

## **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 Institutional Approvals section and the submission to the Quality Council of a Proposal Brief of the proposed program change/new program and the rationale for it.

Please note that the expedited approvals process 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.

## **PROCESS FOR APPROVAL**

New programs must be submitted for approval using the process outlined below. The Spring submission date to the Ministry is normally April 1 and the Fall submission date is November 1.

### **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.

There will be an initial meeting involving the Chair(s), the Dean(s) and the Associate Vice-President (Academic).

The Dean(s) is 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.

Note: Details of the program structure and course content are not needed for this meeting; however, a brief overview should be provided to the attendees in advance of the meeting.

## 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 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.

## 3. **Program Proposal Brief**

The Chair is responsible for the preparation of a Program 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. A template is supplied within this guide.

## 4. **Institutional approval**

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;
- the Undergraduate Council Curriculum Committee – to assess the impact of the new program on students enrolled in other Faculties;
- Undergraduate 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.
- 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.

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.

Special considerations, such as collaboration agreements or non-standard distribution and full revenue generating programs should refer to the Academic Revenue Generating Activity Policy (<http://www.mcmaster.ca/policy/AdminAcad/AcadAdmin/AcademicRevenueActivityPolicy.pdf>) 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.

## **5. Quality Council Secretariat**

Once all approvals 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.

## **6. Announcement of new programs**

Following its submission to the Quality Council, the institution 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 and unless the program is approved by the Council.

## **INITIAL APPRAISAL PROCESS**

After the submission to the Quality Council, the following appraisal process begins:

### **1. Secretariat check**

The Quality Council Secretariat will confirm that the Proposal Brief and associated reports and internal responses to them are complete. If there is missing information or defects of substance, the Secretariat will return the Proposal Brief to the institution for revision or amendment and resubmission. Otherwise the Proposal Brief and accompanying documents will be forwarded directly to the Quality Council Appraisal Committee.

### **2. Appraisal Committee reviews and recommends**

The Quality Council's Appraisal Committee reviews and appraises the complete file. This committee may seek further information from the institution, in which case it provides reasons for its requests to the institution. In rare instances, the Appraisal Committee may invite further input from an external expert, either through desk audit or site visit. If no further information is required, the Appraisal Committee, through the Quality Council, will advise the institution of its proposed recommendation, including a brief explanation of its reasons. This assessment includes one of the following recommendations:

- a) Approval to commence
- b) Approval to commence, with report
- c) Deferral for up to one year during which time the university may address identified issues and report back
- d) Against approval

This step will normally be completed within forty-five days of receipt of the institution's submission, provided that the submission is complete and in good order, and that no further information or external expert advice is required. Where additional information is required by the Appraisal Committee, one of the four possible recommendations (see above) to the Council will be made within a further thirty days of its receipt.

### **3. Institution may consult/appeal to Committee**

When the recommendation is one of b), c) or d) as above, the proposing university may, within sixty days, make an appeal to, or request a meeting with, the Appraisal Committee for reconsideration. Normally, the grounds for seeking reconsideration are that the institution will be providing new information, or that there were errors of fact in the Appraisal Committee's commentary, or there were errors of process. Following such communication, the Appraisal Committee revisits and may revise its assessment. It will convey its final recommendation to the Quality Council.

### **4. Institution may appeal to Council. Council decides**

Having received and considered the Appraisal Committee's final assessment and recommendation, any additional comments from the institution on the assessment, and further, having heard any requested appeal from the institution on matters of fact or procedure, the Council makes one of the following decisions:

- a) Approved to commence
- b) Approved to commence, with report
- c) Deferred for up to one year, affording the institution an opportunity to amend and resubmit its proposal brief

- d) That the program proposal is declined

When the Quality Council chooses option c) as above, then the Appraisal Committee suspends the assessment process until the institution has resubmitted its Brief. After this, the Appraisal Committee reactivates its appraisal process. When the Appraisal Committee does not receive a response within the specified period, it considers the proposal to have been withdrawn.

### **5. Council reports decision**

The Quality Council conveys its decision to the institution through the designated institutional contact, and reports it for information to OCAV and to the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU). The Quality Council and the institution post information about decisions on approval to commence new programs on their respective websites, together with a brief description of the program. Only at this point may institutions make offers of admission to the program.

### **6. Waiting period before resubmission**

To allow time for revisions to proposals, any institution declined permission to proceed at this stage of the process, or following a denied appeal of the decision will normally wait until one year has elapsed from the date of the Quality Council's decision before resubmitting a revised version of its proposal. The same waiting period normally applies when a university does not resubmit a deferred program proposal within the specified period.

### **7. Subsequent *with report* appraisal**

When an institution has been given approval to commence a program *with report*, the Appraisal Committee reviews the subsequently submitted report, conducts whatever consultation it requires, and then makes one of the following recommendations to the Council. That:

- a) The program be approved to continue without condition;
- b) The program may continue accepting admissions but the Council requires additional follow-up and report within a specified period, prior to the conduct of the initial cyclical review. On the Council's receipt of that required report, the procedure returns to this same step in the appraisal process
- c) The program be required to suspend admissions for a minimum of two years. The Quality Council will then specify the conditions to be met in the interim in order for admissions to the program to resume.
- d) The institution may appeal, to the Quality Council, the proposed recommendation of the Appraisal Committee to suspend admissions to the program, on the same terms as are set out in Section 3 above (*i.e.*, the institution will be providing new information; and/or there were errors of fact in the Appraisal Committee's commentary; and/or there were errors of process).

### **8. Council hears *with report* appeal. Council decides**

Having received and considered the Appraisal Committee's recommendation, and the institution's appeal, if any, the Quality Council may decide either:

- a) To approve the program without condition, or
- b) To approve the program continuing admissions with a further report, or
- c) To require the program to suspend admissions for a minimum of two years. This decision is final. The Quality Council conveys its decision to the institution, and reports it to OCAV and to MTCU for information.

## **9. First cyclical review**

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 and normally in accordance with the university's program review schedule.

## **10. Implementation window**

After a new program is approved to commence, the program will begin within thirty-six months of that date of approval; otherwise the approval will lapse.

## **11. 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 (Academic) 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 (Academic) 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.

## **Proposal Brief**