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**Academic Program Reviews – Policy on**

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**Policy on Steps for Creation of New Graduate  
Programs or New Fields in Existing Doctoral  
Programs, 2009**

Enquiries:

[University Secretariat](#)

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## **POLICY ON ACADEMIC PROGRAM REVIEWS**

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## **1. PREAMBLE**

The first stated goal of McMaster's strategic plan, *Refining Directions*, is "to provide an innovative and stimulating learning environment where students can prepare themselves to excel in life." Although many factors contribute towards the learning environment, the academic program in which each student is enrolled plays a major part.

McMaster University is widely recognized for innovation in teaching and learning and for the quality of its programs. Nevertheless, knowledge of our disciplines and the scholarship of teaching and learning are constantly evolving. It is clear that our reputation can only be maintained and improved if we, as academics and educators, critically review what we do and seek the opinion and advice from colleagues at McMaster and at other institutions.

Although the primary objective for these reviews is the improvement of our academic programs, the processes that we adopt also should be designed to meet our responsibility to the government on quality assurance: Every publicly assisted Ontario university that grants degrees and diplomas is responsible for ensuring the quality of all of its programs of study, including modes of delivering programs and those academic and student services that affect the quality of the respective programs under review, whether or not the program is eligible for government funding.

The process by which institutions meet this accountability to the government is outlined in the Quality Assurance Framework (QAF), developed by the Ontario Council of Academic Vice-Presidents (OCAV) and approved by Executive Heads in April 2010. Institutions' compliance with the QAF is monitored by the Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance, also known as the Quality Council, which reports to OCAV and the Council of Ontario Universities (COU).

As part of the Quality Assurance Framework, McMaster was required to develop an Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP), which is contained within this Policy. The guiding principles used for developing McMaster's IQAP were:

- curriculum development and improvement is an ongoing, iterative process that is normally initiated, developed and controlled at the departmental level;
- McMaster's IQAP incorporates input from all principal stakeholders; and, McMaster's IQAP should be designed primarily to help improve programs and shape them to have characteristics that are most valued at our University, while also meeting the responsibility for quality assurance.

Thus, the goal of McMaster's IQAP is to facilitate the development and continued improvement of our undergraduate and graduate academic programs, and to ensure that McMaster continues to lead internationally in its reputation for innovation in teaching and learning and for the quality of its programs. McMaster's IQAP is intended to complement existing mechanisms for critical assessment and enhancement, including departmental reviews and accreditation reviews. The uniqueness of each program at McMaster will emerge in the IQAP self-study.

The IQAP is subject to approval by the Quality Council when it is initiated and thereafter, when it is revised. The Quality Council will audit the University on an 8-year cycle under the

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terms outlined in the Quality Assurance Framework.

## **2. CONTACT**

The authority responsible for the IQAP is the Associate Vice-President (Faculty). The authorities responsible for its application will be the Associate Vice-President (Faculty) for undergraduate programs and the Associate Vice-President and Dean of Graduate Studies for graduate programs. When undergraduate and graduate programs are reviewed concurrently, the Associate Vice-President (Faculty) and the Associate Vice-President and Dean of Graduate Studies will be jointly responsible for its application.

The person responsible for all contact between the University and the Quality Council is the Associate Vice-President (Faculty).

Throughout this Policy, the Chair refers to the head of the academic unit (usually a Department, sometimes a School or an interdisciplinary group) that is proposing a new program or is responsible for an existing program, although we recognize that the official title of such person varies across programs and Faculties. Similarly, the Dean refers to the head of the Faculty or equivalent responsible for the program, again recognizing that the official title may vary.

In the case of joint academic programs (e.g., a combined honours program or a collaborative program with another educational institution), the relevant Chair and Dean shall be those at McMaster University who have the administrative responsibility for the program.

## **3. PURPOSE**

This Policy on Academic Program Reviews is meant to guide the development of new undergraduate and graduate programs (including for-credit graduate diploma programs), and to aid in the ongoing improvement of existing programs. It has been designed also to meet the University's responsibility of ensuring the quality of such programs. It applies to all undergraduate and graduate programs offered at McMaster University, as well as programs offered in collaboration with other institutions that lead to McMaster University degrees or graduate diplomas.

Under this Policy, undergraduate and graduate program reviews may be conducted concurrently or in conjunction with other internal and accreditation reviews, but may also be done independently. The decision on whether to combine the reviews rests with the Chair responsible for the program.

## **4. DEFINITION OF NEW PROGRAMS AND MAJOR MODIFICATIONS**

For the purposes of quality assurance, a program will be considered new when it has not previously been offered at McMaster University. In contrast to the normal evolution of academic programs, a new program will generally involve new courses, new learning

outcomes and new or re-allocated resources, and will be meant to provide students with an academic path that previously will not have been available to them.

Although not new, a program that has been offered at McMaster University without funding from the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU) and for which a request for funding is to be made, will follow the procedures for new programs that are outlined in Section 5.

Revisions to an existing program will be classified as either a minor or a major modification to the program. In both cases, the program will continue to be subject to a cyclical program review as outlined in Section 7. Major modifications must be reported annually to the Quality Council, as outlined in Section 7.4.

