

Collaborative Specialization Guidelines

1 Definition

The University understands a Collaborative Specialization to be: “an intra-university graduate field of study that provides an additional multidisciplinary experience for students enrolled in and completing the degree requirements of one of a number of approved masters and/or PhD programs” ([Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance](#)).

2 Admissions and Specialization Requirements

Students meet the admission requirements of and register in the participating (or ‘home’) program but complete, in addition to the degree requirements of that program, the additional requirements specified by the Collaborative Specialization. Collaborative Specialization requirements are typically met with elective room in the home program, and include:

Clear and explicit requirements for each Collaborative Specialization:

- At least one core one-semester course that is foundational to the specialization and does not form part of the course offerings of any of the partner programs.
- Seminar or activity that routinely brings students and faculty together.
- Courses in the area of specialization may be considered electives in the participating program.
- **For participating programs requiring a major research paper, essay, thesis or other major activity (e.g., practicum):**
 - ▶ the topic must be in the area of the collaborative specialization and under the supervision of a graduate faculty member associated with the Collaborative Specialization.
- **For coursework-only participating programs:**
 - ▶ at least 30% of the courses taken towards the degree must be in the area of specialization including the core course described above.

3 Transcript Notation

The degree conferred is that of the participating program. The completion of the Collaborative Specialization is indicated by a transcript notation indicating the additional specialization.

4 Administration

4.1 Lead Faculty and Lead Dean

Every Collaborative Specialization has a clearly identified lead Faculty and lead Dean. The lead Dean is responsible for appointing the Program Director and overseeing the quality of the Collaborative Specialization including through conducting the periodic review of the Collaborative Specialization under the University of Toronto Quality Assurance Process (UTQAP).

4.2 Supporting Unit

Supporting units commonly provide space and administrative support to the Collaborative Specialization. Supporting units are normally Departments or Extra Departmental Units (EDU: A's, B's or C's), or affiliated units such as hospitals. Supporting units may or may not house participating programs. The contribution of the supporting units should be set out in the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA).

4.3 Program Director

Every CS has a Director who is responsible for the day-to-day administration of the CS. ***The Collaborative Specialization Director's responsibilities are outlined in Appendix A.***

The CS Director is appointed by and accountable to the Dean of the lead Faculty. The lead Dean consults with the Collaborative Specialization Committee, which is responsible for making a recommendation concerning the selection of a Director to the lead Dean in consultation with the Chairs/Directors of participating graduate units.

A Collaborative Specialization Director must hold Graduate Faculty Membership (GFM) in a participating graduate unit. The lead Dean should consult with the Dean / Chair/ Director of the unit holding the prospective Director's budgetary appointment before making any final appointment. The Director's term is normally for five years and is normally renewable for one additional five year term.

4.4 Collaborative Specialization Committee

Each Collaborative Specialization has a Collaborative Specialization Committee. The Collaborative Specialization Committee normally is composed of a core faculty member from each participating graduate unit and a representative from the supporting unit, if any. In the case of Collaborative Specializations which have a large number of participating programs, an agreed-upon method of rotating program representation is included in the MOA.

The Collaborative Specialization Committee works with the Director to manage the Collaborative Specialization. The Collaborative Specialization Committee's responsibilities should be outlined in the MOA.

5 Proposal for a New Collaborative Specialization

Proposals for a new Collaborative Specialization should be developed in close consultation with the relevant Dean's Office(s), which will work with the Office of the Vice-Provost, Academic Programs (VPAP). The Office of the VPAP has developed a new Collaborative Specialization template that addresses the areas required by the University of Toronto Quality Assurance Process (UTQAP) and the *Quality Assurance Framework for Ontario*. [A template for proposing a new Collaborative Specialization is available on the VPAP website.](#)

Under the UTQAP, a new Collaborative Specialization is brought forward as a major modification. Consultation with the VPAP Office, including an initial meeting to launch the proposal development process, is required prior to governance. The proposal is approved by Faculty/Divisional Council and reported to the Committee on Academic Policy and Programs and Quality Council. It does not require external review or approval from the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development.

6 Making Changes to a Collaborative Specialization

- Academic changes to a Collaborative Specialization are normally [minor modifications](#). The status of a change is decided in consultation with the Office of the VPAP.
 - ▶ For example, adjustments made to CS requirements to ensure that 30% of coursework is in the area of specialization (for coursework-only participating programs) are minor modifications.
- Changes to the programs participating in a Collaborative Specialization are [minor modifications](#) and require Divisional level approval only. There is a dedicated template for bringing forward these changes as they involve signing on to the MOA via an addendum.
- Adding a degree level to a Collaborative Specialization is a major modification. In addition to the major modification proposal, an MOA addendum is required, which can be requested from the VPAP Office.

