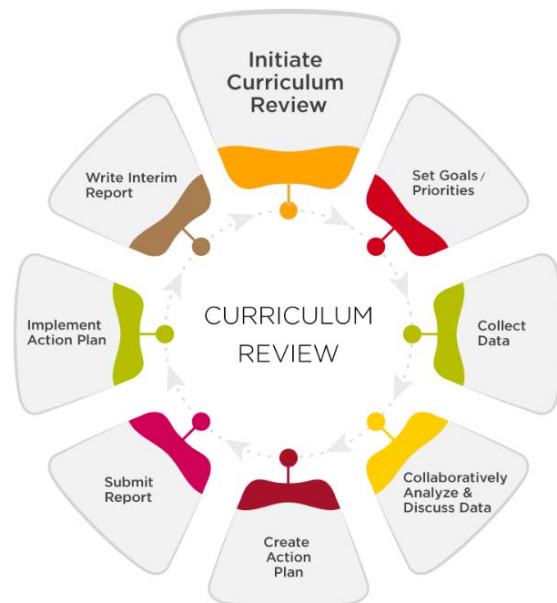


# Introduction to Curriculum Review

Patti Dyjur, PhD  
Kim Grant, PhD  
Frances Kalu, PhD  
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### **Authors**

Patti Dyjur, PhD, Educational Development Consultant  
Taylor Institute for Teaching and Learning, University of Calgary

Kim Grant, PhD, Educational Development Consultant  
Taylor Institute for Teaching and Learning, University of Calgary

Frances Kalu, PhD, Educational Development Consultant  
Taylor Institute for Teaching and Learning, University of Calgary



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Taylor Institute for Teaching and Learning  
434 Collegiate Blvd NW  
University of Calgary, Calgary, AB Canada T2N 1N4

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# Introduction to Curriculum Review

## Understanding Curriculum

Curriculum, with Latin roots – ‘currere’ – means running of the course (Pinar, 2011), a racecourse. In an academic environment, our curriculum – the race course – becomes prescribed and described as the program of study, made up of a series of individual courses. Toombs & Tierney (1993) also describe curriculum as “an intentional design for learning negotiated by faculty in the light of their specialized knowledge and in the context of social expectations and student’s needs” (p. 183).

However, curriculum is not static, but remains fluid and dynamic, ever changing. With learning being interpreted and experienced differently by diverse participants, making it important that we develop an awareness of our curriculum as constructed everyday by participants in our educational program. How are our participants experiencing the ‘race course’? What is their lived experience? Are we meeting identified program learning outcomes? How can we enhance the learning experience of our participants?

## Definition of Curriculum Review (CR)

The curriculum review process provides an evidence-based means to answer questions we may have about our program. At the University of Calgary, curriculum review is defined as:

a critical, evidence-based examination of academic programs for the purpose of optimizing student learning and student experience, led collaboratively by academic staff who teach in the program (University of Calgary, 2019, p. 3).

At the University of Calgary, curriculum reviews are a formative component of the overall quality assurance strategy and focus on understanding students’ learning and experiences within a program. The curriculum review process will generate an action plan for enhancing the program, and an interim report will document the progress toward those plans (University of Calgary, 2019, p. 2).

## Benefits of Curriculum Review

There are many benefits that come from undertaking a curriculum review:

- Enhance student learning and experiences
- Provide an opportunity for critical reflection on the program's curriculum
- Articulate the strengths of a program
- Increase discussion and collaboration among instructors and others who play a role in the program
- Provide opportunities for student voice and input
- Reflect on and strengthening teaching and learning practices
- Provide evidence to guide decision-making within the program
- Understand the relationship among courses within a program
- Identify specific actions to strengthen an academic program

# Guiding Principles of Curriculum Review at the University of Calgary

The curriculum review process at the University of Calgary is guided by the principles that the process will be faculty-led, evidence informed, focus on improving student learning, encompass a program level perspective, and an on-going effort to continuously improve the program.

