:
- Be a close friend or relative of a member of the Academic Unit or of someone with whom the Academic Unit has consulted
- Have been a supervisor within the past six years of a member of any academic unit involved in the development of the proposal for the program being reviewed
- Have been a student within the past six years in any academic unit involved in the development of the proposal for the program being reviewed, or
- Have received an undergraduate or a graduate degree from Nipissing in the past six years.

c) **Process**
The Office of the Provost will notify academic units of the deadline for submission of Nominations of External Reviewers. Members of the academic unit are not to contact possible external reviewers for any reason. The academic unit will complete the Nomination of External Reviewers' template that includes the names and required information of no fewer than six qualified persons who they are nominating to serve as external reviewers, all of whom are to be at arm's length.

- If there are **two or more distinct areas of study** within the degree program(s) to be reviewed, all efforts will be made to ensure a balance of external reviewers with the required expertise. Areas of expertise should be clearly identified for each nominated external reviewer.
- In the case of a **concurrent review of an undergraduate degree program(s) and a related graduate degree program(s)**, nominated external reviewers should be qualified by discipline and experience to review both program levels.
- In the case of **joint programs**, the list of External Reviewers will be developed jointly with the partner institution(s).

The completed **Nomination of External Reviewers' form** will be sent to the Dean(s). On behalf of the Academic Unit, the Dean(s) will submit the Nominations of External Reviewers to the Office of the Provost.

d) Ranking of External Reviewers
The Office of the Provost will develop a ranked list of nominated external reviewers. In the case of degree programs to be offered jointly with another institution, the Office of the Provost will develop a ranked list of External Reviewer(s) in consultation with the partner institution.

e) Invitation to External Reviewers
The Office of the Provost will contact the proposed reviewers in ranked order.

Step 5 – Role and Selection of Internal Representative (optional)

The inclusion of an internal representative will be optional and whether to have an internal will be determined by the Office of the Provost in consultation with the Dean(s).

a) Role of Internal Representative (Optional)
Using his/her knowledge of institutional practices and culture, the internal faculty representative facilitates the work of the External Reviewers during the site visit. The internal representative accompanies the external reviewers throughout the site visit and attends meetings with the Dean(s), Chair(s) and/or Director(s), faculty, students, and staff. The internal representative does not participate in the writing of the External Reviewer Report, except to answer questions, as appropriate.

b) Process
The Dean(s) under whose authority the degree program(s) is being delivered will provide a list of potential faculty members from within the appropriate division. Based on previous experience and past practice, the University has determined that the internal should be from within the same decanal division and not from the academic unit whose program is being reviewed.

c) Joint Program
The selection of an internal faculty member requires joint input and may include one internal member from each partner institution, or preference may be given to an internal member from another academic unit offering a joint program, preferably with the same partner institution.

An additional member, appropriately qualified and experienced, may be assigned from industry or the professions at the discretion of the Provost, in consultation with the Dean.

Step 6 – Writing and Completion of Self-Study Using Template

The academic unit(s) responsible for a program(s) under review will prepare a Self-Study using the Self-Study

template and data collected in Step 3. The template is designed to incorporate all Evaluation Criteria as outlined in **Appendix A**.

a) Writing of Self-Study – Participation and Involvement

The Self-Study will describe extent of participation of faculty, staff and students. Indicate how the Self-Study was written, including how the views of faculty, staff, and students were obtained. All faculty in the program(s) being reviewed should be involved in the writing and/or review of the Self-Study and Appendices; this includes partnering institutions; academic units that share responsibility for the program, and faculty from all degree programs where multiple degree programs are being reviewed. The Self-Study document may include the views of others deemed to be relevant, including staff, students, graduates of the degree program(s), representatives of industry, related professions, and practical training programs, and employers, as appropriate. In the case of professional programs, the views of employers and professional associations should be solicited through surveys and be incorporated into the review. The views of staff and students will be considered in the process of writing the self-study.

b) Components of Self-Study
The Self-Study will:
- Be broad-based, reflective, forward-looking
- Address how continuous improvement has been incorporated into processes and practices to improve/enhance student experience and program quality
- Be a critical analysis of each degree program being reviewed; an assessment of program strengths; and opportunities to improve and enhance the program
- For the first Cyclical Review of a new program, include steps taken to address any issues/items flagged in the Monitoring Report for follow-up and items identified for follow-up by the Quality Council during the approval process
- Describe how concerns and recommendations raised in previous reviews have since been addressed, specifically those marked for follow-up in the FAR, the Implementation Plan and subsequent Monitoring Reports.
- Address each of the required Evaluation Criteria as outlined in Appendix A
- Include program-related data and measures of performance, including applicable provincial, national and professional standards (where available)
- Identify any unique curriculum or program innovations, creative components or significant high impact practices.
- Describe areas that the program's faculty, staff and /or students have identified as requiring improvement, or as holding promise for enhancement and/or opportunities for curricular change
- Assess the adequacy of all relevant services and supports that directly contribute to the academic quality of each program under review

c) University Priorities
Academic units may reflect on University priorities, commenting on the following initiatives and how each is integrated into or reflected in the offering of the program: through program objectives, program-level learning outcomes, curriculum, program delivery, instruction and/or student recruitment:
- Indigenization
- Equity, Diversity and Inclusion
- Anti-Racism

d) Multiple Programs Being Reviewed
In cases where multiple programs are being reviewed, academic units will discuss with the Office of the Provost

whether one or more self-studies should be developed. In cases where multiple programs are being presented in one self-study, the self-study will:

- Review and clearly identify and discuss each distinctive offering (e.g., mode of delivery) of the program throughout the self-study template
- Explicitly address quality of each program and learning environment of students in each program
- Identify the program objectives, program-level learning outcomes, and complete curriculum mapping for each degree program.

Step 7 – Dean Sign-Off on Self-Study and Appendices

The Self-Study and Appendices will be submitted to the Dean(s) for review. Where the head of an academic unit whose program(s) is being reviewed is a Dean, the Self-Study and Appendices will be submitted directly to the Office of the Provost.

The Dean(s) will provide feedback and facilitate improvements. When the Dean(s) is satisfied that the documentation is complete and accurate, they will sign off on the document and submit it to the Office of the Provost for distribution to AQAPC.

Step 8 – AQAPC Reviews Self-Study and Appendices

The AQAPC is responsible for ensuring the self-study and appendices address all the evaluation criteria for the program review. Two members, outside of the academic unit being reviewed, will review the Self-Study and Appendices, and complete the compliance checklist provided by the Office of the Provost. The applicable Dean(s) typically attend the AQAPC meeting. AQAPC will either approve the documentation or advise the unit of revisions to be considered. The academic unit will be given the opportunity to make revisions prior to distribution to the External Reviewers. Once revisions are completed, the documentation is ready to be distributed to the External Reviewers.

Step 9 – Site Visit and Instructions

Once the Self-Study has been approved by AQAPC, it is ready for external review.

a) On-Site or Virtual Site Visit

- External review of a new doctoral program will incorporate an on-site visit.

- External review of a new undergraduate program proposal will normally be conducted on-site, except when the Provost (or delegate) may propose that the review be conducted by desk review, virtual site visit, or equivalent method if the external reviewers are satisfied that the off-site option is acceptable;

- External review of a new master's program proposal will normally be conducted on-site, but certain new master's program's (e.g., professional master's programs) may be conducted by desk review, virtual site visit, or equivalent method if both the Provost (or delegate) and external reviewers are satisfied that the off-site option is acceptable. An on-site visit is required for all other proposed master's programs.

b) Site Visit Schedule
The Office of the Provost will oversee the arrangements for the in-person or virtual site visit. An in-person site

visit will normally be scheduled for two to three consecutive days. A virtual site visit may be scheduled over a longer period of time. The Office of the Provost will assist with travel and accommodation arrangements.

The Office of the Provost will draft the schedule for the site visit in consultation with the academic unit. External reviewers will typically meet with the Provost, relevant Dean(s), Chair(s)/Directors(s), faculty, and students. An in-person site visit may include a tour of facilities and the library. The Office of the Provost has final approval of the schedule.

c) Documentation to Share with External Reviewers
The Office of the Provost will provide External Reviewers and the internal representative (optional) with review documentation.

Documentation will include:
- Nipissing's Institutional Program Quality Assurance Policy (IQAP) – that will include Evaluation Criteria and Degree Level Expectations
- Self-Study and Appendices (course syllabuses, faculty CVs, data, student surveys, library statement of support)
- Template for External Reviewers' Report. The template includes all Evaluation Criteria set by the Quality Council (see *Appendix A*)
- Site Visit Schedule

d) Pre-Meeting (For both in-person and virtual site visits)
A pre-meeting of the external reviewers and the internal representative (optional) will be scheduled to provide guidance and direction. The Office of the Provost will review the instructions with the external reviewers, explain their roles and obligations, and respond to any questions related to documentation, process, and the final report.

Reviewers will be asked to recognize the University's autonomy to determine priorities for funding, space, and faculty allocation and respect the confidentiality of all aspects of the review process. The external reviewer(s) will also be invited to contact the Office of the Provost should any questions arise during the review process.

Step 10 – External Reviewers' Report

Timing: One month following site visit

The External Reviewers will submit one joint report, using the Template provided, to the Office of the Provost. The preference is for one report with a distinct set of recommendations for each program under review. There may be situations, as determined by the Office of the Provost, where separate reports may be submitted.

a) **Preliminary Feedback**. The External Reviewers will provide preliminary oral feedback to the Provost (or designate) before the conclusion of the site visit.

b) **Substance of Report**. The Report will:
- Address the substance (clarity and completeness) of the Self-Study.
- Address all required Evaluation Criteria as specified in *Appendix A*.
- Address the quality of each academic program and the learning environment of the students for each distinct program being reviewed in the Self-Study.
- Describe the program's strengths. Identify and commend distinctive attributes of each discrete program (i.e., multiple campuses, online), identify any notable strong and creative and/or clearly

innovative aspects. Provide evidence of any significant innovation or creativity in the content and/or delivery of the program relative to other such programs.