For undergraduate programs, a major modification will be one in which more than 30% of the program requirements are being changed from one academic year to the next. For graduate programs, a major modification will be one in which more than 50% of the program requirements (including requirements such as courses, major exams, and research) are being changed from one year to the next. If these conditions do not apply, the modifications will not be considered to be major.

In situations where disagreement exists on whether a proposal constitutes a minor modification, a major modification, or a new program, the determination will be made by McMaster University's Quality Assurance Committee.

## **5. NEW GRADUATE AND UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMS**

The steps required for the approval of any new program include:

### **5.1. Broad consultation in the development of a draft proposal brief**

The Chair, in consultation with the Dean, is responsible for ensuring that there is broad consultation. Such consultation is especially important when proposing interdisciplinary programs as those initiators of the proposed plan may not know all the disciplines or individual faculty members who might potentially be interested, or have expertise. It will also be essential to have appropriate discussions with other institutions when the proposed programs are to be offered in collaboration with those institutions.

An initial meeting involving the Chair(s), the Dean(s) and the Associate Vice-President (Faculty) or, in the case of graduate programs, the Associate Vice-President and Dean of Graduate Studies, will take place at which time the Dean(s) will be responsible for providing information showing that:

- the program is consistent with McMaster's principles and priorities and existing strengths of the University;
- the program is of high academic quality;
- there is convincing evidence of student demand and societal need for the program;

and,

- sufficient financial support, infrastructure, and human resources can be made available to initiate and support the program either within the Faculty budget or based on the program being a full revenue generating program. Details of the program structure and course content are not needed for this meeting, but a brief written overview should be provided to the attendees of the meeting in advance.

## **5.2. Consultation with affected parties**

Whenever faculty members from several departments are involved in a proposal, these proponents should discuss the proposal with their respective Dean(s) and Chair(s). Similarly, if there is a proposal to cross-list a course, or to recommend or require students in the new program to take existing courses, the teaching Department(s) should be consulted and agreement obtained, in writing, from the appropriate Chair/Dean, especially in the case where the course is provided through another Faculty. Approvals of the relevant Curriculum Committees should also be sought.

Discussions should be held with central support units such as, but not limited to, the Library, the Registrar, University Technology Services and the Centre for Leadership in Learning, as well as with Faculty-based support units, to assess the impact of the introduction of the new program. Input also should be sought from relevant groups of students for whom there is a potential impact of the proposal.

A proposal for a new interdisciplinary program should be presented to any related Faculty/Program to ensure that there is widespread awareness of the program and of its potential impact. If a new interdisciplinary program utilizes or cross-lists one or several new courses from other Departments, the Department(s) offering the course(s), rather than the new interdisciplinary group, must submit those courses for approval. Prior written agreement also must be obtained from Chairs of participating Departments for teaching, graduate supervision and other resources required for interdisciplinary programs. Departments must be given adequate time to consider these requests. Faculties must include the proposed administrative and governance structures in interdisciplinary program proposals.

## **5.3. Program Proposal Brief**

The Chair is responsible, in collaboration with relevant groups and/or individuals, for the preparation of a Program Proposal Brief that addresses the following criteria:

### **5.3.1. Program Objectives**

- 5.3.1.a. Consistency of the program with the University's mission and academic plans.
- 5.3.1.b. Clarity and appropriateness of the program's requirements and associated learning outcomes in meeting the University's Undergraduate Degree Level

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Expectations (UDLEs) or Graduate Degree Level Expectations (GDLEs), as outlined in Appendix A.

5.3.1.c. Appropriateness of degree nomenclature.

5.3.2. Admission requirements

5.3.2.a. Appropriateness of the program's admission requirements for the learning outcomes established for completion of the program.

5.3.2.b. Alternative requirements, if any, for admission into the program, such as minimum grade point average, additional languages or portfolios, along with how the program recognizes prior work or learning experience.

5.3.3. Structure

5.3.3.a. Appropriateness of the administrative, governance, and communication processes proposed in support of the program.

5.3.3.b. Appropriateness of the program's structure and regulations to meet specified program learning outcomes and Degree Level Expectations.

5.3.3.c. For graduate programs, a clear rationale for program length, which ensures that the program requirements can be reasonably completed within the proposed time period.

5.3.4. Program content

5.3.4.a. Ways in which the curriculum addresses the current state of the discipline or area of study.

5.3.4.b. Identification of any unique curriculum or program innovations or creative components.

5.3.4.c. For research-focused graduate programs, clear indication of the nature and suitability of the major research requirements for degree completion.

5.3.4.d. For graduate programs, verification that the courses included meet university requirements in terms of the minimum number of courses required, the level of courses required, and the appropriate inclusion of other required elements appropriate for the degree level (e.g., transfer exams, comprehensive exams). At least two thirds of the course requirements must be at the 700-level.

5.3.5. Mode of delivery



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Appropriateness of the proposed mode(s) of delivery to meet the intended Program Learning Outcomes and Degree Level Expectations and availability of the necessary physical resources.

5.3.6. Assessment of teaching and learning

5.3.6.a. Appropriateness of the proposed methods for the instruction and assessment of student achievement of the intended Program Learning Outcomes. The Program Learning Outcomes must meet the University's Degree Level Expectations.