## **Collaboration among Instructors and Others:**

- Academic staff-led investigation
- Contributions from and collaboration among instructors
- Consider how students can be involved

## **Evidence-informed:**

- Several data sources are used to inform discussions about the curriculum
- Data sources may include a standard report from the Office of Institutional Analysis (OIA), curriculum mapping data, student feedback, instructor feedback, and an environmental scan

## **Focus on Student Learning:**

- Discussions are framed to focus on enhancing the student learning experience

## **Program-level Perspective:**

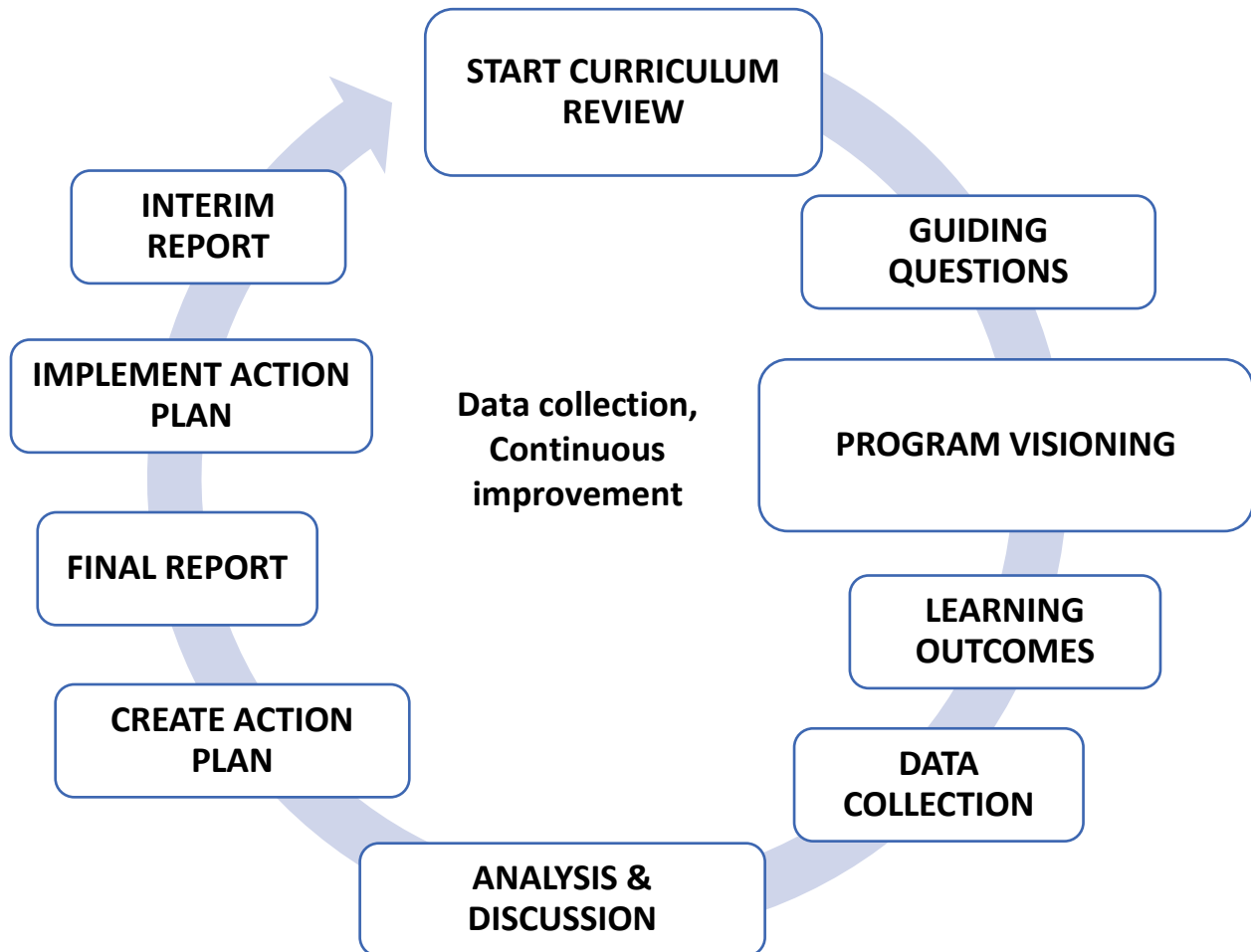
- Curriculum review examines the program as a whole
- Considers the learning experience of students throughout the program