- Describe areas for improvement and opportunities for enhancement – include at least three (3) recommendations for specific steps that will lead to the continuous improvement of the program, distinguishing between those the program can act upon and those that require external action.
- Respect the confidentiality required for all aspects of the review process.
- Recognize the university's autonomy to determine priorities for funding, space and faculty allocation. Recommendations related to resources, specifically faculty and space requirements must be directly linked to issues of program quality and/or sustainability.

c) **Special Instructions**. In addition, External Reviewers may be asked to respond to any additional questions from the Provost/Dean(s) in their final report. Such instruction may include a request to respond to:
- Issues of special concern identified for the degree program(s) under review, for example, appropriateness of the curriculum, breadth of the curriculum, enrolment levels, recruitment, quality of the permanent or limited-term faculty, adequacy of staffing, space or equipment, program-specific library resources, etc.; and/or
- Concerns and/or recommendations raised in previous external reviews
- For initial reviews, issues identified in the 'Notes' from the Quality Council's approval letter

d) **Submission of Report**. The Report(s) should be submitted electronically to the Provost no later than one month from the date of the site visit or desk audit. The Report should be complete and comprehensive (see Step 10b), and specifically include a minimum of three distinct recommendations for specific steps that will lead to the continuous improvement of each distinct program under review.

Upon receipt of the External Reviewers' Report, the Report will be reviewed by the Office of the Provost to ensure that it provides a comprehensive assessment of the degree program(s). If the Report is not satisfactory, the Office of the Provost, in consultation with the Dean(s) will identify any gaps and request additional information from the External Reviewers.

e) **Distribution of Report**
Once the Report is deemed satisfactory, the Office of the Provost will distribute the External Reviewers' Report to the Chair/Director of the academic unit. The External Reviewers' Report is considered a confidential document and will be distributed to the Chair/Director. Where appropriate, any confidential and/or sensitive information will be redacted prior to distribution. Confidential/sensitive information will be discussed with the Dean, and any action taken will be determined in consultation with the Office of the Provost.

Step 11 – Program Response to External Reviewers' Report

Timing: One month from date of request from Office of Provost

The Office of the Provost will ask the Chair/Director to provide a Response from their academic unit to the External Reviewers' Report and specifically to the Report's recommendations. The Chair/Director will consult with members of the academic unit in finalizing a Response. The Response will be submitted to their Dean within one month of the request.

Step 12 – Decanal Response to External Reviewers' Report and Program Response

Timing: One month from receiving response from academic unit

After receipt of the Response by the academic unit, the Dean(s) will provide a written Response within one month, responding to the plans/recommendations proposed in the External Reviewers' Report, and the Program's Response. The Dean will respond to each of the recommendations identified in the External Reviewers' Report, specifically addressing:

- Any changes in curriculum, program organization, policy or governance necessary to meet the recommendations.
- Any resources, financial and otherwise, that will be provided to support the implementation of those recommendations requiring resources; and
- A proposed timeline for the implementation of any recommendations.

Exception to Decanal Response*: In cases where the Dean is the Divisional Head (e.g., Nursing, Education), a joint response will be prepared by the faculty and the Dean.*

Step 13 –Development of Final Assessment Report (FAR) & the Implementation Plan (IP)

Timing: Normally, six (6) months following site visit

The Office of the Provost will review the Self Study, External Reviewers' Report, Academic Unit and Decanal Responses and will develop and finalize the FAR and share it with the Dean and the unit prior to distribution. An Executive Summary of the Final Assessment Report will become the public document; therefore, it will not include any confidential or personal information.

The **Final Assessment Report / Executive Summary** will include the following:
- A clear and accountable synthesis of the outcome of the cyclical review and the plans to improve the program.
- A timeline for the key elements of the program's review process:
    a. The timing of when the review was launched;
    b. The date the self-study was submitted/approved;
    c. The site visit dates;
    d. When the external reviewers' report was received;
    e. When the program's response was received; and
    f. When the Dean's response was received.
- A summary of the groups and individuals (by role) met with during the (in person or virtual) site visit.
- A summary of the outcome(s) of the review, including:
    a. That the Senate (or equivalent) QA Committee has approved the FAR and IP
    b. When a monitoring report(s) is due
    c. When the next Cyclical Review of the program is scheduled to take place, with an expected timing for the associated site visit (e.g., Fall of 2027)
- A summary of the program's strengths and opportunities for further improvement and enhancement.
- A summary of the number of recommendations received, potentially by theme.

The **Implementation Plan** will:
- Identify those recommendations needed to maintain the quality of the programs, and promotes the ongoing and continuous improvement of the program; this process will require looking at key performance indicators of the program
- Set out and prioritize the recommendations that are selected for implementation and/or action
- Identify appropriate timelines for acting on and monitoring the implementation of the recommendations

- Identify and explain the circumstances related to any recommendations that will not be implemented
- Identify who will be responsible for the timely implementation and monitoring of the recommendations (e.g., Dean(s), University Librarian, Chair of a department, Director of a graduate degree program)
- If applicable, identify the source(s) of any additional resources required to implement the recommendations (e.g., Provost, Dean)

Confidential information will be excluded from the FAR and will be documented separately; documentation will be shared with and handled in consultation with the appropriate Dean(s) and the Provost.

Step 14 – FAR Approval and Distribution

The Provost will approve the Final Assessment Report and the Office of the Provost will be responsible for the timely distribution of the Final Assessment Report to the following:

- Relevant Dean(s)
- Academic Unit (chairs/directors) to take responsibility and act on as appropriate (with confidential information removed)
- AQAPC for information
- Senate (for information, with confidential information removed)
- Quality Council for information
- Board of Governors for information
- An Executive Summary and Implementation Plan becomes the public document and is posted to the University's website. The Executive Summary will not contain any confidential and/or personnel information. Academic units are not required to post the FAR or Executive Summary on their own websites.

Step 15 – Monitoring Report

Timing: Normally, two (2) years following approval of Final Assessment Report; a shorter or longer time may be recommended based on complexity of recommendations marked for action.

The Chair/Director will be responsible for executing the identified recommendations in consultation with the Dean(s). The Dean(s) will be responsible for ensuring that the academic unit implements the recommendations and submits the follow-up Monitoring Report in a timely manner. The Office of the Provost will remind academic units and Deans of upcoming deadlines.

Step 16 – Dean signs off Monitoring Report

The Dean will review Monitoring Report and sign off and forward to the Office of the Provost.

Step 17 – AQAPC reviews Monitoring Report

AQAPC reviews the Monitoring Report to ensure that the program has satisfactorily addressed the recommendations identified for action in the Implementation Plan. AQAPC may request additional information, and in some cases may require a follow-up report from the academic unit.

Step 18 – Notification that Review is Complete

Once AQAPC accepts the Monitoring Report, the cyclical review for that degree program is completed, and is reported to: Chairs/Directors of reviewed degree programs, Dean(s) under whose authority the degree program(s) being reviewed is offered; and Senate (for information).

1.7 Publication of Documentation

a) **Documents Subject to 'Public Access'**
   The following documents will be posted publicly on the university's website:
   - Schedule of Reviews
   - Final Assessment Reports (with Exec Summary and Implementation Plan)
   - Monitoring Reports

b) **Documents Not Subject to 'Public Access'**
   Given the highly sensitive nature of the documentation used in the cyclical program review process, in which academic units and external reviewers are asked to be critical in their evaluations, the documents produced will be deemed confidential. Institutional failure to protect the confidentiality of the documents could seriously impair frank appraisal, discourage free flow of analytical information, and compromise the efficacy of the review process.

   The following documents will be deemed to be confidential and therefore not subject to 'public access':

   - Information made available in preparation for the Self-Study
   - Specialized instructions to the External Reviewers
   - Self-Study and Appendices
   - External Reviewers' Reports
   - Internal Responses of the Academic Unit and Dean(s); a summary of the academic and decanal responses will be included in the Final Assessment Report, absent confidential information.

c) **External Reporting**
The Office of the Provost will submit an annual report to the Quality Council listing the past years completed FAR's, IP's and monitoring reports providing an attestation that all IQAP-required CPR processes have been followed. The report will include a link to Nipissing's quality assurance web postings.

Section 2 – New Program Approval Protocol

2.1 **Prelude**

The development of new undergraduate and graduate programs will ensure that educational experiences are both engaging and rigorous. New programs will meet the degree level expectations, which are the academic standards of Ontario universities that identify expectations of performance by graduates at a specified level of learning, e.g., Honours, Master, and Doctoral.

The process will look closely at the key performance indicators including degree level expectations, program objectives, program-level learning outcomes, student achievement of learning outcomes, as well as the instructional and physical resources needed to achieve the program-level learning outcomes.

The program proposal will include a plan for the continuous improvement of the program, and the interim monitoring report will review and evaluate the program's success in realizing its objectives.
The monitoring of a new program is an essential element of continuous improvement, not only in the development of the program but also for the monitoring and continuous improvement of the program once the new program is running.

2.2 Approval Requirements and Timelines

New degree programs and graduate diplomas must be approved by Nipissing University's Senate and by the Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance (Quality Council). The Office of the Provost manages the approval process for new program development and will direct and facilitate the process through the approval stages.

a) Approval by Senate – Following the internal procedures laid out below, the Chair of the Academic Quality Assurance and Planning (AQAPC) will submit a new program proposal to Senate for approval.

b) Approval by the Quality Council – The Office of the Provost will send Senate-approved proposals to the Quality Council for approval. Decisions on a proposed new degree program are normally received within 45 days of submission. When the Appraisal Committee of the Quality Council requires additional information, decisions will normally be made within a further 30 days of the Committee receiving a satisfactory response to its request. The Appraisal Committee will make a decision on Graduate Diplomas whereas new programs require the approval of Quality Council.