7 UTQAP Review

Collaborative Specializations fall under the UTQAP and are subject to review a minimum of every eight years. The review process for Collaborative Specializations differs from that for degree programs, reflecting the unique nature of these offerings. Collaborative Specializations do not themselves confer a degree. Instead they provide an additional multidisciplinary experience for students enrolled in and completing the degree requirements of one of a number of specified participating programs.

8 Quality Indicators

The elements that indicate quality in a Collaborative Specialization are:

- The appropriateness of the Learning Outcomes which includes:
 - ▶ an assessment of the Collaborative Specialization requirements; and
 - ▶ confirmation that the Collaborative Specialization requirements can be accommodated within the participating degree program requirements and does not extend the participating degree program length.
- For participating programs requiring a major research paper, essay, thesis, or other major activity (e.g., practicum):
 - ▶ the topic must be in the area of the collaborative specialization and under the supervision of a graduate faculty member associated with the Collaborative Specialization.
- For coursework-only participating programs:
 - ▶ at least 30% of the courses taken towards the degree must be in the area of specialization including the core course described above.
- The continued vitality of the Collaborative Specialization is reflected in the renewal of the Memorandum of Agreement underlying the Collaborative Specialization. It is demonstrated by:
 - ▶ evidence of ongoing need and demand;
 - ▶ the continued engagement of core faculty members; and
 - ▶ the commitment by participating and/or supporting units of sufficient resources.

9 Review Process

The Collaborative Specialization review process incorporates the key stages of development, review, governance and oversight.

9.1 Development

9.1.1 Timing of the Review

Under the UTQAP, all Collaborative Specializations should be reviewed a minimum of every eight years. The schedule of reviews is determined by the Office of the Vice-Provost, Academic Programs (VPAP) in consultation with the Deans of the lead Faculty for each Collaborative Specialization. While a Collaborative Specialization review may be included as part of a review of the academic unit(s) in which the program resides, there may be some benefit in reviewing the Collaborative Specialization separately. The [schedule of reviews is available online](#).

9.1.2 Commissioning the Review

The Dean of the lead Faculty commissions the review. [A commissioning letter template is available online](#).

9.1.3 Terms of Reference

The terms of reference identify the key issues to be addressed in the review. These derive from the indications of quality:

- Clarity and appropriateness of program requirements to support the learning outcomes. This includes:
 - ▶ confirmation that students are required to complete at least one common learning activity;
 - ▶ confirmation that all participating programs can accommodate the requirements of the Collaborative Specialization;
 - ▶ clarity that the learning outcomes of the Collaborative Specialization are in addition to those supported by the student's home program; and
 - ▶ evidence that the students have successfully attained the learning outcomes.
- For participating programs requiring a major research paper, essay, thesis or other major activity (e.g., practicum):
 - ▶ confirmation that the topic is in the area of the Collaborative Specialization and under the supervision of a graduate faculty member associated with the Collaborative Specialization.
- For coursework-only participating programs:
 - ▶ confirmation that at least 30% of the courses taken towards the degree are in the area of specialization including the core course described above.
- Vitality of the Collaborative Specialization; this includes:
 - ▶ evidence of ongoing need and demand for the Collaborative Specialization;
 - ▶ continuing engagement of programs and core faculty members; and
 - ▶ continuation of resource support from participating and/or supporting units and programs.

9.1.4 Self-Study

- The Director of the Collaborative Specialization should prepare a Self-Study addressing the terms of reference and including data concerning enrolment and graduation (commonly supplied through the Office of the VPAP).
- Consultation:
 - ▶ The preparation of the Self-Study should be a consultative process involving the Collaborative Specialization Committee, all core faculty in the Collaborative Specialization, students, and graduates.
 - ▶ The Director is responsible for ensuring that the academic leads of all participating programs and their respective Deans are aware of the review process and have an opportunity to contribute to the Self-Study.
- A final copy of the Self-Study is submitted to the Dean of the lead Faculty.
- A [self-study template is available online](#).