## **Continuous Improvement:**

- Action plan guides the implementation of changes over time
- Iterative process to be conducted every 5-7 years
- Interim reports and updates

## Curriculum Review Process

Curriculum review at the University of Calgary is an iterative process that involves the following components, which are discussed in detail in later sections.



## Suggested Project Timeline

The following outline is taken from the Quality Assurance Handbook, Curriculum Reviews. (University of Calgary, 2019). It is a suggested timeline only, so you will customize it as needed for your review. For example, programs that already have program-level learning outcomes may not need to spend a significant amount of time on that step, while programs that do not have them or that require significant revision may need to spend 3 months or more on writing them.

<b>INITIATE CURRICULUM REVIEW</b>	<b>2-3 months</b> (prior to the academic year)
Unit Lead (or delegate) consults with each eligible Program Lead to develop a rolling schedule that is submitted to the Provost's office.	
Unit or Program Lead appoints Review Lead, delegates CR responsibilities and makes appropriate workload adjustments to reflect CR leadership responsibilities.	
Office of the Provost requests standard data package from the OIA.	
<b>GOAL SETTING</b>	<b>1-2 months</b> (fall)
Program Lead, Review Lead, and Review Team examine and reflect on recommendations from previous reviews, the data report from the OIA, and draft questions to guide the CR process.	
Review Lead & Program Lead meet to discuss goals, processes, and timelines.	
Review Lead (or delegate) creates a CR plan, consulting with Educational Development Consultants at the Taylor Institute for Teaching and Learning as needed.	
Review Lead (or delegate) consults with the appropriate Subject Librarian to review library resources available to the program.	
Program Lead & Review Lead initiates CR by outlining CR as a collaborative process involving all academic staff teaching in the program (i.e. the Review Team), clearly emphasizing the importance of each member's role in the curriculum mapping and review process. Review Team participates in developing CR guiding questions to be approved at dept council (or equivalent).	
<b>DATA COLLECTION</b>	<b>4-5 months</b> (fall-winter)
Review Lead shares CR information with Review Team	
Review Lead organizes orientation to curriculum mapping process for Review Team (this may include contacting an Educational Development Consultant).	
Curriculum mapping is completed by Review Team.	
The Review Lead (or delegate) coordinates the collection of feedback and input from staff, alumni, and current students within the program that addresses appropriate guiding questions.	
<b>DATA ANALYSIS &amp; DISCUSSION</b>	<b>1-2 months</b> (early spring)
The Review Lead collaborative analysis of data generated through curriculum mapping, the OIA standard report, student feedback, and any additional data sources. Key findings and action plan priorities identified.	
<b>CREATE ACTION PLAN</b>	<b>1 month</b> (spring)
The Review Team drafts an action plan and coordinates opportunities for feedback. Action Plan is approved by Review Team.	
<b>CREATE AND SUBMIT CURRICULUM REVIEW REPORT</b>	<b>1-2 months</b> (for June submission)
The Curriculum Review Report is drafted. Consultation on the report is facilitated with academic staff throughout the department/faculty.	
Review of Draft Curriculum Review Report by Review Team.	