2.3 Intention to Offer New Programs and Offers of Admission

Intention to Offer New Program – Subject to approval by the Provost, the University may publicly announce its intention to offer a new undergraduate or graduate degree program in advance of having received approval by the Quality Council. When such announcements are made in advance of Quality Council approval, they must contain the following statement: 'Prospective students are advised that the program is subject to formal approval' as per QAF 2.7 Public announcement of new programs.

Offers of Admission – Students cannot be admitted to a new degree program until notification of approval of the degree program has been received from the Quality Council.

2.4 Joint Degree Programs

In cases where a proposed new degree program will be offered jointly or in partnership with another institution, the Office of the Provost will work with the partner institution's counterpart office to streamline the process to meet requirements of both institutions' quality assurance policies and procedures and avoid duplication. In cases where Nipissing's processes are different from the partner institution, all efforts will be made to comply with the QAF.

Specifically:
- Representatives from each institution will be members of the Academic Unit.
- Each institution will be involved in the consultation and development of the Program Proposal.
- Each partner institution will be involved in nominating, selecting and ranking of external reviewers.
- Site visits will include all partner institutions, at least where partners are institutions in Ontario.
- There will be a coordinated single internal response by the Academic Unit to the External Reviewers' Report.

2.5 Steps	Description	Documentation Required for Auditing Purposes	Responsibility
Step 1	In-Principal Approval by Provost/Provost Council	• Letter of Intent	• Provost's Office
Step 2	Development of Full Program Proposal and Appendices using Template • Consultation – faculty, academic units, Decanal Councils • Budget – in consultation with Dean(s) and Finance Office • Program Objectives, Program Level Learning Outcomes and Curriculum Mapping • New Course Development and Course Syllabuses Collection • CVs – Collection of Faculty CVs • Library – Statement of Support	Program Proposal and Appendices	Academic Unit
Step 3	Dean Sign-Off on Program Proposal and Appendices	Dean Signature on Proposal	Dean
Step 4	• Nomination, Ranking and Selection of External Reviewers • Nomination and Ranking • Letters of Invitation	Nomination Form Letter of Invitation	Academic Unit Provost's Office
Step 5	**Stage 1** – ACC Review – of Program Proposal and Appendices	ACC Minutes/Report	Provost's Office
Step 6	**Stage II** – AQAPC Initial Review – of Program Proposal and Appendices	AQAPC Minutes/Report	Provost's Office
Step 7	Site Visit and Instructions	Site Visit Schedule Reviewer Instructions	Provost's Office
Step 8	External Reviewers' Report	External Reviewers Report Template	External Reviewers
Step 9	Academic Unit's Response to External Reviewers' Report	Academic Unit's Response	Academic Unit
Step 10	Dean's Response to External Reviewers' Report	Dean's Response	Dean
Step 11	**Stage III** – AQAPC Final Review – of Program Proposal, External Reviewers' Report, Academic Unit's Response, Dean's Response; AQAPC recommends program to Senate	AQAPC Minutes/Report	Provost's Office
Step 12	Senate for Approval	Senate Minutes	Senate
Step 13	Submission and Approval by Quality Council and Ministry of Colleges and Universities	Quality Council Approval Letter Ministry Approval Letter	Provost's Office
Step 14	Follow-up and Reporting • Post Program Description to Website • Verbal Update to Senate • Report to Board of Governors (BoG) • Add to Schedule of Reviews	• Link to program description • BoG Annual Report • Year of First Cyclical Review	Provost's Office
Step 15	Implementation Window and Monitoring Report to AQAPC	Monitoring Report	Provost's Office

Step 1 – Initial Letter of Intent (LOI) Approval

The initial idea for a new degree program may come from several different sources, including groups of faculty members one or more academic units, administration, and collaborations with other institutions. The initial idea for a new degree program will be discussed with the Dean(s) under whose authority the degree program would be delivered.

The Dean, in consultation with the proponents of the new degree program, will develop a Letter of Intent for the new degree program (template available upon request). The Dean(s) will take the Letter of Intent to the Provost Council for discussion and in-principle approval. Should the Provost grant in-principle approval, the Dean(s) will direct the Academic Unit to move forward with developing a Full Program Proposal. If the Provost does not think that the proposal merits further development, it will direct feedback to the proponents through the Dean(s). An amended Initial Proposal may be reconsidered by the Provost at a later date.

Step 2 – Development of Full Program Proposal and Appendices

A number of supports are available to assist academic units in the preparation of the new program proposal and appendices. See **Provision of Support**.

a) Template and Evaluation Criteria
The Academic Unit will prepare, and complete in full, a proposal for a new degree program for approval, using the Program Proposal Template that:
- Includes required Evaluation Criteria as specified in *Appendix B (as defined in QAF)*
- Indicates if the program is a 'professional' or 'cost-recovery' program
- Highlights unique curriculum or program innovations, creative components, or significant high impact practices.

b) University Priorities
Academic units may reflect on University priorities, commenting on the following initiatives and how each is integrated into or reflected in the offering of the program: through program objectives, program-level learning outcomes, curriculum, program delivery, instruction and/or student recruitment:
- Indigenization
- Equity, Diversity and Inclusion
- Anti-Racism

c) Consultation
The Academic Unit is encouraged to begin early consultations and continue consulting throughout the entire process of the new degree program development to allow for feedback and comment. Recommended consultation should include affected/interested parties, including:
- Members of academic units who may be affected by the proposed degree program or who have expertise relevant to the proposal
- Faculty Councils - Deans will announce at their faculty councils that a proposal for a new degree program is being developed; Chairs/Directors will convey this information to their academic units as appropriate
- Where applicable, include input and perspectives of potential employers and professional associations
- Where possible, consultation should include students.

d) Proposed Budget
The Academic Unit will work closely with their Dean to develop a proposed budget for the new program. The budget is for internal use only; it will be submitted to AQAPC and Senate. The proposed budget is an estimate of

proposed resources; actual resources will be dependent upon a number of factors including enrolment. Proposed budgets should be shared with OIPA and the Associate Vice-President, Finance in the Finance Office for review and comment.

e) Program Objectives, Program-Level Learning Outcomes and Curriculum Mapping
The Teaching Hub is available to assist with the development of program objectives, program-level learning outcomes, course-level learning outcomes and curriculum mapping.

f) New Course Development and Course Syllabi Collection
New courses should be developed and submitted to Academic Regulations and Curriculum Committee (ARCC), then ACC for approval and recommendation to AQAPC then Senate. The Appendices should include a sampling of course syllabuses – new and existing course syllabi.

g) Curriculum Vitae
CVs for faculty involved with the degree program should be collected and compiled into an Appendix.

h) Library Statement of Support
The Academic Unit should request from the University Librarian a report showing the extent to which the library resources can support the new degree program.

i) Office of Research
Graduate programs should include information on research funding and grants. Academic Unit should request this information from the Office of Research.

Step 3 – Dean Sign-Off on Program Proposal and Appendices

The Dean will review the Program Proposal and Appendices and recommend revisions as appropriate. The Dean will review the document for accuracy and clarity and will be responsible for ensuring resources are acceptable and reasonable as presented in the proposed budget. Once the Dean(s) has signed off on the completed Program Proposal, the proposal will be forwarded to the Office of the Provost for distribution to AQAPC.

Step 4 – Nomination, Ranking and Selection of External Reviewers

Number of Reviewers Required

Degree Program	External Reviewers
Undergraduate	2 reviewers
Graduate	2 reviewers
Joint Undergraduate and Graduate	2 external reviewers, plus internal reviewers, one from each institution

a) Qualifications of External Reviewers – will normally:
- Be Associate or Full Professors
- Have suitable disciplinary expertise, qualifications and experience in developing, assessing and/or managing degree programs
- Have combined professional experience to cover the majority areas of study and/or fields of expertise.
- At least one of the reviewers will have expertise in teaching and learning – content and program delivery, assessment/evaluation, curriculum mapping, and learning outcomes
- In the case of graduate degree programs, have experience with graduate teaching and supervision
- Be at arm's length.

b) Arm's Length Requirement

An arm's length peer reviewer is an external disciplinary expert who has not been a supervisor, collaborator, departmental colleague (past or present) or co-author of faculty members in the previous six years, and who does not have personal connections with members of the academic unit or:

- Be a close friend or relative of a member of the Academic Unit or of someone with whom the Academic Unit has consulted
- Have been a supervisor within the past six years of a member of any academic unit involved in the development of the proposal for a new degree program
- Have been a student within the past six years in any academic unit involved in the development of the proposal for a new degree program, or
- Have received an undergraduate or a graduate degree from Nipissing in the past six years.

c) Process

The Nomination of External Reviewers should be submitted to the Office of the Provost as soon as the Dean(s) has signed off on the Program Proposal. This enables the Office of the Provost time to confirm the availability of the external reviewer(s). Members of the Academic Unit are not to contact possible external reviewers for any reason.

The Academic Unit will complete the Nomination of External Reviewers' template that includes the names and required information of at least six qualified persons who they are nominating to serve as external reviewers of the proposed degree program, all of whom are to be at arm's length.

- If there are two or more distinct areas of study within the proposed degree program, all efforts will be made to ensure a balance of external reviewers with the required expertise. Areas of expertise should be clearly identified for each nominated external reviewer.

- In the case of joint programs, the list of External Reviewers will be developed jointly with the partner institution(s).

The completed Nomination of External Reviewers' form will be sent to the Dean(s). On behalf of the Academic Unit, the Dean(s) will submit the Nominations of External Reviewers to the Office of the Provost.

d) Ranking and Selection

The Office of the Provost, in consultation with the Dean(s), will develop a ranked list of nominated external reviewers. In the case of a degree program to be offered jointly with another institution, the Office of the Provost will develop a ranked list of External Reviewer(s) in consultation with the partner institution. The Office of the Provost will contact the proposed reviewers in ranked order.

