



TO: Committee on Academic Policy and Programs

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AGENDA ITEM: 4(a)

ITEM IDENTIFICATION:
University of Toronto Quality Assurance Process

JURISDICTIONAL INFORMATION:

The Committee recommends to Academic Board for approval amendments to divisional academic policies or practices, or amendments to University-wide policy in academic matters.

PREVIOUS ACTION TAKEN:

Governing Council approved the *Policy for Assessment and Review of Academic Programs and Units* on February 21, 2005. 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: The *Guidelines for Assessment of Divisional Submissions* and the *Guidelines for Review of Academic Programs and Units*

HIGHLIGHTS:

In 2006–07, the Council of Ontario Universities commissioned a comprehensive analysis of the long-established Ontario Council of Graduate Studies (OCGS) procedures. The recommendations in the report included aligning the quality assurance processes for undergraduate and graduate programs, and establishing a new quality assurance body under the direction of the Ontario Council of Academic Vice-Presidents (OCAV). This new body is the Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance (the Quality Council), established in 2009.

OCAV charged a Quality Assurance Implementation Task Force to develop new quality assurance processes for undergraduate and graduate programs offered by Ontario's publicly assisted universities. The resulting Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) is based on two principles:

- i) That ongoing or periodic reviews of undergraduate and graduate programs will take place within the universities using a cyclical audit system; and

- ii) That new undergraduate and graduate program approvals will have external elements and will be vetted through the Quality Council.

As part of this OCAV process, the University of Toronto is responsible for ensuring the quality of all of its programs of study, including modes of delivering programs and those academic and student services that affect the quality of the respective programs under review, whether or not the program is eligible for government funding. Along with other Ontario institutions, we must develop our own policy and University of Toronto Quality Assurance Process (UTQAP) to be submitted to the Quality Council for ratification. The Council will test our policy and UTQAP for consistency with the substance and principles set out in the respective Quality Council protocols. Once approved, the University will be responsible for commissioning external reviews for appraisal of new program proposals and for cyclical program reviews.

Concurrent with the developments related to the Quality Council, the University of Toronto underwent the second audit of its undergraduate program reviews.¹ In 2008, UPRAC audited our 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. A number of recommendations and suggestions for further improving the conduct of reviews were included in the report.

The University takes the recommendations of the Audit Committee and the Quality Assurance Framework seriously. The creation of the position of Vice-Provost, Academic Programs in the spring of 2009 reflected the University's commitment to ensuring high-level, ongoing engagement of the Vice-President and Provost's office in areas of program quality assurance. In order to consider the development of our revised policy and UTQAP development, the Vice-Provost Academic Programs met with each Faculty Dean individually to discuss the UPRAC report and Quality Assurance Framework and solicit advice on how to improve our processes. A Working Group on Quality Assurance was struck with the aim of providing input to the development of the UTQAP. The Working Group is co-chaired by the Vice-Provost, Academic Programs and the Vice-Provost, Graduate Education and consists of the deans of multi-departmental faculties and a representative from the single departmental faculties. Based on the requirements of the OCAV Quality Assurance Framework, responses to recommendations of the UPRAC audit, and consultations to date, the draft revised Policy for the approval and review of programs and draft UTQAP are included in Appendices 1 and 2 respectively.

The UTQAP includes the protocols for new undergraduate and graduate program approvals, major modifications to programs, and for the cyclical program review. The text and outline of the UTQAP is based on the QAF (Appendix 3). Consultations within the University to date have indicated the following principles that have been incorporated into the Policy and UTQAP:

¹ Each university has been 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. The first UofT UPRAC Report was presented to the Committee on Academic Policy and Program on December 8, 2004, the second on September 14, 2009.

- Both administrative and governance approval of new programs are required
- There should be consistency between approval and review processes for graduate and undergraduate programs
- Approval processes should be efficient
- Consultation and communication are important
- Evaluation criteria should include a standardized university-wide subset of data
- Definitions and processes will need to be monitored and revised as necessary

We are bringing forward the draft documents for discussion and consultation with the Committee on Academic Policy and Programs as it is the key entry point to governance for matters related to academic program approval and reviews.

Based on the discussion with AP&P, the aim is to continue consultations with academic divisions, Governing Council, and the Quality Council Secretariat in order to bring forward a revised *Policy for Approval and Review of Academic Programs* for approval by university governance. The associated UTQAP will be brought forward for information at the same time. Pending approval of the Policy, the UTQAP will be submitted along with the Policy to the Quality Council for ratification. In co-ordination with the academic divisions, we are in the process of developing the UTQAP Manuals that will include best practices and templates for program approval and review.

FINANCIAL AND/OR PLANNING IMPLICATIONS:

There are no new/additional financial resources required to implement the Policy.

The implementation of the Policy and UTQAP will formalize university-wide principles for the approval and review of academic programs and units within a standard framework and also allow the University to meet the OCAV target date by which institutions are expected to have amended or approved policies and processes so that they conform to the Quality Assurance Framework dated February 2010.

The timeframe for the implementation of the Quality Assurance Framework has been confirmed by OCAV as have transitional arrangements for graduate and undergraduate new program proposals, and periodic reviews at both levels. The key points are as follows:

- July 1, 2010: First deadline for Institutional Quality Assurance Processes to be submitted for ratification to the Quality Council. All Institutional Quality Assurance Processes to be ratified by Quality Council by December 31, 2010.
- Undergraduate program approvals will require Quality Council approval as per University's IQAP after August 31, 2011
- Graduate programs: OCGS appraisals of proposed new graduate program proposals will continue for programs submitted to OCGS to December 31, 2010. OCGS will not initiate any new periodic reviews once it has completed its 2009-10 appraisals.

Based on the consultation process within the University and the Quality Assurance Framework, the UTQAP will outline administrative and governance procedures for approval of academic

programs that may differ from current practices. As part of the University of Toronto *Towards 2030* process, the University Governance Task Force² has been reviewing governance processes at the University with the aim of bringing forward its final report and recommendations, including action plan, to be considered by the Governing Council in June 2010. The co-chairs of the Working Group have met with the Task Force Working Group and the Chair of the Committee on Academic Policy and Programs to discuss quality assurance matters as related to governance. Proposed changes to the terms of reference of Governing Council boards and committees will require the appropriate process and approval. Pending approval by UofT governance and Quality Council ratification, and in co-ordination with faculties and schools approval of any changes to divisional constitutions may occur in the fall.

UPRAC has set a target date of July 1, 2010 by which the University would need to respond to the Report recommendations. There is agreement from OCAV that the University can submit its policy revisions and UTQAP in response to addressing both the UPRAC recommendations and meeting the Quality Assurance Framework standards.

RECOMMENDATION: For Information

² <http://www.towards2030.utoronto.ca/governance/index.html>