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Prepared for the Office of the Vice-Provost,
Innovations in Undergraduate Education (VPIUE) at
the University of Toronto.

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Support & Innovation, for the design of this guide.

For more information, see:

[www.teaching.utoronto.ca/teaching-support/
curriculum-renewal](http://www.teaching.utoronto.ca/teaching-support/curriculum-renewal)

If you have questions about curriculum
design and renewal, or would like support
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CURRICULUM RENEWAL

refers to an initiative undertaken by a faculty department or unit that seeks to evaluate, analyze, and/or improve some element of a program's curriculum. There are many entry points into curriculum renewal, for example an external review, enrollment concerns, shift in departmental priorities, or the creation of a new program. The initiative might involve a whole program, a collection of courses (e.g., all second-year courses), or the whole Faculty. A Faculty or unit may be interested in investigating the development of specific student skills (e.g., critical thinking or communication) within a program, and that, too, would be considered curriculum renewal.

PRINCIPLES OF CURRICULUM RENEWAL ¹

The renewal process should include **contributions from and collaboration among instructors**.

This could include:

- Collaborative, faculty-led examination of a program
- Participation on a review team of full-time faculty
- Participation in analyzing information and developing an action plan
- Consultation with instructors, which could include sessionals

The renewal process should be **evidence informed**.

Possible information sources for analysis of the curriculum:

- Course results (student grades, performance on assessments, etc.)
- Curriculum maps
- Enrolment statistics in a program or particular courses
- Student consultations (surveys, focus groups)
- Alumni surveys
- Instructor consultations

Focus on student learning is essential.

Considerations include:

- Development of students' learning experiences throughout a program
- Student-centred teaching and learning activities across the program

- Opportunities for significant learning experiences (e.g., research opportunities, experiential learning opportunities, etc.)

Any renewal should be in the context of an **examination of the program as a whole.**

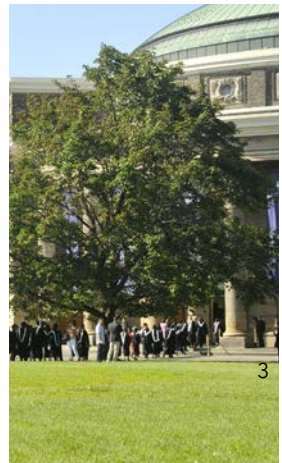
Considerations include:

- Examining courses in the context of how they contribute to program-level student outcomes
- Considering course sequence, scope, teaching and learning activities/assessments, and how these contribute to students' overall learning experience

Continuous improvement is an essential feature of curriculum renewal.

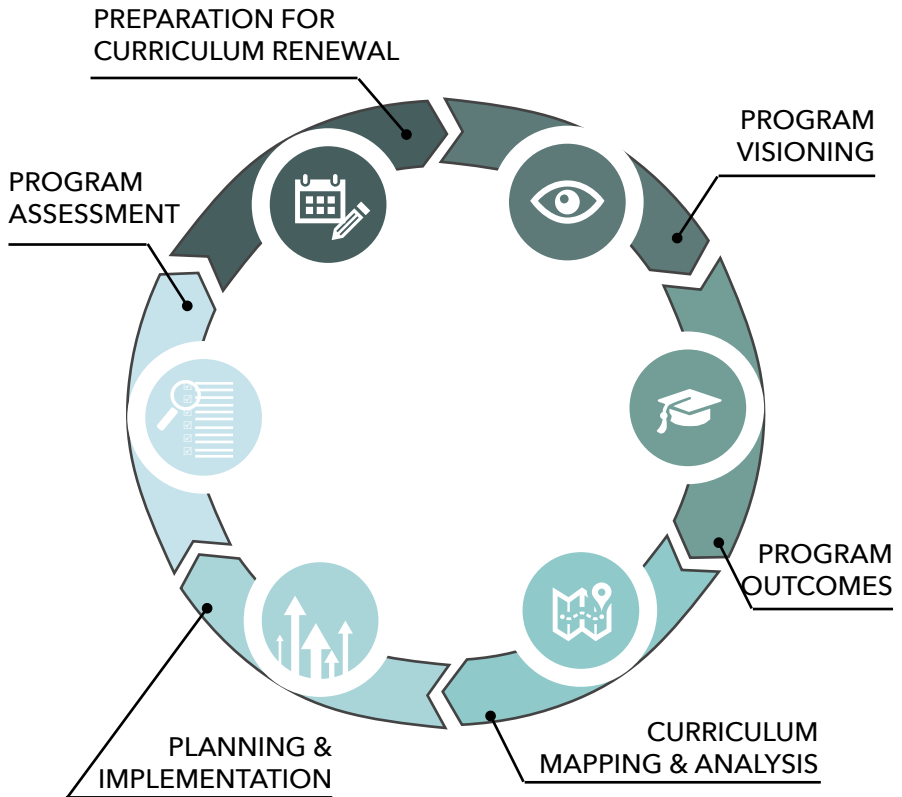
This means that curriculum renewal should take into account:

- How often a curriculum review will be conducted
- Iteration – review as part of normal practice, not a one-off event
- Maintaining momentum and faculty engagement



CURRICULUM RENEWAL

PROCESS





PREPARATION FOR CURRICULUM RENEWAL

*Before a unit begins to make changes to a program's curriculum, it's important to consider who and what to consult to determine what changes will improve the curriculum. **What information do you need to make well-grounded decisions about the curriculum?***

SUGGESTED GUIDING QUESTIONS:

- What goals do we have for curriculum renewal? Why is change needed?
- What are the best ways to engage our faculty, students, and other stakeholders in the renewal process?
- What external data will help us better understand the context of our program? (e.g., review of similar programs, input from professional associations, alumni, etc.)
- What internal data will help us better understand the context of our program? (e.g., enrollment data, grades, course evaluation data, etc.)
- Who should we consult with to compile feedback on the program?





PROGRAM VISIONING

*Considering the vision of the program is helpful in articulating the program's identity, which contributes to the creation of outcomes and establishes the overall focus of the curriculum. **What is the program trying to accomplish?***

SUGGESTED GUIDING QUESTIONS²:

- What are the current trends and potential future developments that might impact the goals of our program?
- Based on these, what is/are the key purpose(s) of our program, including the target student demographic?
- What knowledge and skills do we value most, individually and collectively, in our discipline/subject/profession?
- What are the core educational values in our program?
- What are the features of the learning environment? (e.g., face-to-face or online learning, modules in labs)
- What are the key teaching, learning and assessment approaches that reflect our collective goals?





PROGRAM OUTCOMES

*Program-level outcomes articulate the specific expectations a unit has for a graduating student. Program outcomes translate the goals and purposes of the program into concrete expectations. **What should your students know and be able to do by the time they graduate?***

SUGGESTED GUIDING QUESTIONS:

- Are there existing program outcomes we can use as a starting point? (e.g., for discussion, revision, etc.)
- Considering the overall vision for the program, what intentions or expectations do we have for graduates' abilities?
- What is important for students to leave the program knowing, knowing how to do, and valuing?
- Are there significant habits of mind, ways of knowing, and so forth in the discipline that students should acquire before graduating?





CURRICULUM MAPPING & ANALYSIS

*Curriculum mapping provides an analytic framework to establish how elements of the curriculum relate to the program outcomes. **What is the program curriculum currently doing well? What needs improvement?***

SUGGESTED GUIDING QUESTIONS:

- In which courses is each program-level outcome taught and/or assessed?
- How and where in the program do students develop and/or practice each outcome?
- Which program outcomes are not properly supported (i.e. taught and assessed) in the program?
- Which program outcomes are supported or covered more than necessary?
- What kinds of significant learning experiences³ are offered throughout the program? (e.g., service-learning, research with faculty, internship or field experience, study abroad, etc.)





PLANNING & IMPLEMENTATION

*The analysis stage will have revealed areas for improvement in the curriculum which should result in curricular change. Before planning changes in specific courses, consider an overall pedagogical strategy for the program. **What change is needed to make the program curriculum effective?***

SUGGESTED GUIDING QUESTIONS:

- Based on the results from the mapping process, what courses need to be changed to support the program outcomes?
- Are there overarching pedagogical goals that will inform the changes? (e.g., incorporating more experiential learning opportunities, diversifying students' access to information in large lecture courses, etc.)
- When is the best time to roll out the changes? (Consider what implications the changes will have on work load, TA support, physical space, and other resources.)



PROGRAM ASSESSMENT

Assessment is the process of collecting, analyzing and evaluating information from multiple and diverse sources in order to develop a deep understanding of student learning within a course, series of courses, or program.

How do you know the program curriculum is doing what it is intended to do?

SUGGESTED GUIDING QUESTIONS:

- Which courses should we target to assess students' progress toward the program learning outcomes?
- What assignments do students complete (in various courses) that demonstrate achievement of a program outcome (or progress toward achievement)?
- What student work (e.g., completed and graded assessments) can we collect for evaluation?
- What kinds of evaluation can we do during a course? (e.g., mid-course feedback, course evaluations, peer observation of teaching)
- What can we do during the term or year? (e.g., collect completed assessments, monitor grade patterns)
- What can we do given more time? (e.g., student and alumni feedback, program advisory council)

Endnotes

¹ The principles were developed by The Taylor Institute for Teaching and Learning. More information can be found in Dyjur, P. & Kenny, N. (2015) <http://www.ucalgary.ca/taylorinstitute/teaching-community/node/273>

² *Curriculum Review & Enhancement Guide, v2* (2015-2016). University College Dublin. <http://www.ucd.ie/teaching/> retrieved Oct 21 2016

³ Kuh, G. D. (2008). *High-impact educational practices: What they are, who has access to them, and why they matter*. AAC&U: Washington, DC.



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