Step 5 – Stage I – ACC/Graduate Studies Council (GSC) Review

The Dean will forward the Program Proposal to the ACC for undergraduate degree programs and the GSC for graduate degree programs. ACC/GSC will review the program proposal for consistency with university degree regulations. If any new courses are included in the proposal, ACC/GSC will follow their normal procedures for reviewing and approving new courses. Feedback and comments from ACC/GSC will be provided to the Academic Unit and Dean for consideration and/or inclusion in a revised proposal. The Academic Unit will respond to ACC/GSC feedback as required. Once complete, the Dean will submit the Program Proposal to the Office of the Provost for distribution to AQAPC.

Step 6 – Stage II - AQAPC Initial Review

The Dean will forward the Program Proposal to the Office of the Provost, who will submit it to AQAPC for review. The documentation will include the Program Proposal and Appendices, including the budget. AQAPC will review the documentation and may approve the Program Proposal as submitted or ask for revisions prior to the Office of the Provost forwarding the Program Proposal for external assessment.

Step 7 – Site Visit and Instructions

Once the Program Proposal for a new degree program has been approved by AQAPC, it is ready for external review.

a) **Site Visits: In-person, Virtually or Desk Review**

- External review of a new doctoral program will incorporate an on-site visit.

- External review of a new undergraduate program proposal will normally be conducted on-site, except when the Provost (or delegate) may propose that the review be conducted by desk review, virtual site visit, or equivalent method if the external reviewers are satisfied that the off-site option is acceptable;

- External review of a new master's program proposal will normally be conducted on-site, but certain new master's program's (e.g., professional master's programs) may be conducted by desk review, virtual site visit, or equivalent method if both the Provost (or delegate) and external reviewers are satisfied that the off-site option is acceptable. An on-site visit is required for all other proposed master's programs.

b) Site Visit Schedule
The Office of the Provost will oversee the arrangements for the in-person or virtual site visit. An in-person visit will normally be scheduled for one to two days, whereas a virtual site visit may be scheduled over a longer period. The Office of the Provost will assist with travel and accommodation arrangements. The Office of the Provost will be responsible for drafting the schedule for the site visit. External reviewers will typically meet with the Provost, relevant Dean(s), Chair(s)/Directors(s) and faculty. An in-person site visit may include a tour of facilities and the library. The Office of the Provost has final approval of the schedule.

c) Documentation to Share with Reviewers
The Office of the Provost will provide external reviewers with review documentation normally no less than two weeks prior to the site visit.

Documentation will include:
- Nipissing University's IQAP Policy and Procedures, including Evaluation Criteria and Degree Level Expectations
- Program Proposal and Appendices, including Library Statement of Support, Course Syllabuses and Faculty CVs
- Template for the External Reviewers' Report. The template includes all Evaluation Criteria set by the Quality Council (see *Appendix B*)
- Site Visit Schedule.

d) Pre-Meeting – *For both in-person and virtual site visits*
A pre-meeting of the external reviewers will be scheduled to provide guidance and direction. The Office of the Provost will review the instructions with the external reviewers, explain their roles and obligations, and respond

to any questions related to documentation, process, and the final report.

e) Reviewers will be asked to recognize the University's autonomy to determine priorities for funding, space, and faculty allocation and respect the confidentiality of all aspects of the review process. The external reviewer(s) will also be invited to contact the Office of the Provost should any questions arise during the review process.

Step 8 – External Reviewers' Report

Timing: One month following site visit

External reviewers will submit one joint report using the External Reviewers' Report Template provided by the Office of the Provost.

a) Substance of Report. The Report will:
- Address the substance (clarity and completeness) of the New Program Proposal
- Address all required Evaluation Criteria as specified in *Appendix B*
- Address the quality and learning environment of the program
- Describe the program's strengths. Identify, commend and provide evidence of any distinctive attributes of the program, identify any notable strong and creative and/or clearly innovative aspects, including significant innovation or creativity in the content and/or delivery of the program relative to other such programs.
- Describe areas for improvement and opportunities for enhancement.
- Include a Summary and a clearly defined list of recommendations that are clear, concise and actionable to improve and/or enhance the quality of the program
- Respect the confidentiality required for all aspects of the review process.

Recognize the university's autonomy to determine priorities for funding, space and faculty allocation. Recommendations related to resources, specifically faculty requirements must be directly linked to issues of program quality and/or sustainability.

b) Submission of Report
The final report will be submitted electronically to the Office of the Provost no later than one month from the date of the visit (on-site, virtually or desk).

Upon receipt of the External Reviewers' Report, the Report will be reviewed by the Office of the Provost to ensure that it provides a comprehensive assessment of the new program. If the Report is not satisfactory, the Provost, in consultation with the Dean(s) identify any gaps and request additional information from the External Reviewers.

c) Distribution of Report
Once the Report is deemed satisfactory, the Office of the Provost will distribute the External Reviewers' Report to the Academic Unit Chair/Director. Where appropriate, any confidential and/or sensitive information will be redacted prior to distribution.

d) Honorarium
Upon satisfactory completion of the External Reviewers report, each reviewer will receive an Honorarium for their work. The Office of the Provost will administer the Honorarium.

Step 9 – Academic Unit's Response

The Academic Unit will prepare a response to the External Reviewers' Report that will address each of the recommendations; the response may include further explanation or details in response to the comments or recommendations.

- If minor revisions are required, it is expected that these will be detailed in the Academic Unit's Response
- For substantial revisions, the Academic Unit will revise the Program Proposal using track changes. A detailed summary of these revisions will be included as part of the Academic Unit Response or in an appended document with the formal response. The Academic Unit will submit their response to the Dean(s).

Step 10 – Dean's Response

The Dean(s) will provide a response to the External Reviewers' Report, that is separate from that of the Academic Unit, to each of the recommendations. In cases where a Dean is the Working Chair for a new Program Proposal, members of the Academic Unit will prepare a response independently from the Dean; the Dean will provide a separate response.

Exception to Decanal Response: *In cases where the Dean is the Divisional Head (e.g., Nursing, Education), a joint response will be prepared by the Academic Unit and the Dean.*

Step 11 – Stage III - Academic Quality Assurance and Planning Committee's Final Review

AQAPC will review the final Program Proposal, the External Reviewers' Report, the Academic Unit's Response and Dean's Response. Relevant Dean(s) will be invited to attend AQAPC. AQAPC will assess whether the new degree program meets Nipissing's quality assurance standards, and will make one of the following determinations:
- Recommends to Senate for approval
- Requests modifications
- Recommends that the proposal not be pursued further

Should AQAPC request modifications or recommend that the proposal not be pursued further, the Dean or the Office of the Provost will convey the committee's views to the Academic Unit.

Step 12 – Senate for Approval and Faculty Council for Information

The Final Program Proposal and related documentation (with confidential and/or sensitive information removed) will be shared with Faculty Council for information and Senate for approval.

Documentation will include:
- Program Proposal,
- Budget,
- Executive Summary of the External Reviewers' Report,
- Academic Unit's Response,
- Dean's Response.

The Dean and/or a member of the Academic Unit will be called upon to speak to the proposal and/or to answer questions.

If Senate does not approve the recommendation from AQAPC, the Provost, in consultation with the Dean, will determine the next step, which may include modification of the proposal or discontinuation of the initiative.

Step 13 – Submission and Approval by Quality Council

Once Senate has approved a proposal for a new degree program, the Office of the Provost will submit the program to the Quality Assurance Secretariat. The submission to the Quality Council will be a single, clearly bookmarked PDF file arranged in the order required by the Quality Assurance Appraisal Committee (see the Quality Assurance Submission Checklist).

a) Documentation to Quality Council will include:
- Quality Assurance Submission Checklist
- Program Proposal
- Appendices (excluding CVs and Budget)
- External Reviewers' Report
- Academic Unit's Response
- Dean's Response
- Letter of Support from the Provost.

The submission will also include:
- A Checklist (with a summary of key changes as required)
- Date approved by Senate
- Bios for external reviewers specifically indicating qualifications in the following areas: sufficient expertise in content and program delivery; connections to industry (where appropriate); and expertise in teaching and learning.

b) Quality Council Decision

The Quality Council Appraisal Committee will review the proposal and may request clarification and/or additional information. Once satisfied, they will make a recommendation to Quality Council, who in turn will review the proposal and make one of the following recommendations:

i) Approved to Commence
ii) Approved to Commence with Report – The University will be required to report on specified issues with a pre-determined deadline, e.g., one to three years from program commencement
iii) Deferred for up to one year during which time the university may address identified issues and report back
iv) Not Approved
v) Such other action as the Quality Council considers reasonable and appropriate in the circumstances.

The Quality Assurance Secretariat will convey the decision of the Quality Council to the university. Requests for clarification and follow-up will be handled by the Office of Provost, and internally by the Dean(s) with the Chair/Director of the Academic Unit.

If approved by the Quality Council, the Office of the Provost will submit the approved proposal to the Ministry of Colleges and Universities for approval and program funding.

c) Public Announcement of new programs

The Provost may publicly announce its intention to offer a new undergraduate or graduate program in advance of receiving approval by the Quality Council with the following statement: *"Prospective students are advised that the program is still subject to formal approval."*

d) Appeals and Resubmissions

Should the Quality Council not grant approval to commence, the Provost, in consultation with the Dean(s), will reassess the proposal considering the Quality Council's comments and will determine whether to amend and resubmit the brief, appeal the decision, or discontinue the proposal. When the recommendation is ii), iii) or iv), the University has 30 days to request a meeting with and/or reconsideration by the Appraisal Committee.

Should the decision be made to amend and resubmit, the Dean(s) will work with the Academic Unit to develop a revised proposal. The Provost can approve minor changes made to the original proposal; major changes will be reviewed and/or approved through Senate Committees (ACC for changes to degree requirements or new courses, AQAPC for approval of the revised Full Proposal). When AQAPC deems that the revised Full Proposal for the new degree program addresses the issues highlighted by the Quality Council, it will be resubmitted to the Quality Assurance Secretariat for approval.

Step 14 – Follow Up and Reporting

a) Description of Program

Will be posted on the Office of the Provost's website once the program is approved by the Quality Council.

b) Senate

Senate will be verbally informed of decisions of the Quality Council.

c) Reports to Board of Governors

The Provost will keep the Board of Governors regularly apprised of new degree program proposals, normally in an annual report.

