



TO: Committee on Academic Policy and Programs

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AGENDA ITEM: 5

ITEM IDENTIFICATION:

Report on the Reviews of Academic Units and Programs January to June 2010

JURISDICTIONAL INFORMATION:

The Committee is the point of entry into governance for reports, summaries and administrative responses on the results of academic reviews of programs and units commissioned by academic administrators.¹ The role of the Committee is to ensure that the reviews are done as per University policy and guidelines, 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 2005². 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* was revised as the *Policy for Approval and Review of Academic Programs and Units* and approved by Governing Council in 2010. The revisions reflect recommendations resulting from the recently approved provincial Quality Assurance Framework and the recommendations of the University's 2008 Undergraduate Program Review Audit. The *Policy* specifies that the University of Toronto Quality Assurance Process (UTQAP) outline the protocols for the approval and review of programs and units.

¹ The full review reports are available to members in the Office of the Governing Council.

² <http://www.provost.utoronto.ca/policy/review.htm>

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. The academic reviews are critical to ensuring the quality of our programs through vigorous and consistent processes. The 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.

Twelve external reviews of units and/or programs were received by the Office of the Vice-President and Provost from January to June 2010: One commissioned by the Provost and eleven commissioned by Deans. As part of our efforts to improve the accountability of the process, this year we include the signed administrative responses from the Deans for departmental reviews. In addition, rather than presenting reports to the Committee on a slip-year basis, this compendium includes reports received to the end of June 2010. As such, administrative responses for these reports highlight action plans and consultations to be taken following report recommendations.

The overall assessments of the academic programs reviewed were positive. Common themes continue to be the strength of our faculty excellence and the emphasis on enhancement of the student experience.

It should be noted, however, that the reviews of the University of Toronto Mississauga Forensic Science Program and the University of Toronto Scarborough Department of Physical and Environmental Sciences, raised serious concerns related to the curricula, faculty complement, space and facilities, and the structures of these units. The administrators of these units have included plans for addressing the recommendations in the review reports.

In the case of the University of Toronto Mississauga, the reviews conducted are the first external reviews of these departments since their establishment in 2003. The review reports reflect the rapid undergraduate expansion that the campus has seen since the establishment of the departments. In addition, the review of the Centre for the Environment is the first since its establishment in 2005, and the review of the Department of Physical and Environmental Sciences at the University of Toronto Scarborough is the first since its establishment in 2002.

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.