



TO: Committee on Academic Policy and Programs

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AGENDA ITEM: **8(a)**

ITEM IDENTIFICATION:

Report on the Reviews of Academic Units and Programs – November 2010 to May 2011

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 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 academic programs and units². 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 peer institutions.

Eight external reviews of units and/or programs were commissioned by Deans and completed between November 2010 and May 2011. 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, the innovativeness and quality of programs, and the effectiveness of collaborations with other units within the University and external organizations.

It should be noted, however, that some reviews raised concerns about the breadth of course offerings and student access to courses in other units, access to faculty and research supervision, student recruitment strategies, student expectations and career opportunities, and laboratory space. The reviews made important recommendations on how these matters could be improved and the administrative responses from the deans address these issues.

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.

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>