Step 15 – Implementation Window and Monitoring of a New Degree Program

a) Implementation Window

After a new degree program is approved to commence by the Quality Council and the Ministry of Colleges and Universities, the degree program must begin within 36 months of the date of approval; otherwise, the approval from the Quality Council will lapse.

b) Monitoring Report

The purpose of the monitoring report is to ensure that the degree program has been successfully initiated and to identify early, and work to address, any unforeseen implementation issues. There is an element of continuous improvement that ensures a program that is recently launched is closely monitored to identify challenges and issues with the program and address them in a timely manner.

- The Dean, in consultation with the Chair, Director or Program Coordinator, will provide a monitoring report to the Office of the Provost for distribution to the AQAPC on a new degree program, normally after the degree program has been operating for five years. In cases where enrolment is low in the first few years, the date for submitting a Monitoring Report may be delayed. The Monitoring Report will take place after the program's launch and prior to the program's first cyclical review.

- The Monitoring Report will address any issues identified in the 'Notes' provided by the Quality Assurance's Appraisal Committee and will include an evaluation of the program's success in realizing its objectives, requirements and outcomes, as originally proposed and approved, as well as any changes that have occurred in the interim.

- AQAPC will review the Report prepared by the Dean, in consultation with the Chair, Director or Program Coordinator, and determine if it is sufficient or if additional information is required. Senate will be notified that AQAPC has accepted the Monitoring Report.

- The ongoing monitoring process of the new program will continue to consider issues identified in the report, and the Office of the Provost will ensure that any concerns from the Monitoring Report are included in the first Cyclical Review.

2.6 Process

Graduate Diploma Note
The approval process for proposing a new graduate diploma will follow an abbreviated process of the new program approval as diplomas are not subject to external assessment. Steps 1, 2, 3 and 5 will be required as will Steps 12 through 15.

2.7 Publication of Documentation

The following documentation will be published to the website:
- Description of New Program – once approved by Quality Council`

2.8 First Cyclical Program Review

The first cyclical review for any new degree program must be conducted no more than eight years after the date of the degree program's initial enrolment. The degree program will be added to the Cyclical Schedule of Reviews.

Issues identified in the Monitoring Report and any 'Notes' from Quality Council's approval letter will be addressed in the first Cyclical Review.

Section 3 – Expedited Approval Protocol

3.1 Prelude

This protocol is designed to ensure that decisions can be made quickly and efficiently to launch new graduate diploma programs or program changes in a timely manner, e.g., to meet upcoming term application deadlines, support innovation., etc.

The protocol for Expedited Approvals applies to:
- New Graduate Diploma – Types 2 and 3
- Expedited Major Modifications – as determined by the Provost
- Creation of new standalone degree from an existing field in a graduate program

Expedited proposals are granted in a shorter time with less required documentation and do not require an external review. Proposals sent to the Appraisal Committee for Expedited Approval require Senate approval and will follow the processes set out in Section 2.6 Graduate Diploma Note for new Graduate Diplomas and Section 4 – for Major Modifications. Expedited proposals will be submitted to Quality Council for approval following Senate approval.

3.2 Graduate Diplomas – Types 2 and 3

The approval process for proposing a new graduate diploma will follow an abbreviated process of the New Program Approval Protocol and will not be subject to external assessment. Steps 1, 2, 3 & 5 and Steps 12 through 15 will be required, as per the required Evaluation Criteria (QAF 2.1.2).

In cases where a Graduate Diploma is not associated with a parent graduate program, it is recommended (not required) that an external Desk Review be conducted.

Once approved by Senate, the program will be submitted to Quality Council's Appraisal Committee for decision:

     i.   Approved to Commence
    ii.   Approved to Commence with Report
   iii.   Not Approved.

3.3 Expedited Major Modifications

The Provost will determine if a Major Modification to an existing program should be sent to the Quality Council's Appraisal Committee for expedited approval rather than reported to Quality Council in the Annual Report on Major Modifications. In such cases, these will be referred to as 'expedited major modifications'.

3.4 Creation of new standalone degree from an existing field in a graduate program

A program may choose to create a standalone degree from a long-standing field provided it has undergone at least two Cyclical Program Reviews and has had at least two graduating cohorts.

The internal approval process will follow that of Graduate Diplomas (2 and 3), an abbreviated process of the New Program Approval Protocol, Steps 1, 2, 3 and 5 and Steps 12 through 15, as per the required Evaluation Criteria (QAF 2.1.2). Once approved by AQAPC, the recommendation will move forward to Senate for approval, followed by submission to Quality Council's Appraisal Committee for approval.

3.5 Final Decision of Appraisal Committee

The Appraisal Committee will make one of the following decisions:
    iv.   Approved to Commence
    v.   Approved to Commence with Report
    vi.   Not Approved.

Section 4 – Major Modification Protocol
(Program Renewal and Significant Change)

4.1 Prelude
The Major Modification Protocol encourages and reinforces the ongoing and continuous improvement of programs and associated curriculum. Academic units are encouraged to have a plan in place to actively monitor key performance indicators (i.e., program structure, requirements, objectives, learning outcomes, assessment and student achievement) that will help them identify modifications to the program that will improve and enhance the quality of the program. The University values the importance of this self-reflection and self-assessment to ensure the delivery of high-quality programming and student learning and experiences.

Major Modifications may be made to:

- Implement the outcomes of cyclical program review;
- Reflect the ongoing evolution of the discipline;
- Accommodate new developments in a particular field;
- Facilitate improvements in teaching and learning strategies;
- Respond to the changing needs of students, society and industry; and/or
- Respond to improvements in technology.

The distinction between major modifications and new programs can, at times, be difficult to determine. The Quality Council has the final authority to decide if a major modification constitutes a new program. In such a case, the submission must follow the Protocol for New Programs.

4.2 Definition and Examples of Major Modifications

Major modifications result in substantial changes to an existing program requirement, learning outcomes, faculty complement, or delivery mode, usually creating significant new choices or experiences for students, but not as considerable as to qualify as a new program. The Provost, in consultation with the Deans and the Office of the Registrar, will determine what constitutes a significant modification, and hence qualifies as a major modification, or is a minor modification or a new program.

Major modifications typically include, but are not limited to, one or more of the following:

a) Requirements that differ significantly from those existing at the time of the previous cyclical program review, for example:
- course requirements comprising more than one third of the entire program
- a merger of two programs
- The introduction or deletion of an undergraduate thesis or capstone project
- The introduction or deletion of a work experience, co-op option, internship or practicum, or portfolio

b) Change to at least one third of the program-level learning outcomes.

c) Significant changes to the program's delivery, including:
- 50% or more of the program's faculty;
- Loss of or addition to the essential physical resources, where these changes impair or enhance the delivery of the approved program.
- the existing mode(s) of delivery (e.g., different campus and/or changes to online/hybrid delivery impacting 30% or more of program, introduction or deletion of full- or part-time program options). For more detail on mode of delivery changes, please see 4.3.

d) Change in program name and/or degree nomenclature, when this results in a change in learning outcomes; and/or

e) Addition of a single new field to an existing graduate program.

4.3 Considerations for Changes to Mode of Delivery

When changing the mode of delivery of a program to online for all or a significant portion of a program that was previously delivered in-person, consideration of the following criteria is strongly encouraged as part of the approval process for the proposed major modification:

a) Maintenance of and/or changes to the program objectives and program-level learning outcomes.
b) Adequacy of the technological platform and tools.
c) Sufficiency of support services and training for teaching staff.
d) Sufficiency and type of support for students in the new learning environment; and
e) Access.

4.4 Program Closure

Program closures will not be considered a Major Modification. These closures will be recommended by Faculty Executive to AQAPC and Senate for approval.

4.5 Submission Process for Major Modifications

An academic unit intending to propose a major modification to an existing program will submit a Letter of Intent to the Dean using the appropriate template. The Dean will present the LOI to the Provost for in-principle approval. If granted in-principle approval, the academic unit be notified to complete the full Proposal for Major Modification template and submit it to Academic Regulations and Curriculum Committee (ARCC) (if an undergraduate program) or Graduate Studies Council (GSC) (if a graduate program). Upon approval, the proposal will next move to Faculty Executive, then ACC (if an undergraduate program), and then Senate. If the Provost determines the Major Modification may require substantial changes to resources/infrastructure, the proposal will also need to be heard at AQAPC following ACC (for undergraduate programs) or GSC (for graduate programs).

The proposal for a **major modification** to a program will include:

- A detailed description of the change to the program along with rationale for those changes
- Discussion of the modification's relationship to the University's Strategic Plan and the approved Strategic Mandate Agreement (SMA).
- Consideration of the changes in regard to the previous cyclical program review, where appropriate
- Details of existing and new resources (human, physical and budgetary) required to modify the program.
- Proposed program requirements if the curriculum will change along with this modification
- An indication of how the change aligns with the relevant program objectives and program-level learning outcome(s); or changes to the objectives and learning outcomes
- Details of the appropriateness of the proposed mode(s) of delivery to facilitate students' successful completion of the program-level learning outcomes
- An assessment of how students will be impacted as well as a statement as to how the modification will improve the student experience

- Evidence of consultation with all affected academic units; consultation will include input from current students and recent graduates
- Evidence that the Dean has been consulted.

4.6 Annual Reporting

The Registrar's Office will maintain a list of major modifications approved by Senate that will be reported by the Office of the Provost in the Annual Report to the Quality Council. The Annual Report will reflect the period from July to June and will include a summary of major program modifications, including program closures approved through the internal approval process. Note that major modifications are not normally subject to the institution's Cyclical Audit.