5.3.6.b. Completeness of plans for documenting and demonstrating the level of performance of students, consistent with the University's statement of its Degree Level Expectations.

5.3.7. Resources for all programs

5.3.7.a. Adequacy of the administrative unit's planned utilization of existing human, physical and financial resources, and any institutional commitment to supplement those resources, to support the program.

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

5.3.7.c. Evidence that there are adequate resources to sustain the quality of scholarship produced by undergraduate students as well as graduate students' scholarship and research activities, including library support, information technology support, and laboratory access.

5.3.8. Resources for graduate programs only

5.3.8.a. Evidence that full-time tenured/tenure-track/CAWAR faculty have the recent research and/or professional/clinical expertise needed to sustain the program, promote innovation, foster an appropriate intellectual climate, and provide excellent supervision of students in academic and research components of the program.

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

5.3.8.c. For programs with a research component, evidence that faculty research supervisors have current and ongoing research programs and funding, and space and relevant research infrastructure appropriate to support students' research in the program.

5.3.8.d. Evidence of how supervisory loads will be distributed, and the qualifications and appointment status of faculty who will provide instruction and supervision.

5.3.8.e. Evidence of prior experience in graduate teaching and research supervision for faculty participating in the program.

5.3.9. Resources for undergraduate programs only

5.3.9.a. Evidence of plans for adequate numbers of faculty and staff to achieve the goals of the program;

5.3.9.b. Evidence of plans to provide the necessary resources in step with the implementation of the program;

5.3.9.c. Planned/anticipated class sizes;

5.3.9.d. Provision of supervision of experiential learning opportunities (if required); and,

5.3.9.e. Role of adjunct and sessional faculty.

5.3.10. Quality and other indicators

5.3.10.a. Definition and use of indicators that provide evidence of quality of the faculty (e.g., qualifications, research, innovation and scholarly record; appropriateness of collective faculty expertise to contribute substantively to the proposed program).

Evidence of a program structure and faculty research that will ensure the intellectual quality of the student experience.

5.3.11. Description of the extent and method of the consultation process undertaken during the development of the proposal, including the groups and /or individuals who helped to prepare the proposal

#### 5.4. External reviewers

The Associate Vice-President (Faculty) or, in the case of graduate programs, the Associate Vice-President and Dean of Graduate Studies, in consultation with the Dean will select a team of reviewers to assess the proposal. The review team shall consist of at least one external reviewer for new undergraduate programs and two external reviewers for new graduate programs.

External reviews of new graduate programs must incorporate an on-site visit. External reviews of new undergraduate program proposals will normally be conducted on-site, but

may be conducted by desk audit, video-conference or an equivalent method if the external reviewer is satisfied that the off-site option is acceptable; exceptions to on-site visits for undergraduate program reviews will be determined by the Associate Vice-President (Faculty), in consultation with the Dean, prior to the commencement of the review.

External members of the review team shall normally be individuals who are in the same discipline as the program under review (or across disciplines for interdisciplinary programs) and who are distinguished senior academics of broad experience, with an established commitment to higher education. They must have an impartial, arms-length relationship to the program (for clarity, arms-length reviewers should not have been a research supervisor or student of members of the proposed program; and should not have collaborated with members of the proposed program within the past 6 years, or have made plans to collaborate with those individuals in the immediate future. There also should be no other potential conflicts of interest (e.g., personal or financial).

Reviewers will be selected from a list of at least four suggested individuals compiled by the Department and endorsed by the Dean for undergraduate programs under review, or six for graduate programs. The list shall include, for each proposed external reviewer:

- name;
- rank and position;
- institution or company and current address, telephone and fax numbers, e-mail address, and URL if available;
- professional (including administrative) experience or expertise relevant to the Program under review;
- details of any previous or current affiliation with the University, and any association with individual members of the Program under review (e.g., co-author, previous student/supervisor, close relationship); and,
- for graduate programs, a description of research expertise, and a partial listing of recent scholarly publications.

The Program Proposal Brief, the McMaster Guide to Program Reviews and other materials specific to the review will be provided to all members of the review team no less than two weeks prior to their visit.

### **5.5. Reviewers' report**

Excepting when contrary circumstances apply, the reviewers normally will provide, within 4 weeks of the review, a joint report that appraises the standards and quality of the proposed program, and addresses the criteria set out in Section 5.3, including the associated faculty and material resources. Reviewers also will be invited to acknowledge any clearly innovative aspects of the proposed program, together with recommendations on any essential or otherwise desirable modifications to the program.

### **5.6. Internal response**

Responses to the reviewers' report from both the Chair and the Dean, or their delegates, should be prepared and attached to the reviewers' report.

