



TO: Committee on Academic Policy and Programs

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AGENDA ITEM: 1

ITEM OF BUSINESS:

Semi-Annual Report on the Reviews of Academic Units and Programs

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.” (*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 Committee is to undertake “a comprehensive overview of review results and administrative responses.” The Committee “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 Committee’s role is to ensure that the reviews are conducted in line with the University’s policy and guidelines; to ensure that the Provost’s Office 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 of the Governing Council for information. (*Policy*)

PREVIOUS ACTION:

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 goal 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).

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.

Ten external reviews of units and/or programs, all commissioned by Deans, were received by the Office of the Vice-President and Provost since the last report to AP&P. The submission to AP&P includes the signed administrative responses from each Dean, which highlight action plans in response to reviewer recommendations.

The overall assessments of the academic programs reviewed were positive. Common themes continue to be the excellence of our faculty and students, the strength of our research reputation, and the innovativeness and quality of programs. In addition, this set of reviews highlighted the uniquely rich array of cognate and affiliated units and faculty, library resources, and external partners that contribute to the excellence of these programs.

It should be noted that several reviews raised concerns about the recruitment and funding of international students; the professionalization of graduate students, including pedagogical training; and foreign language training. 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 AND/OR PLANNING IMPLICATIONS: n/a

RECOMMENDATION: For Information.