4.7 Other Program Changes

Changes to an existing Emphasis, Option, or Minor Program; the creation of a new micro-credential(s); undergraduate certificate(s); and laddering, stacking or similar options, or comparable elements that do not rise to the level of a Major Modification will follow an internal approval process as follows:
- Academic Unit
- ARCC (for undergraduate studies) or GSC (for graduate studies)
- Faculty Executive
- ACC (for undergraduate studies)
- Senate

Section 5 – Audit Protocol

5.1 Prelude

Cyclical Audit provides the necessary accountability to post-secondary education's principal stakeholders, students, government, employers, and the public, by assessing the degree to which a university's internally defined quality assurance processes, procedures, and practices align with and satisfy the internationally agreed upon standards, as set out in the Quality Assurance Framework.

The University will be subject to a Cyclical Audit at least once every eight years. The scope of this protocol will include an evaluation of past and current practices; review of institutional changes made in policy, procedures, and practices in response to recommendations from the previous audit; confirmation that university's practices comply with its ratified IQAP; and review of the university's approach to continuous improvement.

Specifically, the Audit will:
- Evaluate past and current practices
- Review institutional changes made in policy, procedures and practices in response to the recommendations from the previous audit
- Confirm that university's practices comply with its IQAP as ratified by the Quality Council and note any misalignments of its IQAP with the QAF
- Review the university's approach to continuous improvement.

5.2 Outcomes of Audit Report

The Audit Report describes the extent to which the institution is compliant with its quality assurance polices and achieves best practice. Based on the findings in its Report, the Audit Committee will make recommendations about future oversight by Quality Council and/or one or more of its Committees, and may include any of the following:

- Direct specific attention of issue(s) to auditors in the subsequent audit
- Schedule a larger selection of programs for the university's next audit
- Require a Focused Audit. A Focused Audit may be required in cases where at least one Cause for Concern has been identified. The Audit will focus on specific areas of concern and follow similar steps to the Cyclical Audit. A Focused Audit does not replace the Cyclical Audit.
- Adjust the degree of oversight and any associated requirements for more or less oversight.

5.3 Key Elements and Process for Cyclical Audit

a) **Pre-Audit Orientation Briefing**
   The University will participate in a pre-audit orientation/briefing with the Quality Council Secretariat and an Audit Team member approximately one year prior to the scheduled Cyclical Audit. The purpose of this briefing will be to outline the expectations of the cyclical audit.

b) **Selection of Sample Programs for Audit**
   The Audit Team will select a sample of programs for audit that represent the New Program Approval Protocol and the Cyclical Program Review Protocol as described in the Quality Assurance Framework. New programs approved and existing programs that have undergone cyclical review since the previous Cyclical Audit will be eligible for selection in the University's next Cyclical Audit. The audit process cannot reverse the approval of a program to commence.

A small sample of new programs or cyclical program reviews in progress may be selected, and in these cases, documentation will not be required. In these cases, auditors will meet with program representatives to gain a better understanding of current quality assurance practices in the institution.

Programs created or modified through the Protocols for Expedited Approvals and Major Modifications are not normally subject to the institution's Cyclical Audit.

c) **Institutional Self-Study**
The university will prepare a self-study that presents and assesses its quality assurance processes, including challenges and opportunities, within its own institutional context. The self-study will include the process undertaken to prepare the self-study, flag any issues from the previous audit, and most importantly, reflect on current policies and practices that demonstrate the university's focus on continuous improvement. The self-study will be submitted to the Quality Assurance Secretariat in advance of the desk audit and will form the foundation of the Cyclical Audit.

d) **Process and Documentation**
In its preparation, the Provost, Deans, and relevant committees will be consulted and requested to provide input. The Office of the Provost will be responsible for the preparation of the self-study and for submission of Audit documentation to the Quality Council Secretariat, including:

- Relevant documents and other information related to the programs selected for audit, as requested by the Audit Team
- Record of any revisions of the university's IQAP, as ratified by the Quality Council
- Annual Report of any minor revisions of the University's IQAP that did not require Quality Council re-ratification.

e) **Desk Audit and Site Visit**
The Audit Team will review documentation prior to a two-to-three-day site visit. During the site visit, the Audit Team will meet with the university's senior academic leadership, quality assurance staff, and representatives from programs selected for audit. The purpose of the visit will be to gain a sufficiently complete and accurate understanding of the university's application of its IQAP, and to specifically address any information gaps that may arise during the desk audit and to assess the degree to which the institutions' quality assurance practices contribute to continuous improvement of its programs.

f) **Audit Report and Summary**
The Audit Report includes an assessment of the overall performance of the university and includes recommendations to the Quality Council, based on their assessment. The Audit Report will focus on compliancy with the University's IQAP; misalignment of the IQAP with the Quality Assurance Framework; identifying and recording notable effective policies or practices; and the university's approach to ensuring continuous improvement in quality assurance through the implementation of the outcomes of cyclical program reviews and the monitoring of new programs. The Report will include findings in the form of:

- Recommendations that will require an institutional response
- Causes for Concern that are potential structural and /or systemic weaknesses
- Suggestions to strengthen quality assurance practices

g) **Focused Audit**
When an Audit Report identifies at least one Cause for Concern, the University will participate in a Focused Audit as recommend by the Audit Committee. This Audit will require closer scrutiny and further support to

address the specific area(s) of concern.

h) **Follow-up Response by University and Auditors' Report on the University's Response**
- Follow-up. The University may be required to respond to the Audit Report, within the recommended timeframe for submission, by detailing the steps taken to address the recommendation and/or any Causes for Concern.
- Associated Auditors' Report. The Audit Team will report on the institution's sufficiency of response. Once satisfied, the Audit Committee will submit a recommendation to the Quality Council to accept the university's follow-up response and associated auditors' report.

5.4 Publication of Documentation

The following documentation will be publicly posted to the University's website, absent any confidential information:

- Audit Report (excluding addendum)
- Follow-Up Response Report (to Audit Report)
- Auditors' Response Report
- Focused Audit Report

Appendix A
Evaluation Criteria for Cyclical Program Review

Existing undergraduate and graduate programs will be evaluated against the following criteria as set out in the Quality Assurance Framework (5.1.3.1)

1. **Objectives**
   a) Consistency of the program's objectives with the institution's mission and academic plans.

2. **Program Requirements**
   a) Appropriateness of the program's structure and the requirements to meet its objectives and the program-level learning outcomes.
   b) Appropriateness of the program's structure, requirements and program-level learning outcomes in meeting the institution's own undergraduate or graduate Degree Level Expectations
   c) Appropriateness and effectiveness of the mode(s) of delivery to facilitate students' successful completion of the program-level learning outcomes
   d) Ways in which the curriculum addresses the current state of the discipline or area of study

3. **Program Requirements for Graduate Programs Only**
   a) Clear rationale for program length that ensures that students can complete the program-level learning outcomes and requirements within the time required
   b) Evidence that each graduate student in the program is required to take a minimum of two-thirds of the course requirements from among graduate level courses
   c) For research-focused graduate programs, clear indication of the nature and suitability of the major research requirements for degree completion.

4. **Assessment of Teaching and Assessment**
   a) Appropriateness and effectiveness of the methods for assessing student achievement of the program-level learning objectives and degree level expectations.
   b) Appropriateness and effectiveness of the plans to monitor and assess:
      i. The overall quality of the program
      ii. Whether the program continues to achieve in practice its objectives
      iii. Whether its students are achieving the program-level learning outcomes
      iv. How the resulting information will be documented and subsequently used to inform continuous program improvement

5. **Admission Requirements**
   a) Appropriateness of the program's admission requirements given the program's objectives and program-level learning outcomes
   b) Sufficient explanation of alternative requirements, if applicable, for admission into graduate, second-entry or undergraduate program, e.g., minimum grade point average, additional languages or portfolios, and how the program recognizes prior work or learning experience

6. **Resources**
   Given the program's class sizes and cohorts as well as its program-level learning outcomes:
   a) Participation of a sufficient number of qualified core faculty who are competent to teach and/or supervise in and achieve the goals of the program and foster the appropriate academic environment
   b) If applicable, discussion/explanation of the role and approximate percentage of adjunct and part-time faculty/limited term appointments used in the delivery of the program and the associated plans to ensure the sustainability of the program and quality of the student experience
   c) If required, provision of supervision of experiential learning opportunities

d) Adequacy of the administrative unit's utilization of existing human, physical and financial resources
e) Evidence that there are adequate resources to sustain the quality of scholarship and research activities produced by students, including library support, information technology support, and laboratory access.

7. **Resources for Graduate Programs Only**
   Given the program's class sizes and cohorts, as well as its program-level learning outcomes:
   a) Evidence that faculty have the recent research or professional/clinical expertise needed to foster an appropriate intellectual climate, sustain the program, and promote innovation
   b) Where appropriate to the program, evidence that financial assistance for students is sufficient to ensure adequate quality and numbers of students
   c) Evidence of how supervisory loads are distributed, in light of qualifications and appointment status of the faculty

8. **Quality and Other Indicators**
   a) Evidence of the quality of the faculty (e.g., qualifications, funding, honours, awards, research, innovation and scholarly record, appropriateness of collective faculty expertise to contribute substantively to the program and commitment to student mentoring)
   b) Any other evidence that the program and faculty ensure the intellectual quality of the student experience
   c) For students: grade-level for admission, scholarly output, success rates in provincial and national scholarships, competitions, awards and commitment to professional and transferable skills, and times-to-completion and retention rates.