### **5.7. Institutional approval**

In addition to the completion of the external review, approval of new program proposals by the following University bodies, normally in the order listed below, is required:

- the Department(s) – to ensure that the new program meets the stated objectives within the context of the discipline;
- the Faculty Curriculum Committee(s) – to ensure that the new program adds sufficient value to the programs already offered in the Faculty;
- the Faculty(ies) (or Faculty Council(s) if the Faculty By-Laws allow it to act on behalf of the Faculty) – to ensure that the program is consistent with the Faculty's strategic plans and that the necessary resources are available if these are to be provided from within the Faculty's envelope;
- for Undergraduate programs, the Undergraduate Council Curriculum Committee – to assess the impact of the new program on students enrolled in other Faculties;
- Undergraduate Council or Graduate Council – to provide a venue for a broad discussion on the new program by elected faculty and student members with specific knowledge of and expertise in undergraduate or graduate programming, and ensure that the program is consistent with University-wide goals and criteria specifically related to undergraduate or graduate programming;
- University Planning Committee – to ensure the financial viability of the new program and evaluate the need for additional resources if these are to be provided from outside the Faculty envelope; and,
- Senate – to ensure that the program is consistent with the University's general strategic plans with respect to academic programs.

These bodies should consider the criteria outlined in Section 5.3 when evaluating the proposal.

Normally, approvals by all of the above University bodies will take place before the external review. However, in cases where the external reviewers recommend significant changes to the program proposal, it may have to return to these bodies for re-assessment.

In addition:

- The University Budget Committee must approve any request for additional funding outside the Faculty envelope including new one-time or base budget funding. This would be done during the normal budget cycle. Typically budget submissions are received in March and decisions communicated in June after the budget has the Board of Governors' approval.
- The University Student Fees Committee must approve all fees and the administration of them if the fees are different than the normal tuition charged in a Faculty and/or if supplementary fees are being proposed. The Fees Committee must approve all fees for revenue generating programs.

Special considerations, such as collaboration agreements or non-standard distribution and full revenue generating programs should refer to the [Academic Revenue Generating Activity Policy](#) and other relevant University policies as may apply.

If any one of the bodies requires changes to the proposal, those changes may have to be subsequently provided to the other approving bodies for approval, depending on the nature of the changes.

Chairs of Departments named in the proposal should be informed by the University Secretariat of the schedule for presentations to Undergraduate Council, University Planning Committee and Senate, and of the decisions of these bodies with regard to the new program proposal. The School of Graduate Studies should inform Chairs of the schedule of presentations to Graduate Council, and of the decisions of this body with regards to the new program proposal.

### **5.8. Quality Council Secretariat**

Once all approvals outlined in Section 5.7 are obtained, the institution will submit the Proposal Brief, together with the Reviewers' Report and the internal response to the Report, to the Quality Council Secretariat. The submission template will require information on whether or not the proposed program will be a cost-recovery program. The same standards and protocols apply regardless of the source of funding.

### **5.9. Announcement of new programs**

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

### **5.10. Approved new programs**

After a new program is approved to commence by the Quality Council, the University may seek Provincial funding for the program, which must begin within thirty-six months of the date of approval; otherwise, the approval will lapse.

The first cyclical review for any new program must be conducted no more than eight years after the date of the program's initial enrolment.

Between eighteen and twenty-four months after onset of the program, the Chair will provide the Dean and Associate Vice-President (Faculty) or, in the case of graduate programs, the Associate Vice-President and Dean of Graduate studies, with a brief update on progress in the program, addressing any concerns from the initial program review, and highlighting any unanticipated changes in curriculum, resources, enrollment, funding mechanisms, or governance structure. If, after consultation with the Dean, the Associate Vice-President (Faculty) or, in the case of graduate programs, the Associate Vice-President and Dean of Graduate studies, deems it appropriate, an informal internal assessment of the program may be undertaken, including interviews with current faculty,

students, and staff, to determine if a more complete, early cyclical review is warranted.

## **6. EXPEDITED APPROVALS OF NEW PROGRAMS**

The Protocol for Expedited Approvals applies when one or more of the following applies:

- an institution requests endorsement of the Quality Council to declare a new Field or to revise Fields in a graduate program (note: there is no requirement to declare fields in either master's or doctoral programs);
- there is a proposal for a new collaborative program;
- there are proposals for new for-credit graduate diplomas; or,
- there are major modifications to existing programs, and the University requests approval.

The Expedited Approvals process requires all the approvals listed in Section 5.7 and the submission to the Quality Council of a Proposal Brief of the proposed program change/new program and the rationale for it. It does not require that external reviewers be involved in the approval process and provides for a faster turn-around on decisions by the Quality Council.

### **6.1. Proposal Brief**

The Proposal Brief will describe the new program or the significant changes being proposed (including, as appropriate, reference to Program Learning Outcomes, Degree Level Expectations, faculty and resource implications), provide a brief account of the rationale for the changes, and address the evaluation criteria.

### **6.2. Institutional Identification of Major Modifications to Existing Programs**

Existing programs can be expected to routinely undergo revisions with the aim of quality enhancement. This includes, for example, the introduction or deletion of courses, major exam structures, change in emphases, options, minors, or mode of delivery. The revisions must be submitted through the normal curriculum approval process outlined in Section 5.7 (excluding the University Planning Committee, unless there are significant resource implications). These revisions will be assessed during the course of the next cyclical review of the program.