Submission of Curriculum Review Report to Program Lead for discussion and approval for final sign off by Unit Lead. In the case of course-based Master's programs, the report also goes to Faculty of Graduate Studies for review and signed approval.	
Submission of Curriculum Review Report to VPTL for review and discussion. VPTL will meet with the Review Lead to discuss challenges and opportunities presented. Meeting should include the Educational Development Consultants from the TI, and may include the Unit Lead.	Mid-late June No later than August
Submission of the Executive Summary and the Action Plan from CR Report to the Teaching and Learning Committee (TLC) of the GFC.	
Review Lead and Program Lead attend GFC TLC for discussion and feedback on CR Action Plan	
<b>IMPLEMENT ACTION PLAN</b>	Throughout the CR cycle
<b>WRITE INTERIM REPORT</b>	At midpoint of CR cycle
Interim Progress report on implementation of action plan submitted VPTL and GFC TLC for discussion.	
Review Lead and Program Lead attend GFC TLC to give an update on CR action plan.	

## Roles and Responsibilities

### Review Lead

- Is an academic staff member
- Oversees and facilitates the review process along with the Curriculum Review Committee
- Coordinates communication and resources to support colleagues in providing information to the process
- Communicates regularly with the Unit Lead regarding progress of the review
- Tracks the progress of the review
- Delegates responsibilities as appropriate
- Coordinates the writing of the Curriculum Review Report

### Review Team

- Includes all full-time faculty teaching in the program
- Sessional instructors are invited, but not required, to participate
- Help develop and approve guiding questions
- Provide feedback on program-level learning outcomes
- Maps the curriculum for courses they teach
- Invited to participate in data analysis and generating the action plan
- Approve CR Action plan through the appropriate form (i.e., department or council meetings)

### **Curriculum Review Committee**

- Works with the Review Lead coordinate and implement the review process
- Drafts guiding questions
- Coordinates curriculum mapping activities
- Coordinates processes to ensure all Review Team members have opportunities to engage and provide feedback

### **Unit Lead**

- Department Head or Associate Dean responsible for the unit
- Approves the CR internal and public reports
- Supports the process as needed

### **Students**

Because students have direct experiences within the program under review, their feedback is essential to the CR process (University of Calgary, 2019).

Students can also be involved in curriculum review in other ways

- Include student representatives on the review team (undergraduate and graduate, different specializations, etc.)
- Hire an RA to do work such as implementing surveys and focus groups
- If you have a student council or committee, get feedback from them at strategic points of the process and input into the action plan

### **Educational Development Consultants**

- From the Taylor Institute for Teaching and Learning
- Provides consultative expertise when needed
- Supports the process with resources and templates
- Provides consultation and facilitative leadership for working sessions based on availability
- Provides guidance and expertise on the use of Curriculum Links program

As consultants or facilitators, we can support your curriculum review in a variety of ways. The chart below provides some ideas for involving us in the process.

<b>Your Role</b>	<b>Consultant's Role</b>
Make decisions, eg. data collection strategy	Provide guidance and strategies
Arrange workshops/working sessions with the Review Team, set agenda	Provide guidance, resources, and, if available, facilitation
Support curriculum mapping	Advise, provide templates, instructions for your customization of Curriculum Links
Write the CR report	Provide feedback
Develop and implement the action plan	Facilitate a session to introduce the process or discuss the review

## Dissemination and Curriculum Reviews

Dissemination of the results of your curriculum review at a conference or as a journal article may be possible.

- Faculty or Department: Check with your Associate Dean of Teaching and Learning, dean and/or department head. You will likely need several levels of approval.
- CFREB: Get ethics approval or a certificate of exemption.

Some of the issues we have encountered:

- Secondary use of data
- Using student data? What sort of data?
- How have people been informed about process and dissemination?
- Are the data publicly available? For example, are course outlines posted online? Expectations of privacy? Impact on professional aspects?
- Data presented in aggregate or individual?
- Use of proprietary data (faculty, department)

### Curriculum Review and Dissemination: Helpful Links

Research Activities Exempt from CFREB Review:

[http://www.ucalgary.ca/research/files/research/150130-cfreb\\_research\\_exempt\\_from\\_review.pdf](http://www.ucalgary.ca/research/files/research/150130-cfreb_research_exempt_from_review.pdf)

Mount Royal University Guidelines for Differentiating between Quality Assurance and Research:

<http://research.mtroyal.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/QAguidelines.pdf>

## References

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