Appendix B
Evaluation Criteria for New Program Approvals

New undergraduate and graduate programs will be evaluated against the following criteria as set out in the Quality Assurance Framework (2.1.2)

1. **Program Objectives**
   a) Clarity of the program's objectives
   b) Appropriateness of degree nomenclature given the program's objectives
   c) Consistency of the program's objectives with the institution's mission and academic plans

2. **Program Requirements**
   a) Appropriateness of the program's structure and the requirements to meet its objectives and program-level learning outcomes
   b) Appropriateness of the program's structure, requirements and program-level learning outcomes in meeting the institution's undergraduate or graduate Degree Level Expectations
   c) Appropriateness of the proposed mode(s) of delivery to facilitate students' successful completion of the program-level learning outcomes
   d) Ways in which the curriculum addresses the current state of the discipline or area of study

3. **Program Requirements for Graduate Programs Only**
   a) Clear rationale for program length that ensures that students can complete the program-level learning outcomes and requirements within the proposed time
   b) Evidence that each graduate student in the program is required to take a minimum of two-thirds of the course requirements from among graduate-level courses
   c) For research-focused graduate programs, clear indication of the nature and suitability of the major research requirements for degree completion

4. **Assessment of Teaching and Learning**
   a) Appropriateness of the methods for assessing student achievement of the program-level learning outcomes and degree level expectations
   b) Appropriateness of the plans to monitor and assess:
      i. The overall quality of the program
      ii. Whether the program is achieving in practice its proposed objectives
      iii. Whether its students are achieving the program-level learning outcomes
      iv. How the resulting information will be documented and subsequently used to inform continuous program improvement

5. **Admission Requirements**
   a) Appropriateness of the program's admission requirements given the program's objectives and program-level learning outcomes
   b) Sufficient explanation of alternative requirements, if applicable, for admission into a graduate, second-entry or undergraduate program, e.g., minimum grade point average, additional languages or portfolios, and how the program recognizes prior work or learning experience

6. **Resources**
   Given the program's planned/anticipated class sizes and cohorts as well as its program-level learning outcomes:
   a) Participation of a sufficient number and quality of core faculty who are competent to teach and/or supervise in and achieve the goals of the program and foster the appropriate academic environment
   b) If applicable, discussion/explanation of the role and approximate percentage of adjunct and part-time

faculty/limited term appointments used in the delivery of the program and the associated plans to ensure the sustainability of the program and quality of the student experience

c) If required, provision of supervision of experiential learning opportunities

d) Adequacy of the administrative unit's planned utilization of existing human, physical and financial resources including implications for the impact on other existing programs at the university

e) Evidence that there are adequate resources to sustain the quality of scholarship and research activities produced by students, including library support, information technology support, and laboratory access

f) If necessary, additional institutional resource commitments to support the program in step with its ongoing implementation

7. Resources for Graduate Programs Only

Given the program's planned/anticipated class sizes and cohorts as well as its program-level learning outcomes:

a) Evidence that faculty have the recent research or professional/clinic expertise needed to sustain the program, promote innovation, and foster an appropriate intellectual climate

b) Where appropriate to the program, evidence that financial assistance for students will be sufficient to ensure adequate quality and number of students

c) Evidence of how supervisory loads will be distributed, in light of qualifications and appointment status of the faculty

8. Quality and Other Indicators

a) Evidence of the quality of the faculty (e.g., qualifications, funding, honours, awards, research, innovation and scholarly record; appropriateness of collective faculty expertise to contribute substantively to the program and commitment to student mentoring)

b) Any other evidence that the program and faculty will ensure the intellectual quality of the student experience

Appendix C
Undergraduate Degree Level Expectations (UDLEs)
Formulated by the Ontario Council of Academic Vice Presidents (OCAV) and affirmed by Nipissing University
Senate February 15, 2011

Expectations	General Bachelor's Degree This degree is awarded to students who have demonstrated the following	Honours Bachelor's Degree This degree is awarded to students who have demonstrated the following
1. Depth and Breadth of Knowledge	a) a general knowledge and understanding of many key concepts, methodologies, theoretical approaches and assumptions in a discipline; 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; c) an ability to gather, review, evaluate and interpret information relevant to one or more of the major fields in a discipline; d) some detailed knowledge in an area of the discipline; e) critical thinking and analytical skills inside and outside the discipline; and f) the ability to apply learning from one or more areas outside the discipline.	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; 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; c) a developed ability to: gather, review, evaluate and interpret information; and compare the merits of alternate hypotheses or creative options, relevant to one or more of the major fields in a discipline; d) a developed, detailed knowledge of and experience in research in an area of the discipline; e) developed critical thinking and analytical skills inside and outside the discipline; and f) the ability to apply learning from one or more areas outside the discipline.
2. Knowledge of Methodologies	… an understanding of methods of enquiry or creative activity, or both, in their primary area of study that enables the student to: • 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.	… an understanding of methods of enquiry or creative activity, or both, in their primary area of study that enables the student to: • 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	a) the ability to review, present, and interpret quantitative and qualitative information to: • develop lines of argument; and • make sound judgments in accordance with the major theories, concepts and	a) the ability to review, present and critically evaluate qualitative and quantitative information to: • develop lines of argument; • make sound judgments in accordance with the major theories, concepts and methods of

Expectations	General Bachelor's Degree This degree is awarded to students who have demonstrated the following	Honours Bachelor's Degree This degree is awarded to students who have demonstrated the following
	methods of the subject(s) of study; b) the ability to use a basic range of established techniques to: • analyze information; • evaluate the appropriateness of different approaches to solving problems related to their area(s) of study; and • propose solutions; and c) the ability to make use of scholarly reviews and primary sources.	the subject(s) of study; • apply underlying concepts, principles, and techniques of analysis, both within and outside the discipline; and • where appropriate use this knowledge in the creative process; b) the ability to use a range of established techniques to: • initiate and undertake critical evaluation of arguments, assumptions, abstract concepts and information; • propose solutions; • frame appropriate questions for the purpose of solving a problem; • solve a problem or create a new work; and c) the ability to make critical use of scholarly reviews and primary sources.
4. Communica-tion 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	a) qualities and transferable skills necessary for further study, employment, community involvement and other activities requiring: • the exercise of personal responsibility and decision-making; and • working effectively with others; b) the ability to identify and address their own learning needs in changing circumstances and to select an appropriate program of further study; and c) behaviour consistent with academic integrity and social responsibility.	a) qualities and transferable skills necessary for further study, employment, community involvement and other activities requiring: • the exercise of initiative, personal responsibility and accountability in both personal and group contexts; • working effectively with others; decision-making in complex contexts; 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 c) behaviour consistent with academic integrity and social responsibility.

Appendix D
Graduate Degree Level Expectations (GDLEs)
Formulated by the Ontario Council of Academic Vice Presidents (OCAV) and affirmed by Nipissing University
Senate February 15, 2011

Expectations	Master's Degree This degree is awarded to students who have demonstrated the following	Doctoral Degree This degree is awarded to students who have demonstrated the following
1. Depth and Breadth of Knowledge	A systematic understanding of knowledge, and a critical awareness of current problems and/or new insights, much of which is at, or informed by, the forefront of their academic discipline, field of study, or area of professional practice;	A thorough understanding of a substantial body of knowledge that is at the forefront of their academic discipline or area of professional practice.
2. Research and Scholarship	A conceptual understanding and methodological competence that • Enables a working comprehension of how established techniques of research and inquiry are used to create and interpret knowledge in the discipline; • Enables a critical evaluation of current research and advanced research and scholarship in the discipline or area of professional competence; and • Enables a treatment of complex issues and judgments based on established principles and techniques; and, On the basis of that competence, has shown at least one of the following: • The development and support of a sustained argument in written form; or • Originality in the application of knowledge.	a) The ability to conceptualize, design, and implement research for the generation of new knowledge, applications, or understanding at the forefront of the discipline, and to adjust the research design or methodology in the light of unforeseen problems; b) The ability to make informed judgments on complex issues in specialist fields, sometimes requiring new methods; and c) The ability to produce original research, or other advanced scholarship, of a quality to satisfy peer review, and to merit publication.
3. Level of Application of Knowledge	Competence in the research process by applying an existing body of knowledge in the critical analysis of a new question or of a specific problem or issue in a new setting.	The capacity to: • Undertake pure and/or applied research at an advanced level; and • Contribute to the development of academic or professional skills, techniques, tools, practices, ideas, theories, approaches, and/or materials.
4. Professional Capacity/ Autonomy	a) The qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring • The exercise of initiative and of personal responsibility and accountability; • Decision-making in complex situations; and b) The intellectual independence required for continuing professional development;	a) The qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring the exercise of personal responsibility and largely autonomous initiative in complex situations; b) The intellectual independence to be academically and professionally engaged and current;

Expectations	**Master's Degree** This degree is awarded to students who have demonstrated the following	**Doctoral Degree** This degree is awarded to students who have demonstrated the following
	c) The ethical behavior consistent with academic integrity and the use of appropriate guidelines and procedures for responsible conduct of research; and d) The ability to appreciate the broader implications of applying knowledge to particular contexts.	c) The ethical behavior consistent with academic integrity and the use of appropriate guidelines and procedures for responsible conduct of research; and d) The ability to evaluate the broader implications of applying knowledge to particular contexts.
5. Level of Communication Skills	The ability to communicate ideas, issues and conclusions clearly.	The ability to communicate complex and/or ambiguous ideas, issues and conclusions clearly and effectively.
6. Awareness of Limits of Knowledge	Cognizance of the complexity of knowledge and of the potential contributions of other interpretations, methods, and disciplines.	An appreciation of the limitations of one's own work and discipline, of the complexity of knowledge, and of the potential contributions of other interpretations, methods, and disciplines.

<u>**Definitions**</u>

Academic Curriculum Committee (ACC): ACC is a committee of Senate, which engages in on-going review and oversight of all matters related to undergraduate studies, (including degree and program requirements), to the criteria and policies with respect to admission of all students to the University and the transfer of credits from other educational institutions and to makes recommendations to Senate as necessary and appropriate.

Academic Support Unit: An academic support unit is a unit whose primary mission is to support the teaching, learning and/or research interests of students and faculty. Academic support units include, but are not limited to, the Office of the Registrar, Library Services, Student Development and Services, University Technology Services and the Office of Indigenous Initiatives.

Academic Unit: The Department/School where the program is housed.

Academic Quality Assurance and Planning Committee (AQAPC): AQAPC is a committee of Senate, which is responsible for long-range academic planning, including quality assurance, in accordance with the overall academic objectives of the University, and for making recommendations to Senate as necessary and appropriate.