There may be, however, situations where the changes to the program are of such significance that a more immediate review is desirable. This situation may occur, for example, where:

- the program's revisions meet the definition of a major modification, as defined in Section 4;
- the fundamental objectives of the program change; or,
- there are significant changes to the faculty engaged in delivering the program and/or to the essential physical resources,

In such cases, the Department, the Faculty, Undergraduate Council or Graduate Council

may, if it deems it advisable after consultation with the relevant Dean(s) and Associate Vice-President (Faculty) and/or Associate Vice-President and Dean of Graduate Studies, initiate a program review and request that the Quality Council review the major modification proposal. Normally, such review will occur through an Expedited Approval Process.

## **7. CYCLICAL PROGRAM REVIEWS**

All academic programs are to be reviewed on an eight-year cycle. Combined programs do not require review if their constituting programs are reviewed separately. Emphases, Options and Minors do not require review. The list of programs that require review, and the schedule of such reviews, will be maintained by the Associate Vice-President (Faculty).

Departments can choose to review undergraduate and graduate programs jointly or separately. If the reviews are done jointly, there can be additional subsections within the report to address different situations that apply to each program. Program reviews can also be done jointly with accreditation reviews, at the discretion of the Chair, in consultation with the Dean (see Section 7.5).

The review consists of the following five steps:

### **7.1. Self-study: Internal program perspective**

The Chair is responsible, in collaboration with relevant groups and/or individuals, for preparing a self-study document that is broad-based, reflective, forward-looking and inclusive of critical analysis. It should identify any pertinent information deemed appropriate for inclusion. The self-study must address and document the consistency of the program's learning outcomes with the University's mission and Degree Level Expectations, and how its graduates achieve those outcomes;

The self-study should include criteria and quality indicators including:

#### **7.1.1. Objectives**

7.1.1.a. Program is consistent with the University's mission and academic plans.

7.1.1.b. Program requirements and learning outcomes are clear, appropriate and align with the University's statement of the undergraduate and/or graduate Degree Level Expectations.

#### **7.1.2. Admission requirements**

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

#### **7.1.3. Curriculum**

7.1.3.a. How the curriculum reflects the current state of the discipline or area of study.

7.1.3.b. Evidence of any significant innovation or creativity in the content and/or delivery of the program relative to other such programs.

7.1.3.c. How the mode(s) of delivery are appropriate and effective at meeting the program's identified learning outcomes.

7.1.4. Teaching and assessment

7.1.4.a. Methods for assessing student achievement of the defined learning Outcomes and Degree Level Expectations are appropriate and effective.

7.1.4.b. Appropriateness and effectiveness of the means of assessment, especially in the students' final year of the program, in clearly demonstrating achievement of the program learning objectives and the University's statement of Degree Level Expectations.

7.1.5. Resources

Appropriateness and effectiveness of the academic unit's use of existing human, physical and financial resources in delivering and maintaining the quality of its program(s), in relation to the University's priorities for and constraints on funding, space, and faculty allocation.

7.1.6. Quality indicators

Information on the quality of the program under review. Standard quality indicators, outlined in the McMaster Guide to Program Reviews, will be provided to Chairs by central resources and departments. Chairs will be expected to provide context and commentary on the data provided to them. When possible and appropriate, Chairs will also refer to applicable professional standards.

7.1.7. Quality enhancement

Initiatives that have been undertaken to enhance the teaching, learning and/or research environments thus, the quality of the program, and how these will be sustained.

7.1.8. Additional graduate program criteria

7.1.8.a. Evidence that students' time-to-completion is both monitored and managed in relation to the program's defined length and program requirements.

7.1.8.b. Quality and availability of graduate supervision.



7.1.8.c. Definition and application of indicators that provide evidence of faculty, student and program quality, for example:

7.1.8.c.i. Faculty: funding, honours and awards, and commitment to student mentoring;

7.1.8.c.ii. Students: grade-level for admission, scholarly output, success rates in provincial and national scholarships, competitions, awards;

7.1.8.c.iii. Program: evidence of a program structure and faculty research that will ensure the intellectual quality of the student experience, and commitment to development of professional and transferable skills; evidence of sufficient and regular graduate level course offerings to ensure that students will be able to meet university requirements in terms of the minimum number of courses required, the level of courses required, and the timely completion of other required elements appropriate for the degree level (e.g., transfer exams, comprehensive exams).

7.1.9. Evidence that a consultative and inclusive system of governance has been used on an ongoing basis to assess the program and implement changes as appropriate.

7.1.10. Concerns and recommendations raised in previous reviews;

7.1.11. Areas identified through the conduct of the self-study as requiring improvement;

7.1.12. Areas that hold promise for enhancement;

7.1.13. Academic services that directly contribute to the academic quality of each program under review;

7.1.14. Participation of program faculty, staff, and students in the self-study and how their views were obtained and taken into account, and who contributed to the development and writing of the self-study.

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

It is the Chair's responsibility to review and approve the self-study report to ensure that it meets the above criteria.

