



**FOR
RECOMMENDATION**

PUBLIC

OPEN SESSION

TO: Agenda Committee

SPONSOR: Sioban Nelson, Vice-Provost, Academic Programs

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PRESENTER: Professor Liz Smyth, Chair, Committee on Academic Policy and

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DATE: April 1 for April 14, 2015

AGENDA ITEM: 2(a)

ITEM IDENTIFICATION:

Semi-Annual Report on the Reviews of Academic Units and Programs,
October 2014 – March 2015

JURISDICTIONAL INFORMATION:

“The Committee...has general responsibility...for monitoring, the quality of education and the research activities of the University. In fulfilling this responsibility, the Committee works to ensure the excellent quality of academic programs by...monitoring reviews of existing programs....The Committee receives annual reports or such more frequent regular reports as it may determine, on matters within its purview, including reports on the ...[r]eviews of academic units and programs.” (*Committee on Academic Policy and Programs (AP&P) Terms of Reference, Sections 3, 4.9*)

Within the *Accountability Framework for Cyclical Review of Academic Programs and Units*, the role of the AP&P is to undertake “a comprehensive overview of review results and administrative responses.” The AP&P “receive[s] semi-annual program review reports including summaries of all reviews, identifying key issues and administrative responses,” which are discussed at a “dedicated program review meeting with relevant academic leadership.” (*Policy for Approval and Review of Academic Programs and Units*). The AP&P’s role is to ensure that the reviews are conducted in line with the University’s policy and guidelines; to ensure that the Office of the Vice-President and Provost has managed the review process appropriately; to ensure that all issues relative to the quality of academic programs have been addressed or that there is a plan to address them; and to make recommendations concerning the need for a follow up report.

The compendium of review summaries is forwarded, together with the record of the Committee's discussion, to the Agenda Committee of the Academic Board, which determines whether there are any issues warranting discussion at the Board level. The same documentation is sent to the Executive Committee and the Governing Council for information.

GOVERNANCE PATH:

1. Committee on Academic Policy and Programs [for information] (March 31, 2015)
2. **Agenda Committee [for information] (April 14, 2015)**
3. Academic Board [for information] (April 23, 2015)
4. Executive Committee [for information] (May 11, 2015)
5. Governing Council [for information] (May 20, 2015)

PREVIOUS ACTION TAKEN:

Governing Council approved the *Policy for Approval and Review of Academic Programs and Units* in 2010. The *Policy* outlines University-wide principles for the approval of proposed new academic programs and review of existing programs and units. Its purpose is to align the University's quality assurance processes with the Province's Quality Assurance Framework through establishing the authority of the University of Toronto's Quality Assurance Process (UTQAP).

The Semi-Annual Report on the Reviews of Academic Units and Programs (April – September, 2014) was previously submitted to the Committee on Academic Policy and Programs on October 28, 2014.

HIGHLIGHTS:

External reviews of academic programs and units are important mechanisms of accountability for the University and a vital part of the academic planning process. Academic reviews are critical to ensuring the quality of our programs through vigorous and consistent processes that assess the quality of new and existing programs and units against our international peers.

Summaries of the external review reports and the complete decanal responses of three external reviews of units and/or academic programs are being submitted to the AP&P for information and discussion. Of these, one was commissioned by the Vice-President and Provost and two were commissioned by the Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Science. The signed administrative responses from each Dean highlight action plans in response to reviewer recommendations.

Overall, the themes raised in these reviews echoed those in previous compendia: the excellent quality of our programs, the talent and high calibre of our students, the impressive body of scholarship produced by our faculty, and the strong morale within the programs. In addition, this set of reviews highlighted the community engagement and public outreach undertaken by faculty and staff.

As always, the reviews noted areas for development such as the importance of considering future program development when undertaking faculty complement planning and the allocation of resources in support of programs. The reviews made important recommendations on how these matters could be improved. The administrative responses from the Deans address these issues and others.

Additional reviews of programs are conducted by organizations external to the University. Reviews of academic programs by external bodies form part of collegial self-regulatory systems to ensure that mutually agreed-upon threshold standards of quality are maintained in new and existing programs. A summary listing of these reviews is presented in the Appendix.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

Not applicable.

RECOMMENDATION:

This item is for information and feedback.

DOCUMENTATION PROVIDED:

Compendium of Reviews of Academic Programs and Units, October 2014 – March 2015