

University Policy on Approval and Review of Academic Programs and Courses	Effective date: July 2018 Replaces: New
Application: University-wide Access: Public	Position responsible for facilitating compliance: <i>Academic Senate</i>

## I. POLICY

Niagara University is committed to Catholic and Vincentian values and the delivery of high quality undergraduate, graduate and professional programs that provide students with diverse learning experiences, which are intended to enrich their development as whole persons, as well as the instruction pertinent to their fields of study. In accordance with Niagara University’s continuous improvement model, quality assurance through the assessment of new academic programs and the review of existing academic programs is a priority for the University.

This policy provides an outline for university-wide processes for the proposal and approval of new academic programs as well as the review of existing academic programs. The process by which reviews are conducted are in accordance with best practices as identified in the Ontario Council of Academic Vice-Presidents’ *Quality Assurance Framework (QAF)*, which assigns the responsibility for academic standards, quality assurance and program improvement, to universities themselves.

The purpose of the policy is to ensure consistency so that:

- Proposals for new programs and courses both at the undergraduate and graduate levels undergo a rigorous review to ensure that they are of high academic quality.
- Existing programs and courses are externally reviewed on a cyclical basis to ensure that they:
  - Remain current and relevant to their audience and purpose;
  - Remain of high academic quality;
  - Maintain a level of rigor and relevance appropriate to the level of their degree;
- The review process must include a comparison with programs offered at other institutions nationally and internationally with respect to quality.
- In accordance with the requirements of a university, the quality of scholarship of faculty and how that scholarship relates to teaching is of fundamental importance. And in accordance with its Middle States accreditation, the university recognizes the importance of all factors including: mission and goals, ethics and integrity, design and delivery of the student learning experience, support for the student learning experience, educational effectiveness, planning, resources, and institutional improvement, governance, leadership, and administration, as integral elements of all programs.

## **II. SCOPE OF POLCY**

This policy applies to the approval of all new graduate and undergraduate academic programs and courses offered by the University and the review of all existing academic programs and courses offered by the University.

## **III. PROCEDURES**

- i. The Office of the Provost and Vice-President Academic will be responsible for the Quality Assurance Process under which approval and review of academic programs and courses within Niagara University are conducted.
- ii. The Niagara University Quality Assurance Process will address protocols by which approvals and reviews will be conducted.
- iii. As part of accreditation, it may be necessary for some programs to undergo a process which includes a collegial review by external bodies. In the case where a program is accredited, and where a self-study and an external review are required at intervals no more than eight (8) years, Niagara University will recognize the accreditation as meeting the requirement for review under this policy.
- iv. In the case where a program has already been approved and where it is not accredited by an external body, a formal review will occur every five (5) years. This process will serve to ensure that standards of quality in proposed and existing programs are maintained. As part of this process a self-study and collegial review will be required and incorporated into the process. The Academic Senate Standards, Planning, and Support Committee will be responsible for the establishing the cycle of reviews and for the review itself.
- v. Courses that are required for all undergraduate students are reviewed by the General Education Committee, a sub-committee of the Academic Senate.

### **III. Oversight of the Policy**

The Office of the Provost and Vice-President Academic is responsible for, and maintains the policy and procedures associated with Quality Assurance of Academic Programs at Niagara University.

### **IV. Revision of this Policy**

Any revision of this policy or changes in the Process for Quality Assurance of Academic Programs will be initiated by the Office of the Provost and Academic Vice-President and completed in accordance with Niagara University's Policy on Policy Review.