4. PROTOCOLS FOR THE EVALUATION AND APPROVAL OF MAJOR MODIFICATIONS TO EXISTING PROGRAMS

4.1 Protocol for the Evaluation and Approval of Major Modifications to Existing Undergraduate Programs

4.1.1 Major modifications

Modification to a program is considered major when:

a) the requirements for the program differ significantly from those existing at the time of the previous cyclical program review (e.g. a change in number and type of mandatory courses; a change in the language of program delivery; the introduction of a new concentration; a new mode of delivery; the addition or deletion of a coop or practicum; addition or deletion of a research paper; a change in the nature of the comprehensive, qualifying or candidacy examinations; the merger of two or more programs; the introduction of a bridging option for college diploma graduates; any change to field studies or residency requirements; major changes made to more than one-third of courses; a change from full to part-time program options or vice versa);

b) significant changes have been made to the learning outcomes (e.g. a major research component such as a research paper or thesis has been removed, added, or otherwise significantly changed);

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

d) significant changes have been made to the professors engaged in delivering the program (e.g. a large proportion of professors retires; new hires alter the areas of research and teaching interests; a field is deleted; an existing degree program is established at another location or institution). (For the introduction of a new field see above.);

e) when significant changes have been made to the essential physical resources (e.g. new laboratories are created; a complete on-line delivery of the program is proposed; the program is moved to an off-campus location) where these changes impair the delivery of the approved program.

The Senate Committee on Undergraduate Program Evaluation will act as an arbitrator to determine whether a change constitutes a major modification.
4.1.2 Evaluation and approval process for major modifications

All proposals for major modifications to an existing program must undergo an evaluation and approval process. The stages involved in the process vary depending on whether the proposal is submitted to the Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance (Quality Council). If the proposal is submitted to the Quality Council (expedited approval), it will undergo a five-stage evaluation and approval process similar to the process for evaluating and approving new programs. If the proposal is not submitted to the Quality Council, it will undergo a three-stage evaluation and approval process, as described below (some stages are broken down into sub-stages). At any of these stages, the proposal can be returned to the academic unit concerned, which must incorporate recommended modifications before moving on to the next approval stage.

4.1.2.1 Academic unit

The evaluation and approval process for major modifications is normally initiated by the academic unit(s) offering the program. The process may vary slightly for interdisciplinary or collaborative programs. However, before any discussions with the unit’s academic authorities take place, the Vice-Dean Academic must be advised of the modifications being proposed.

The unit prepares a proposal for the major modifications and submits it to all its academic authorities for approval (program committee and department assembly, or their equivalent).

4.1.2.2 Faculty

The proposal is submitted for approval to all faculty academic authorities (including the undergraduate program committee, or its equivalent) and, finally, to the faculty council or councils.

4.1.2.3 Senate

The Vice-Dean Academic, or equivalent, of the faculty concerned submits the proposal to the Council on Undergraduate Studies for approval. The Associate Vice-President Academic then presents the proposal to the Executive Committee of the Senate and to the Senate, if necessary. Senate approval is necessary if a modification has an impact on the diploma (for example, if a new major is created).

4.1.2.4 Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance

A copy of the major modifications approved by Senate is sent to the Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance as part of the University’s annual report on major modification(s) approved during the academic year.
4.1.3 Information to be included in the proposal

The proposal must include:

a) a justification for the major modifications being proposed;

b) a detailed description of the modifications (changes to admission or graduation requirements, program structure, courses, delivery methods, allocated resources, etc.);

c) the effect of these modifications on the University’s mission and academic plans, on the learning goals and expected learning outcomes, on undergraduate Degree Level Expectations, on admission requirements, on student preparedness, on enrolment and on the student university experience;

d) the effect of these modifications on teaching, learning or evaluation methods;

e) the effect of these modifications on physical space requirements as well as on professorial resources, material and financial resources required and expected class sizes;

f) and the effect of these modifications on the program’s administrative structure.

If new resources are required in order to implement the major modifications, the Dean and the Administrative Committee must decide on the resources needed to offer the program for a reasonable period of time. The financial impact of the major modifications and potential internal or external sources of funding must also be explored.

4.1.4 Evaluation criteria

The various academic authorities involved in the approval process examine the proposals according to several criteria. They take into account academic criteria specific to the University of Ottawa, the Quality Council’s requirements and the Ontario Council of Academic Vice-Presidents (OCAV) guidelines on University Degree Level Expectations. They must ensure that:

4.1.4.1 Objectives

a) the major modifications allow the University to carry out or better carry out its mission and academic plans, reach its goals, and build upon the teaching and research strengths of the academic unit(s) concerned;

b) the major modifications are consistent with or reinforce the educational goals, learning outcomes, and undergraduate Degree Level Expectations;

c) major modifications allow the program to satisfy societal needs and students’ actual interests.
4.1.4.2 Admission requirements

a) the admission requirements, as well as students’ prior learning (results) and level of preparation, allow for the learning outcomes to be achieved;

b) other possible admission requirements such as the CGPA, language requirements, and recognition of prior learning experience are sufficiently and clearly explained.

4.1.4.3 Program structure

a) the program structure and requirements allow for learning outcomes to be achieved and undergraduate Degree Level Expectations to be met.

4.1.4.4 Program content

a) the name of the program and the degree awarded correspond to both the program content and the terminology used in the discipline;

b) any innovative aspects or distinctive features of the program are highlighted, in particular those that will contribute to the quality of the student University experience.

4.1.4.5 Mode of delivery

a) delivery methods ensure learning outcomes are achieved and meet undergraduate Degree Level Expectations;

b) expected class sizes are specified.

4.1.4.6 Language of delivery

a) there is evidence that, where appropriate, the University’s mission concerning Ontario’s Francophone Community and bilingualism is reflected in the course delivery.

4.1.4.7 Assessment of teaching and learning

a) the methods used to evaluate student progress ensure learning outcomes are achieved and undergraduate Degree Level Expectations are met and are consistent with OCAV’s guidelines on Degree Level Expectations.

4.1.4.8 Resources

a) the experience and quality of the teaching staff is clearly indicated, and there is a sufficient number of regular faculty members;

b) the role of part-time and associate professors is defined;

c) the financial and physical resources required or invested for the program are sufficient;
d) the resources necessary to support students’ scholarly activities, such as library services, information technology support and laboratory access, are sufficient and of good quality.

4.1.4.9 Quality and other indicators

a) quality indicators of teaching staff (training and skills, distinctions, ability to make a significant contribution to the proposed program) are set out;

b) all elements of the academic program, program structure, composition of the teaching staff and possible partnerships that will ensure an intellectually stimulating university experience are identified.

APPROVAL PROCESS FOR A MAJOR MODIFICATION PROPOSAL FOR UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMS

Academic unit
    ↓
Faculty
    ↓
Council on Undergraduate Studies
    ↓
Executive Committee of the Senate
    ↓
Senate (if necessary)
    ↓
Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance (via annual report)