Academic Services
Those services integral to a student's ability to achieve the program-level learning outcomes. Such services would typically include, but are not limited to, academic advising and counselling appropriate to the program; information technology, library and laboratory resources directed towards the programs; and internship, cooperative education and practicum placement services, where these experiential components are a required part of a program.

Arm's Length External Peer Reviewer: An arm's length peer reviewer is an external disciplinary expert who has not been a supervisor, collaborator, departmental colleague (past or present) or co-author of faculty members in the previous six years, and who does not have personal connections with members of the academic unit.

Degree
An academic credential awarded on successful completion of a prescribed set and sequence of requirements at a specified standard of performance consistent with OCAV's Degree Level Expectations and the university's own expression of those Expectations and achievement of the degree's associated learning outcomes.

Degree Level Expectations
Academic standards that identify the knowledge and skill outcome competencies and reflect progressive levels of intellectual and creative development, as established by OCAV. The Degree Level Expectations (as detailed in the Appendices) are the Quality Assurance Framework's link to the Ontario Qualifications Framework (OQF). Degree Level Expectations may be expressed in subject-specific or in generic terms. Graduates at specified degree levels (e.g., BA, MSc) are expected to demonstrate these competencies. Each university has undertaken to adapt and describe the degree level expectations that will apply within its own institutions. Likewise, academic units will describe their university's expectations in terms appropriate to their academic programs.

Degree Program
The complete set and sequence of courses, combinations of courses and/or other units of study, research and practice prescribed by an institution for the fulfillment of the requirements for each particular degree.

Desk Audit
The process associated with the Audit Team's auditing of documents that have been submitted for a university's audit, as required as a preliminary step of the Cyclical Audit. A desk audit is one part of the process to determine an institution's compliance with its own IQAP and/or the Quality Assurance Framework.

Desk Review
A review of a New Program Proposal or Self-Study conducted by external reviewers that is conducted independently of the university (i.e., does not typically include interviews or in-person or virtual site visits). Such a review may, with the agreement of both the external reviewers and the Provost, replace the external reviewers' in-person or virtual site visit in the New Program Approval process and Cyclical Program Review process for certain undergraduate and master's program reviews.

Diploma Program
The complete set and sequence of courses, combinations of courses and/or other units of study prescribed by a university for the fulfillment of the requirements for each particular for-credit or not-for-credit undergraduate and graduate diploma. Not-for-credit and for-credit undergraduate or post-graduate diploma programs are not subject to approval or audit by the Quality Council. The Quality Council recognizes three types of Graduate Diplomas, with specific appraisal conditions applying to each. In each case, when proposing a new graduate diploma, a university may request an Expedited Approval process. All such programs, once approved, will be subject to the normal cycle of program reviews, typically in conjunction with the related degree program.

- **Type 1** – Awarded when a candidate admitted to a master's program leaves the program after completing a prescribed proportion of the requirements.

- **Type 2** – Offered in conjunction with a master's or doctoral degree, admission to which requires that the 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.

Expedited Approval
Generally, approvals are granted in a shorter time span with less required documentation. The Expedited Protocol requires submission to Quality Council of the proposed program change/new program and the rationale for it. This process does not require the use of external reviewers.

Field
In graduate programs, an area of specialization or concentration that is related to the demonstrable and collective strengths of the program's faculty and to a new or existing program. Universities are not required to declare fields at either the master's or doctoral level.

Focused Audit
A close examination of a specific aspect of an institution's quality assurance processes and practices that have not met the standards/requirements set out by the Quality Council in the QAF or in the institution's IQAP. A Focused Audit does not replace a Cyclical Audit.

Graduate Level Course
A course offered by a graduate program and taught by institutionally approved graduate faculty, where the learning outcomes are aligned with the Graduate Degree Level Expectations and most students are registered as graduate students.

Inter-Institutional Program Categories
For the following categories, the Protocol for New Program Approvals or the Protocol for Major Modifications will be used, as appropriate, and Quality Council's Cyclical Program Review Processes will apply to all elements of those programs as offered by all partner institutions involved.

- **Conjoint Degree Program** – A program of study, offered by a postsecondary institution that is affiliated, federated or collaborating with a university that is approved by the University's Senate or equivalent body, and for which a single degree document signed by both institutions is awarded.

- **Dual Credential/Degree Program** – A program of study offered by two or more universities or by a university and a college or institute, in which successful completion of the requirements is confirmed by a separate and different degree/diploma document being awarded by each of the participating institutions.

- **Joint Degree Program** – A program of study offered by two or more universities or by a university and a college or institute in which successful completion of the requirements is confirmed by a single degree document.

Major Modification
A 'significant change' in the program requirements, intended learning outcomes and/or human and other resources associated with a degree program or program of specialization as defined by the university. Major modifications typically include, but are not limited to, one or more of the following:
- Requirements that differ significantly from those existing at the time of the previous cyclical program review;
- Significant changes to the program-level learning outcomes that do not, however, meet the threshold of a new program;
- Significant changes to the program's delivery, including to the program's faculty and/or to the essential physical resources as may occur, for example, where there have been changes to the existing mode(s) of delivery (e.g., different campus and/or online / hybrid delivery – see below);
- Change in program name and/or degree nomenclature, when this results in a change in learning outcomes; and/or
- Addition of a single new field to an existing graduate program. Note that universities are not required to declare fields for either master's or doctoral programs. Note also that the creation of more than one field at one point in time or over subsequent years may need to go through the Expedited Protocol.

Microcredentials
A designation of achievement of a coherent set of skills and knowledge, specified by a statement of purpose, learning outcomes, and strong evidence of need by industry, employers, and/or the community. They have fewer requirements and are of shorter duration than a qualification and focus on learning outcomes that are distinct from diploma/degree programs. While requiring recognition in the IQAP, proposals for the introduction or modification of a microcredential do not require reference to the Quality Council unless they are part of a New Program.

Mode of Delivery
The means or medium used in delivering a program (e.g., lecture format, distance, online, synchronous/asynchronous, problem-based, compressed part-time, multi-campus, inter-institutional collaboration or other non-standard forms of delivery).

New Program
Any degree credential or degree program (within an existing degree credential), currently approved by Senate or

equivalent governing body that has not been previously approved for that institution by the Quality Council, its predecessors, or any intra-institutional approval processes that previously applied. A change of name, only, does not constitute a new program; nor does the inclusion of a new program of specialization where another with the same designation already exists (e.g., a new honours program where a major with the same designation already exists). For the purposes of the Quality Assurance Framework, a 'new program' is brand-new; the program has substantially different program objectives, program requirements and program-level learning outcomes from those of any existing approved programs offered by the institution.

Options, Minor, Specialization, and Streams
An identified set and sequence of courses and/or other units of study, as well as research and practice within an area of disciplinary or interdisciplinary study that are completed on an optional basis in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the awarding of a degree, and that may be recorded on the graduate's academic record. While requiring recognition in the IQAP, proposals for their introduction or modification do not require reference to the Quality Council unless they are part of a New Program.

Professional Master's Program
Typically, a professional master's degree is a terminal degree that does not lead to entry into a doctoral program. Such programs are designed to help students to prepare for a career in specific fields such as occupational therapy, physical therapy, finance or business among others. A professional master's degree often puts a great deal of focus on real-world application, with many requiring students to complete internships or projects in their field of study before graduation. In contrast, a research master's degree provides experience in research and scholarship and may be either the final degree or a step toward entry into a doctoral program.

Program
For purposes of this policy, 'Program' will refer to all undergraduate and graduate degree programs, as well as for-credit graduate diploma programs.

Program-Level Student Learning Outcomes
Clear and concise statements that describe what successful students should have achieved and the knowledge, skills and abilities that they should have acquired by the end of the program, however an institution defines 'program' in its IQAP. Program-level student learning outcomes emphasize the application and integration of knowledge – both in the context of the program and more broadly – rather than coverage of material; make explicit the expectations for student success; are measurable and thus form the criteria for assessment/evaluation; and are written in greater detail than program objectives. Clear and concise program-level learning outcomes also help to create shared expectations between students and instructors.

Program Objectives
Clear and concise statements that describe the goals of the program, however an institution defines 'program' in its IQAP. Program objectives explain the potential applications of the knowledge and skills acquired in the program; seek to help students connect learning across various contexts; situate the program in the context of the discipline as a whole; and are often broader in scope than the program-level learning outcomes that they help to generate.

Program of Specialization (e.g., a Major, Honours Program, Concentration)
An identified set and sequence of courses, and/or other units of study, research and practice within an area of disciplinary or interdisciplinary study, completed in full or partial fulfillment of the requirements for the awarding of a degree and is recorded on the graduate's academic record.
- A program constitutes complete fulfillment of the requirements for the awarding of a degree when the program and degree program are one and the same.
- A program constitutes 'partial' fulfillment of the requirements for the awarding of a degree when the

program is a subset of the degree program. Typically, a bachelor's degree requires the completion of a program of specialization, often referred to as a major, an honours program, a concentration or similar designation.

Quality Council
The Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance (the Quality Council) is an arm's length body designed to ensure rigorous quality assurance of university undergraduate and graduate programs. The Quality Council is responsible for the approval of new undergraduate and graduate programs, as well as auditing each university's quality assurance processes on an eight-year cycle. The NU-IQAP will be ratified by the Quality Council.

Undergraduate Certificate
A short form credential that forms a coherent program of study organized around a clear set of learning outcomes. Undergraduate certificates are comprised of undergraduate level academic content at least 15 credits.   While requiring recognition in the IQAP, proposals for the introduction or modification to an undergraduate certificate do not require reference to the Quality Council unless they are part of a New Program.

Virtual Site Visit
The practice of conducting all required elements of the external reviewers' site visit using videoconferencing software and/or other suitable platforms. A virtual site visit will still include elements such as virtual meetings with students, faculty and other stakeholders. It may also include remote attendance at performances or events, and virtual facility tours. A virtual site visit may replace an in-person site visit for certain undergraduate and master's program, with agreement from both the external reviewers and the Provost.