

Process and Plans for Program Improvement

The course and/or curriculum revision process at the University of Fairfax consists of a structured approach grounded on various sources of information. A revision is categorized as Level 1 (minor), Level 2 (moderate), or Level 3 (major).

A Level 1 (*Course Content Change/Update*) revision could include the update of a discussion question to add more clarity or an update to a broken link in the course. These revisions do not require the intervention of a curriculum specialist or instructional designer and it is typically done via a form submitted to the University Dean for review and approval.

A Level 2 (*Course Design/Layout/Structure Change/Update*) revision could consist of the re-organization of a course after a new edition of a textbook has been released. This type of revision does not require the addition of new content but may require the support of a curriculum specialist or instructional designer.

Finally, a Level 3 (*Course/Program Objective/Assessment/Outcome/Name Change/Update*) revision is considered a major overhaul for a course (or program), requiring approval from the University's curriculum committee, Advisory Board, and the Board of Directors. In addition, such a revision type requires extensive resources including but not limited to a subject matter expert (faculty member), instructional designer, editor, and project manager.

Revisions can be proposed using different methods or sources of data:

- Lead/designated faculty members may initiate changes to ensure that all resources are provided in the course (e.g., templates, URLs, videos, articles) and the material aligns to acceptable standards.
- Data from Outcomes Assessment Reports (OAR) analyses may reveal a need for a critical revision in courses and/or program.
- Student end of course (EOC) evaluation indicating a need for course content/assessment change.
- End of course faculty feedback may include recommendations for areas of improvements in design, development, and delivery of course content.
- Review of employer survey results may require a need to add changes.
- Changes/updates may be required due to technological changes related to hardware, software, standards, and industry best practices.

The University of Fairfax is committed to maintaining the currency and quality of its curricula. As a result, it has implemented a structured process that ensures all curricula is up to date and aligned to industry standards consisting of the following steps:

- For Level 1 and Level 2 revisions, the faculty member completes a Course Revision Form.
- The form is reviewed by the Chief Academic Officer and Dean to determine if it requires University Curriculum Committee Approval or not.
- If no approval is necessary, the Dean works with the Learning Management System (LMS) administrator to ensure all changes are implemented following the University's Edit Window Calendar.

For Program Reviews, the University will use the traditional method followed by most universities and endorsed by accreditation standards, which includes completing Academic Program Reviews every five (5) years on all programs offered.

The Academic Dean and Chief Academic Officer will meet with the Professional Advisory Board to discuss current offerings and determine future curriculum strategies that could strengthen the University of Fairfax's academic position in the cybersecurity and business fields. Knowledge from this meeting, combined with market research data and internal data from Outcomes Assessment Reports, End of Course evaluations, and faculty feedback, will be used to generate ideas for future product offerings under the master's and/or doctoral programs. These ideas will be presented to the Board of Directors for discussion and approved funding.

The Development of New Curriculum & Programs (Program-Driven Outcome Assessment Model)

The development of new curriculum and programs at the University of Fairfax is a robust process.

- a. The University conducts a program needs-based assessment where the Chief Academic Officer (CAO) and the Vice President of Operations conduct a SWOT analysis and assess the curriculum and program needs of the University in conjunction with EOCs and the University's long-term strategic vision, mission, and goals, as well as the market trends within the field and higher education. This meeting generates a list of new program suggestions that the CAO takes to the Dean for extensive research.
- b. The University's CAO and Dean conduct a Program Assessment Comparison Benchmarking Matrix where the new program is thoroughly researched and benchmarked against similar institutions; in the case of the University of Fairfax, the benchmarked institutions are for-profit institutions offering online delivery modality. This benchmarking information becomes the cornerstone for the development of the program outcomes, which are aligned with the University's strategic vision, mission, and goals.
- c. Based on the course information generated from the benchmarking assessment; the CAO and Dean, with the assistance of subject matter experts and the curriculum design team, research popular course offerings within a given program. Taking into advisement industry standards, as well as long-term professional/market needs and graduate knowledge and skills expectations to generate a complete curriculum offering, the Academic Program Plan is drafted.

Once an Academic Program Plan is agreed upon, the CAO and Dean call a Faculty Advisory Board meeting consisting of industry experts and practitioners, as well as, external subject matter experts, professional consultants, University faculty and administrators with specific and targeted professional, academic, research, and consulting expertise in the program area content matter. The Faculty Advisory Board meets multiple times until all changes are implemented to the Board's satisfaction and the program receives the Board's full approval. The CAO and Dean are seeking robust input regarding class content, curriculum, prerequisites, textbooks, applicability with industry and academic standards, and the like. The revised Program Plan is then taken to the University of Fairfax Curriculum Committee comprised of University of Fairfax faculty for review.

Again, the Committee meets multiple times until all changes are implemented to the Committee's satisfaction, and the program receives the Committee's full approval. The CAO and Dean are seeking robust input regarding class content, curriculum, prerequisites, textbooks, applicability with industry and academic standards, and the like.

The CAO and Dean, with the assistance of the Director of Education, subject matter experts, and the curriculum design team, use the revised Academic Program Plan (and suggestions from both the Board and the Committee) to build the course content. Each course is built using the University of Fairfax's standardized syllabus template to ensure consistency between classes and among the various University programs.

Textbooks: the textbooks must be no more than three years old (unless the class is a traditional research methodology class) and should contain content-specific content. The textbook should also have an e-book option accessible via Vital Source. While the University of Fairfax prefers to use traditional academic textbooks with Vital Source accessibility, sometimes, the University will choose to adopt a textbook that does not possess these characteristics. Technically, in all programs at all levels, adopted textbook(s) may be non-traditional such as reference books, study guides, tutorials, conference proceedings, technical documents, collection of research papers, software/applications documentation etc.

Once the subject matter experts and the curriculum design team build the classes and upload them to the University's Learning Management Platform (Canvas), the program becomes part of the University's on-going continuous improvement curriculum review plan where all programs are reviewed annually by the CAO and Dean for textbook, content, and assessment relevance against industry changes, higher education trends, the results of the EOCs, as well as, continued alignment with the University's strategic vision, mission, and goals.

The CAO and Dean call annual Faculty Advisory Board and quarterly Curriculum Committee meetings to garner input regarding the program's continued relevance considering current industry standards and update the curriculum as needed. Textbooks are assessed once a year to ensure that the content stays relevant, and that the most recent version of the textbook is being used. Curriculum that is found to be irrelevant or outdated is reassessed and replaced with more relevant/aligned/contemporary content after consultation and approval from both the Advisory Board and the Curriculum Committee.

If curriculum is found to be outdated between scheduled Board and Committee meetings, a special meeting will be scheduled to ensure that any outdated curriculum is immediately addressed. The University of Fairfax utilizes a program-driven learning assessment model that links the program outcomes to the University's strategic vision, mission, and goals. The program outcomes are used as the foundation for creating relevant and aligned curriculum. The goal is to coherently map the curriculum to an achievable set of learning goals (stated as program outcomes) and knowledge, skills, and competencies (stated as course learning outcomes assessments). Content is aligned with the program outcomes via the individual class learning outcomes assessment (LOAs) which are written using Bloom's Taxonomy and are mapped in each syllabus (see *Appendix D*). The class deliverables are then also aligned with the class learning outcomes assessments and are mapped out accordingly in each class.