



TO: Members of the Academic Board

SPONSOR: Richard Nunn, Chair, Governing Council

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DATE: September 21, 2011 for October 6, 2011

AGENDA ITEM: 11

TITLE OF ITEM OF BUSINESS: Academic Board Terms of Reference: Revisions Arising from the Implementation Committee for the Task Force on Governance

ACTION:

- For Information

JURISDICTIONAL INFORMATION:

- Section 2(14) (e) of the *University of Toronto Act* empowers the Governing Council to “appoint committees and delegate thereto power and authority to act for the Governing Council with respect to matters, provided that where power and authority to act for the Governing Council are delegated, a majority of the members of the committee shall be members of the Governing Council.” Section 2(14)(na) permits delegation of authority to act for the Governing Council to committees that lack a majority of members from the Governing Council in certain purely academic areas: examinations, student academic awards, admission standards, curriculum and academic requirements.
- The Governing Council has established Boards and Committees and assigned responsibilities among those bodies through their terms of reference. The Governing Council has periodically approved changes in Board and Committee terms of reference to respond to changing circumstances and expectations of governance.

PREVIOUS ACTION TAKEN:

On October 28, 2010, the Governing Council approved in principle the [*Report of the Task Force on Governance*](#) and the 32 recommendations outlined in the *Report*. The Governing Council also established an Implementation Committee led by then Vice-Chair Richard Nunn. The mandate of the Implementation Committee was to oversee and coordinate implementation of the Task Force’s recommendations, ensuring appropriate participation among relevant bodies of governance, administrative offices and the Secretariat.

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The Task Force recommended that, as a guiding principle, transactional matters be delegated to either the lowest appropriate level within governance, or where appropriate, to the administration with reporting back of decisions to a suitable level of governance. As expected, this principle has been key to the Implementation Committee's work on revisions to Board and Committee Terms of Reference. Recommendations 15, 19 and 20 specifically provide for the re-distribution of and greater delegation of responsibility; for the clarification and reduction of intersection with other Boards' responsibilities; and the re-assignment of selected responsibilities to the Academic Board, Business Board, Executive Committee and the proposed Campus Affairs Committees. Finally, recommendation 30 called for a reduction or elimination of routine or transactional items to enhance efficiency through consent agendas.

The Task Force Report described the use of consent agendas as "delegation with continued oversight" – that is, the consideration of specific classes of more routine approval items to facilitate more careful consideration of major items, a common practice for governing boards.

In May 2011, the Governing Council approved the re-alignment of responsibilities among the Committee on Academic Policy and Programs, the Planning and Budget Committee, the Academic Board and the divisional councils with respect to academic program review and approval. These revisions were derived from two parallel processes – (1) that of the University's Quality Assurance Process arising from the Council of Ontario Universities, and (2) the recommendations of the Task Force Report intended to vest academic decision-making and oversight with the institution's expert academic bodies.

Further changes to the Academic Board's Terms of Reference were approved by the Governing Council at its meeting of June 23, 2011. The Connaught Committee was eliminated as a Standing Committee of the Board. To replace its functions, the Vice-President, Research established a committee to oversee the Connaught Fund; information on the new committee and the status of the fund are readily accessible on the Vice-President's website, ensuring the transparency and accountability intended by the original Standing Committee.

HIGHLIGHTS:

The major additional amendments are as follows. (Additional amendments represent simple housekeeping.)

- **Item 5 – Areas of Responsibility.**

Academic Matters - The final decision-making authority of the Board in purely academic matters is now stressed in the description of the Board's overall function and is referenced in Section 5.3.3, Matters Requiring Academic Board Approval. This authority allows the Board to grant final approval for matters pertaining to examinations, student academic awards, admission standards, curriculum and academic requirements, without requiring subsequent confirmation of approvals by the Executive Committee of the Governing Council.

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Academic Plans - Consistent with one of the Task Force on Governance's recommendation, divisional academic plans would be developed according to guidelines prepared by the Provost, approved by the Academic Board, and confirmed by the Executive Committee. Divisional councils would consider their respective academic plans, prior to approval by the Provost. The divisional academic plans would then be forwarded to the Board for information and feedback.

- **Item 6 – Procedures.** Two procedural options are being added to the terms of reference of all Boards and Committees. The Chair could include certain more routine items on the agenda of any meeting as “consent” items. Such items would normally be dealt with without presentation or discussion. Rather members would be invited to put any questions to the sponsor by means of a call or an electronic message before the meeting. Any member with concerns could request that the item be dealt with in the usual way. The process would enable the Board to focus its attention on the more substantial items on the agenda.

Similarly, certain reports for information could be published electronically, members notified of the publication, and questions again put to the sponsor between meetings. Again, with sufficient notice, any member with a concern could request that the item be placed on the agenda of the next Board meeting. Again, the process would enable the Board to focus its attention on the more substantial items on the agenda. In addition, publication of items between meetings would keep members abreast of developments in a timely manner.

BUDGETARY/FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

N/A

ACTION:

- For Information only.