## **7.2. External evaluation: External perspective**

The Associate Vice-President (Faculty) or, in the case of graduate programs, the Associate Vice-President and Dean of Graduate Studies, in consultation with the Dean, will select a team of reviewers to evaluate the program. The review team shall consist of at least one external reviewer for undergraduate programs and two external reviewers for either graduate programs or for concurrent reviews of undergraduate and graduate programs. The team will also include one internal reviewer selected by the Associate Vice-President (Faculty) or, in the case of graduate programs, the Associate Vice-President and Dean of Graduate Studies, in consultation with the Dean. Additional members may be added to the team if appropriate, such as when evaluating professional programs.

External members of the review team normally shall be individuals in the same discipline as the Program under review (or across disciplines for interdisciplinary programs) who are distinguished senior academics of broad experience, with an established commitment to higher education. They must have an impartial, arms-length relationship to the Program (as defined in Section 5.4). They will be selected from a list of at least four suggested individuals compiled by the Program/Department under review and endorsed by the Dean, or six for graduate programs or combined undergraduate/graduate program reviews. The list shall include, for each proposed external reviewer:

- name;
- rank and position;
- institution or company and current address, telephone and fax numbers, and e-mail address, and URL if available;
- professional (including administrative) experience or expertise relevant to the Program under review;
- details of any previous or current affiliation with the University, and any association with individual members of the Program under review (e.g., co-author, previous student/supervisor, close relationship); and,
- for graduate program or combined reviews, a description of research expertise, and a partial listing of recent scholarly publications.

The Self-Study, the McMaster Guide to Program Reviews and other materials specific to the current review will be provided to all members of the Review Committee no less than two weeks prior to their visit. When appropriate, the results of the previous accreditation review also will be made available to the Review Committee to provide them with the views of the relevant professional association(s). The Guide describes the review process and the roles and obligations of the Review Committee, which include:

- to identify and comment on the program's notably strong and creative attributes;
- to describe the program's respective strengths, areas for improvement, and opportunities for enhancement;
- to recommend specific steps to be taken to improve the program, distinguishing between those the program can itself take with existing resources and those that require external action;
- to recognize the University's autonomy to determine priorities for funding, space, and faculty allocation; and,

- to respect the confidentiality required for all aspects of the review process.

It is required that all reviewers visit at the same time, normally for two days. As appropriate, the review team shall meet with the following:

- Chair or Director;
- Full-time faculty members (in groups);
- Part-time faculty members (in groups);
- Program students (units should encourage a broad cross section of students to participate in a meeting with the review team);
- Departmental/Program support staff;
- Associate Dean;
- Dean;
- for graduate programs, the Associate Vice-President and Dean of Graduate Studies;
- for undergraduate programs, the Associate Vice-President (Faculty); and,
- Provost and Vice-President (Academic), if available.

The review team will submit to the Office of the Associate Vice-President (Faculty) a joint report, including an Executive Summary, for the program(s) under review, normally within four weeks of the visit. The report will normally be written primarily by the external reviewer(s), with input from the internal reviewer. The Review Committee's report should address the substance of both the self-study report and the evaluation criteria set out in Section 5.3. The intent of these reports is to be formative and constructive. The reports are intended to provide counsel rather than prescriptive courses of action. The Office of the Associate Vice-President (Faculty) will circulate the report to the appropriate Chairs and Deans and, in the case of graduate programs, to the Associate Vice-President and Dean of Graduate Studies.

The Chair shall be responsible, in collaboration with relevant groups and/or individuals, for preparing the Program's response to the report and submitting it to the Dean.

The Dean's response to the reviewers' report and to the Chair's response should include any changes in organization, policy or governance that would be necessary to meet the recommendations, a discussion of the ways in which proposed changes deal with problems identified in the review, whether additional resources can be allocated to enhance the quality of the program, and a proposed timeline for the implementation of proposed changes. The Dean will be responsible for reviewing the recommendations and for providing resources necessary for those that will be implemented.

### **7.3. Institutional perspective and report**

All program reviews, whether for new programs or for existing programs, will be submitted to McMaster University's Quality Assurance Committee, a joint committee of Undergraduate and Graduate Councils. The Quality Assurance Committee will assess the review and will submit a report to Undergraduate Council or Graduate Council that:

- identifies significant strengths of the program;
- addresses the appropriateness of resources for the success of the program;
- identifies opportunities for program improvement and enhancement;
- identifies and prioritizes the recommendations;
- may include a confidential section (e.g., where personnel issues may be addressed);
- may include additional recommendations or comments to the Provost and Vice-President (Academic). Recommendations could include, for example, requiring a detailed 18-month report that will describe progress towards addressing major concerns or scheduling an additional cyclical review sooner than specified by the normal 8-year cycle.

Undergraduate Council or Graduate Council will receive the report from the Quality Assurance Committee and will consider whether it will provide its own recommendations or comments to the Provost and Vice-President (Academic). These will be communicated to the Chair, the Dean and the Associate Vice-President (Faculty) or, in the case of graduate programs, to the Associate Vice-President and Dean of Graduate Studies.

The report from Undergraduate Council or Graduate Council, along with any recommendations or comments, will be presented to the University Planning Committee, which will consider whether it will make additional recommendations or comments to the Provost and Vice-President (Academic). These will be communicated to the Chair, the Dean and the Associate Vice-President (Faculty) or, in the case of graduate programs, to the Associate Vice-President and Dean of Graduate Studies.