9.2 The Review

- The lead Faculty Dean or designate(s) reviews the Self-Study and prepares a short Summary Assessment assessing the performance of the Collaborative Specialization against the quality indicators above (#8) and making a recommendation as to whether

the Collaborative Specialization should continue. A [Summary Assessment Report template is available online.](#)

9.2.1 Summary Assessment

- The Summary Assessment is shared with the academic leads of all participating programs and their respective Deans; the Dean of SGS; and the Office of the VPAP and their responses solicited. [A template for communicating and sharing the Summary Assessment is available online.](#)
- The lead Faculty Dean or designate finalizes the Summary Assessment and shares it with the Collaborative Specialization Director.

9.2.2 Outcome of the Review

- There is **no follow-up report** from a Collaborative Specialization review.
- The Summary Assessment may result in:
 - ▶ Renewal of the MOA
 - ▶ Changes to the Collaborative Specialization and renewal of the MOA such as:
 - Recommendations relating to the elements that determine quality. These could include recommendations about:
 - Learning Outcomes:
 - ▷ Changes to the learning outcomes
 - ▷ Adjustments to program requirements
 - Vitality:
 - ▷ Measures to assess or improve need and demand
 - ▷ Involvement of additional faculty
 - ▷ Changes to participating programs
 - ▷ Clarifying or enhancing levels of support/resources
 - Note: Adjustments made to CS requirements to ensure that 30% of course work is in the area of specialization (for course-work only participating programs) are minor modifications.
 - Occasionally, admissions to a Collaborative Specialization may be suspended while it is reviewed and changes are made. Presuming the suspension of admissions is short-lived, admissions may be re-opened administratively.
- A decision to close the Collaborative Specialization. Reasons for closure may include, but are not limited to:
 - ▶ low enrolment
 - ▶ disciplinary changes
 - ▶ development of different program options.

9.2.3 Renewal of MOA

- The lead Faculty Dean works with the Collaborative Specialization Director and the academic leads of any participating programs/units to renew the MOA.
- Alternatively, admissions to the Collaborative Specialization are ceased and a proposal is drafted to close the Collaborative Specialization. Please consult with VPAP Office on any proposals for closure.

- The [MOA template is available online](#).

9.2.4 Governance

- The Summary Assessment is submitted to the Office of the VPAP with the renewed MOA or notice that admissions to the Collaborative Specialization have been ceased and that a proposal to close the Collaborative Specialization is being prepared.
- The VPAP will prepare a [Final Assessment Report & Implementation Plan \(FAR/IP\)](#) consolidating all Collaborative Specialization Reviews undertaken during that academic year and summarizing their outcome. The FAR/IP of Collaborative Specialization reviews is taken forward for information as an annual report to the Committee on Academic Policy and Programs (AP&P).

9.3 UTQAP Oversight

- The annual FAR/IP consolidating all Collaborative Specialization Reviews undertaken during the academic year is also reported to the Quality Council.
- The FAR/IP consolidating all Collaborative Specialization Reviews is posted on the VPAP website.

Appendix A

Administration of a Collaborative Specialization

The Collaborative Specialization Director is responsible for overseeing all aspects of a Collaborative Specialization. Many of these responsibilities may be shared or delegated to the Collaborative Specialization Committee:

Administration and Management

1. Chairs the Collaborative Specialization Committee, and ensures that the Collaborative Specialization Committee has appropriate representation from the participating programs. (One option where there are many participating programs may be to have a rotating sub-set of participating unit faculty members).
2. Administers the budget and any resources.
3. Ensures that all materials (calendar, website etc.) are current.
4. Maintains a list of faculty associated with the Collaborative Specialization and any other records.
5. Consults with academic lead(s)/chair(s) of participating units and lead Faculty Dean(s) or delegate(s) on matters relating to the Collaborative Specialization.

Admissions and Academic Oversight

1. Reviews and approves admissions to the Collaborative Specialization.
2. Provides guidance to students in managing Collaborative Specialization requirements and ensures appropriate graduate supervision.

3. Ensures that 30% of coursework is in the area of specialization (for coursework-only participating programs) and is clearly outlined in the *SGS Calendar*.
4. Confirms completion of program requirements for each student enrolled in the Collaborative Specialization, works with SGS to provide each student with a completion letter, and to ensure the Collaborative Specialization notation is recorded on the graduate transcript.

Governance

1. Ensures that the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) is revised appropriately including the addition or deletion of participating programs.
2. Works with the lead Faculty to change admissions and program requirements through Faculty governance as necessary (including, for example, changes related to the new 30% requirement for coursework only participating programs).

Collaborative Specialization Requirements and UTQAP

1. Prepares any materials required as part of the UTQAP review process.
2. Works collaboratively with the lead Faculty Dean and participating programs on the renewal of the MOA following the outcome of the review process.