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Program Development in the Faculty of Science: Examining Procedures, Challenges, and Opportunities

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The purpose of this project was to examine curriculum development within a Faculty of Science at a mid-sized university in Ontario, Canada. In particular, we sought to understand departmental procedures and policies for curriculum development and revision as well as curricular collaboration across the Faculty of Science. Ten faculty members were interviewed, and data transcripts were subjected to a content analysis. Key findings suggest there is consistency in terms of the procedures and polices departments follow with respect to their curriculum development efforts. These align with institutional workflow requirements. Participants reported that their departments were engaging in various aspects of curriculum development from creating new courses, certificates, degree programs, college transfer pathways as well engaging in curriculum mapping and learning outcome development. Strengths of departmental curriculum development efforts included the use of a faculty-level curriculum development committee, consultations with students, and strong leadership among those who chair curriculum-related committees. Key challenges included the political and confrontational nature of curriculum development, limited time and resources devoted to curriculum development, and the perceptions of curriculum development as bureaucratic work.