Eighteen months after receiving the report from Undergraduate Council or Graduate Council, the Dean will meet with the Chair for an update on the program. The Dean will submit a report to Undergraduate Council or Graduate Council summarizing the status of any actions taken or being taken. This report, along with any recommendations or comments made to the Provost and Vice-President (Academic) from Undergraduate Council or Graduate Council, will be presented to the University Planning Committee, which will consider whether it will make additional recommendations or comments to the Provost and Vice-President (Academic). These will be communicated to the Dean and the Associate Vice-President (Faculty) or, in the case of graduate programs, to the Associate Vice-President and Dean of Graduate Studies.

#### **7.4. Reporting requirements**

Once per year, the Associate Vice-President (Faculty) will prepare a report of major modifications to existing programs, as defined in Section 4, and will submit the report to the Quality Council.

Once per year, the Quality Assurance Committee will prepare an Annual Report on program reviews for that year. The Chair of the Quality Assurance Committee will present the Annual Report (excluding any confidential information) to an open session of Senate. The Deans will be invited to answer any questions that arise.

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The Annual Report will be posted on the Vice-President (Faculty) section of the University's website and copies of this information will be provided to the Quality Council and to the University's Board of Governors.

#### **7.5. Use of accreditation and other external reviews in the Institutional Quality Assurance Process**

Programs that periodically undergo accreditation reviews may use the associated documentation as a partial substitute for the self-study. The Associate Vice-President (Faculty) or, in the case of graduate programs, the Associate Vice-President and Dean of Graduate Studies, in consultation with the Dean, will review the accreditation requirements to determine their suitability and identify any components of the cyclical review that are missing. An addendum to the accreditation documentation, containing any revised or missing components, will be prepared and appended to the accreditation documentation. A record of substitutions or additions, and the grounds on which they were made, will be eligible for audit by the Quality Council. The remaining steps in the cyclical review will then take place. When requested by the Dean and permitted by the accreditation authorities, the cyclical visit by the external reviewers may be performed at the same time or by the same people as the accreditation review, or it may be used to assess quality assurance issues not covered by the accreditation review.

**APPENDIX A**  
**McMASTER UNIVERSITY'S STATEMENT**  
**ON DEGREE LEVEL EXPECTATIONS**

A McMaster education should enable students to develop sets of life and learning skills that promote a continuing ability and desire to learn, and a set of technical and professional skills that permit a range of career choices. Degree level expectations elaborate the intellectual and creative development of students and the acquisition of relevant skills that are usually widely, yet implicitly, understood.

McMaster University has adopted the following Undergraduate Degree Level Expectations (UDLEs) or Graduate Degree Level Expectations (GDLEs) that were developed by the Ontario Council of Academic Vice-Presidents and endorsed by the Council of Ontario Universities in December 2005. These degree level expectations are to be viewed as a minimum threshold for all degree programs at McMaster.

**UNDERGRADUATE**

	<b>Baccalaureate/bachelor's degree</b> This degree is awarded to students who have demonstrated the following:	<b>Baccalaureate/bachelor's degree: honours</b> This degree is awarded to students who have demonstrated the following:
1. Depth and breadth of knowledge	<p>a) General knowledge and understanding of many key concepts, methodologies, theoretical approaches and assumptions in a discipline</p> <p>b) Broad understanding of some of the major fields in a discipline, including, where appropriate, from an interdisciplinary perspective, and how the fields may intersect with fields in related disciplines</p> <p>c) Ability to gather, review, evaluate and interpret information relevant to one or more of the major fields in a discipline</p>	<p>a) Developed knowledge and critical understanding of the key concepts, methodologies, current advances, theoretical approaches and assumptions in a discipline overall, as well as in a specialized area of a discipline</p> <p>b) Developed understanding of many of the major fields in a discipline, including, where appropriate, from an interdisciplinary perspective, and how the fields may intersect with fields in related disciplines</p> <p>c) Developed ability to:</p> <p>i) gather, review, evaluate and interpret information; and</p> <p>ii) compare the merits of alternate</p>

	<p>d) Some detailed knowledge in an area of the discipline</p> <p>e) Critical thinking and analytical skills inside and outside the discipline</p> <p>f) Ability to apply learning from one or more areas outside the discipline</p>	<p>hypotheses or creative options, relevant to one or more of the major fields in a discipline</p> <p>d) Developed, detailed knowledge of and experience in research in an area of the discipline</p> <p>e) Developed critical thinking and analytical skills inside and outside the discipline</p> <p>f) Ability to apply learning from one or more areas outside the discipline</p>
2. Knowledge of methodologies	<p>An understanding of methods of enquiry or creative activity, or both, in their primary area of study that enables the student to:</p> <p>a) evaluate the appropriateness of different approaches to solving problems using well established ideas and techniques; and</p> <p>b) devise and sustain arguments or solve problems using these methods.</p>	<p>An understanding of methods of enquiry or creative activity, or both, in their primary area of study that enables the student to:</p> <p>a) evaluate the appropriateness of different approaches to solving problems using well established ideas and techniques;</p> <p>b) devise and sustain arguments or solve problems using these methods; and</p> <p>c) describe and comment upon particular aspects of current research or equivalent advanced scholarship.</p>
3. Application of knowledge	<p>The ability to review, present, and interpret quantitative and qualitative information to:</p> <p>a) develop lines of argument;</p> <p>b) make sound judgments in accordance with the major theories, concepts and methods of the subject(s) of study; and</p>	<p>The ability to review, present and critically evaluate qualitative and quantitative information to:</p> <p>a) develop lines of argument;</p> <p>b) make sound judgments in accordance with the major theories, concepts and methods of the subject(s) of study;</p>

