



TO: Committee on Academic Policy and Programs

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AGENDA ITEM: 11

ITEM IDENTIFICATION: Undergraduate Program Review Audit Committee (UPRAC) - Report of the Auditors on the 2008 U of T Undergraduate Program Review

JURISDICTIONAL INFORMATION:

The Committee has monitorial responsibility for annual reports on reviews of academic programs and units.

PREVIOUS ACTION TAKEN:

The Council of Ontario Universities (COU) has mandated that each Ontario university undertake periodic appraisals of its undergraduate programs. These undergraduate program reviews are required to follow guidelines established by the Ontario Council of Academic Vice-Presidents (OCAV). Each university is subject to a periodic audit of its processes by the provincial Undergraduate Program Review and Audit Committee (UPRAC) to ensure compliance with its guidelines for development of new undergraduate programs and review of existing programs.¹ The UPRAC audit report is distributed to other universities and to the ministry, providing accountability at a high level.

The first University of Toronto UPRAC Report was presented to the Committee on Academic Policy and Program on December 8, 2004.² Following receipt of the report and through consultations with academic divisions, the University *Policy for Assessment and Review of Academic Units and Programs* was approved by Governing Council on February 10, 2005. At the same time, the Office of the Vice-President and Provost developed procedural Guidelines for the assessment of proposed new programs and units and the review of existing programs and units at the University.

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¹ The process was designed to satisfy the needs for accountability identified in the 1993 Task Force on University Accountability (Broadhurst Report), and by the Ontario Council on University Affairs in its Advisory Memorandum OCUA 93-VI Academic Audit Review, while preserving the principles of university self-regulation and autonomy.

² Available online at <http://www.provost.utoronto.ca/policy/academic/uprac.htm>

HIGHLIGHTS:

In 2008, UPRAC audited the University of Toronto's undergraduate program approval and review system by selecting a sample consisting of a new program submission and four reviews of existing programs. The audited samples were compared to processes outlined in the University's own *Policy for Assessment and Review of Academic Programs and Units* and the associated Provostial Guidelines for the assessment and review of academic programs. The Audit Committee presented its Report to the University in June 2009 (see attached).

The *UPRAC Audit Guidelines* apply two tests: the conformity of institutional policy, procedures, and practices (i.e., the review process as a whole) to the UPR process, and the conformity of institutional procedures and practices to institutional policy. The auditors concluded that the University had made "major progress in developing its policy and procedures more in line with *UPRAC Guidelines*" since its first audit. The Auditors found that the new program approval process was "commendable". However, the Auditors found that the undergraduate program review process was lacking in several respects related to implementation of the guidelines by academic divisions; ensuring that unit reviews commission a thorough review of its undergraduate programs; developing the process for specifying and monitoring the actions to be taken following review recommendations. Since the time of the auditors' visit in early 2008, degree level expectations have been incorporated into our Guidelines for review of programs and units.

A number of recommendations and suggestions for further improving the conduct of reviews are included in the report. In framing their report and presenting their findings, the Auditors distinguish between recommendations and suggestions. Instances where the Auditors considered the policies and procedures not to be in conformity with the UPR Process are cast as recommendations. Suggestions are offered in cases where, although the institution's measures are in conformity with the Process, those measures could, in the opinion of the Auditors, be improved.

The UPRAC recommendations and suggestions are constructive and particularly helpful as they came at a time when the University and other Ontario institutions have begun the process of aligning the quality assurance processes for undergraduate and graduate programs. A new quality assurance body, the Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance (the Quality Council) has been established under the direction of OCAV. The mandate of the Quality Council is to ensure that Ontario continues to have a rigorous quality assurance framework acknowledging that academic standards, quality assurance and program improvement are, in the first instance, the responsibility of universities themselves. The Quality Assurance Task Force, a sub-committee of OCAV is currently drawing up a Quality Assurance Framework. According to the Task Force, universities will use their processes to ensure the academic standards of their undergraduate and graduate programs, and to assure their ongoing improvement.

The University takes the recommendations of the Audit Committee seriously. One of the main tasks for the Office of the Vice-President and Provost in the coming year will be to address the recommendations of the audit while at the same time endeavoring to align our processes with the emerging Quality Assurance Framework. The creation of the position of Vice-Provost, Academic Programs in the spring of 2009 reflects the University's commitment to ensuring high-level, ongoing engagement of the Vice-President and Provost's office in areas of program quality assurance. We will be working with deans and principals over the course of the year to revise our policy and guidelines in line with our institutional structure and the Quality Assurance Framework.

FINANCIAL AND/OR PLANNING IMPLICATIONS:

There are no new/additional financial resources required to receive the UPRAC audit report and implement the recommendations.

RECOMMENDATION:

For Information.