



TO: Committee on Academic Policy and Programs

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AGENDA ITEM: 8

ITEM IDENTIFICATION:

Reviews of Academic Units and Programs 2006-07– Annual Report Part II: Divisional Reviews

JURISDICTIONAL INFORMATION:

The Committee is the point of entry into governance for reports on the results of academic reviews of programs and units commissioned by academic administrators. The role of the Committee is to ensure that the reviews are done, that an appropriate process is being used, that adequate documentation is provided and consultations are undertaken, and that issues identified in the review are addressed by the administration.

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

PREVIOUS ACTION

Governing Council approved the *Policy for Assessment and Review of Academic Programs* in 2005¹. The *Policy* governs the overall framework for the internal assessment of proposed new programs and units and the review of existing programs and units at the University of Toronto and defines the overarching principles, scope, procedures and accountability within this framework. The *Policy* specifies two administrative guidelines that outline the procedures for the actual assessment and review of programs and units.

HIGHLIGHTS:

Reviews of academic programs and units are important mechanisms of accountability for the University. The academic reviews are critical in ensuring the quality of our programs through vigorous and consistent processes. Academic leaders commission regular reviews of academic divisions when principals, deans or chairs reach the end of their terms. The reviews also inform the search for a new dean or chair and are an integral part of the academic planning process.

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¹ <http://www.provost.utoronto.ca/policy/review.htm>

Twenty-one units and/or programs were commissioned by University Divisions in the 2006-07 academic year. The overall assessments of these units and their academic programs were positive. Common themes continue to be the strength of our faculty excellence and the emphasis on enhancement of the student experience. Several reviews highlight the need for academic planning and curriculum review within a unit.

The Faculty of Arts and Science undertook a review of its First Year Seminars, Research Opportunities Program, and Independent Experiential Study Programs. First Year Seminars are undergraduate full-credit or half-credit courses with a focus on discussion of issues, questions and controversies surrounding a particular discipline (or several disciplines) in a small-group setting that encourages the development of critical thinking, writing skills, oral presentation and research methods. The Research Opportunities Programs and Independent Experiential Study Programs are higher year courses that provide students the opportunity to work on original research projects with professors.

The 2006-07 Summary includes a separate review for the Celtic Studies Program, an interdisciplinary undergraduate program offered by Arts and Science departments and St. Michael's College. The program was reviewed as part of the review of the Department of Linguistics.

All three of the reviews conducted by the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) are the first external reviews of the departments since the merger of OISE and the Faculty of Education at the University of Toronto in 1996. There was an external review of Faculty as a whole in 2003. The Bachelor of Education/Diploma in Technological Education (B.Ed./Dip.Tech.Ed.), the Master of Teaching (MT), and the Master of Arts in Child Study and Education (M.A./CSE) were reviewed and received accreditation by the Ontario College of Teachers in 2004-05.

The Faculty of Medicine reviews highlight the need for ongoing undergraduate curriculum evaluation and renewal both within the Faculty and in interdisciplinary programs offered with the Faculty of Arts and Science. The Faculty's undergraduate medical curriculum has undergone many innovative developments over the decade and provides a standard of excellence in medical education. Curriculum renewal and benchmarking of programs are ongoing and are undertaken as part of the Faculty's broader strategic plan.

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 Appendix 1.

These reports compliment the University's Performance Indicators and other institution-wide quantitative measures of our performance towards key goals and compares that performance to its peers. The full review reports are available in the Office of the Governing Council should members wish to consult them.

FINANCIAL AND/OR PLANNING IMPLICATIONS: n/a

RECOMMENDATION:

For Information.