	<p>The ability to use a basic range of established techniques to:</p> <p>a) analyze information;</p> <p>b) evaluate the appropriateness of different approaches to solving problems related to their area(s) of study;</p> <p>c) propose solutions; and</p> <p>d) make use of scholarly reviews and primary sources.</p>	<p>c) apply underlying concepts, principles, and techniques of analysis, both within and outside the discipline;</p> <p>d) where appropriate use this knowledge in the creative process; and</p> <p>The ability to use a range of established techniques to:</p> <p>a) initiate and undertake critical evaluation of arguments, assumptions, abstract concepts and information;</p> <p>b) propose solutions;</p> <p>c) frame appropriate questions for the purpose of solving a problem;</p> <p>d) solve a problem or create a new work; and</p> <p>e) to make critical use of scholarly reviews and primary sources.</p>
<p>4. Communication skills</p>	<p>The ability to communicate accurately and reliably, orally and in writing to a range of audiences.</p>	<p>The ability to communicate information, arguments, and analyses accurately and reliably, orally and in writing to a range of audiences.</p>



<p>5. Awareness of limits of knowledge</p>	<p>An understanding of the limits to their own knowledge and how this might influence their analyses and interpretations.</p>	<p>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.</p>
<p>6. Autonomy and professional capacity</p>	<p>Qualities and transferable skills necessary for further study, employment, community involvement and other activities requiring:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) the exercise of personal responsibility and decision-making;</li> <li>b) working effectively with others;</li> <li>c) the ability to identify and address their own learning needs in changing circumstances and to select an appropriate program of further study; and</li> <li>d) behaviour consistent with academic integrity and social responsibility.</li> </ul>	<p>Qualities and transferable skills necessary for further study, employment, community involvement and other activities requiring:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) the exercise of initiative, personal responsibility and accountability in both personal and group contexts;</li> <li>b) working effectively with others;</li> <li>c) decision-making in complex contexts;</li> <li>d) 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;</li> <li>e) and behaviour consistent with academic integrity and social responsibility.</li> </ul>

**GRADUATE**

	<b>Master's degree</b> This degree is awarded to students who have demonstrated the following:	<b>Doctoral degree</b> This degree extends the skills associated with the Master's degree and is awarded to students who have demonstrated the following:
1. Depth and breadth of knowledge	A systematic understanding of knowledge, including, where appropriate, relevant knowledge outside the field and/or discipline, 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 including, where appropriate, relevant knowledge outside the field and/or discipline.
2. Research and scholarship	<p>A conceptual understanding and methodological competence that:</p> <p>a) Enables a working comprehension of how established techniques of research and inquiry are used to create and interpret knowledge in the discipline;</p> <p>b) Enables a critical evaluation of current research and advanced research and scholarship in the discipline or area of professional competence; and</p> <p>c) Enables a treatment of complex issues and judgments based on established principles and techniques; and,</p> <p>On the basis of that competence, has shown at least one of the following:</p>	<p>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;</p> <p>b) The ability to make informed judgments on complex issues in specialist fields, sometimes requiring new methods; and</p> <p>c) The ability to produce original research, or other advanced scholarship, of a quality to satisfy peer review, and to merit publication.</p>

	<p>a) The development and support of a sustained argument in written form; or</p> <p>b) Originality in the application of knowledge.</p>	
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.	<p>The capacity to:</p> <p>a) Undertake pure and/or applied research at an advanced level; and</p> <p>b) Contribute to the development of academic or professional skills, techniques, tools, practices, ideas, theories, approaches, and/or materials.</p>
4. Professional capacity/autonomy	<p>a) The qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">i) The exercise of initiative and of personal responsibility and accountability; and</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">ii) Decision-making in complex situations;</p> <p>b) The intellectual independence required for continuing professional development;</p> <p>c) The ethical behavior consistent with academic integrity and the use of appropriate guidelines and procedures for responsible conduct of research; and</p> <p>d) The ability to appreciate the broader implications of applying knowledge to particular contexts.</p>	<p>a) The qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring the exercise of personal responsibility and largely autonomous initiative in complex situations;</p> <p>b) The intellectual independence to be academically and professionally engaged and current;</p> <p>c) The ethical behavior consistent with academic integrity and the use of appropriate guidelines and procedures for responsible conduct of research; and</p> <p>d) The ability to evaluate the broader implications of applying knowledge to particular contexts.</p>
5. Level of communications skills	The ability to communicate ideas, issues and conclusions clearly, orally and in writing, to a range of audiences.	The ability to communicate complex and/or ambiguous ideas, issues and conclusions clearly and effectively, orally and in writing, to a range of audiences.

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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.
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