TO: Committee on Academic Policy and Programs

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AGENDA ITEM: **4**

ITEM IDENTIFICATION: Policy for Approval and Review of Academic Programs and Units – Revision

JURISDICTIONAL INFORMATION:
The Committee recommends to Academic Board for approval 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.

HIGHLIGHTS:

The proposed *Policy for Approval and Review of Academic Programs and Units* (Appendix 1) is a revision of the University's current *Policy for Assessment and Review of Academic Programs and Units.* 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. **The UTQAP in Appendix 2 is presented to the Committee on Academic Policy and Programs For Information only.**

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, the Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance (the Quality Council), under the direction of

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the Ontario Council of Academic Vice-Presidents (OCAV). 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)[1] 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 include external appraisals
and will be vetted through the Quality Council.

The University of Toronto is responsible for ensuring the quality of all of its programs of study.
Along with other Ontario institutions, we must revise our own policy and develop a University of
Toronto Quality Assurance Process (UTQAP) to be submitted to the Quality Council for
ratification. Further, in 2008, the University underwent its second audit of undergraduate
program reviews by the Undergraduate Program Review Audit Committee.[2] 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. The
Vice-Provost Academic Programs met individually with each the Dean of each academic
division to discuss the UPRAC report and Quality Assurance Framework and solicit advice on
how to improve our processes. The Vice-President and Provost struck a Working Group on
Quality Assurance, co-chaired by the Vice-Provost, Academic Programs and the Vice-Provost,
Graduate Education. The Committee on Academic Policy and Programs reviewed drafts of the
proposed draft policy and UTQAP at its April 7, 2010 meeting and provided valuable insights
and recommendations.

The revised *Policy for the Approval and Review of Programs and Units* and draft UTQAP
created under the *Policy* are based on the requirements of the OCAV Quality Assurance
Framework, responses to recommendations of the UPRAC audit, and consultations to date. The
UTQAP may undergo further revisions as part of the Ontario Universities Council on Quality
Assurance (Quality Council) ratification process. Significant changes will be reported for
information to the Committee on Academic Policy and Programs.

The UTQAP includes the protocols for new undergraduate and graduate program approvals,
major modifications to programs, program closure, and for the cyclical program review. The
following principles are reflected in the proposed documents:

- Both administrative and governance approval of new programs are required
- There should be consistency between approval and review processes for graduate and
undergraduate programs

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[1] http://www.provost.utoronto.ca/Assets/Provost+Digital+Assets/QAF.pdf

[2] 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 a University's policies and guidelines for
approval 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.

- 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

Pending governance approval of the Policy, the UTQAP will be submitted to the Quality Council for ratification. In consultation with the academic divisions, associated administrative Manuals are being developed by the Office of the Vice-Provost, Academic Programs. These will provide detailed procedures, best practices, and standardized templates for program quality assurance processes.

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 protocols for the approval and review of academic programs and units that align with the Quality Assurance Framework.

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 programs 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 cycle.

The UTQAP outlines administrative and governance procedures for approval of academic programs that differ from current practices. As part of the University of Toronto *Towards 2030* process,[3] the Governing Council struck a Task Force on Governance to review governance practices, identify strengths and deficiencies, and make recommendations for enhancement. The Task Force Report is expected to be considered by 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 follow the normal approval process. These governance changes will subsequently require changes to divisional council responsibilities. Pending approval by UofT governance and Quality Council ratification, and in co-ordination with Governing Council and academic divisions, approval of any changes to divisional constitutions may occur in the fall of 2010.

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[3] http://www.towards2030.utoronto.ca/governance/index.html

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the Committee recommend to Academic Board:

> THAT the proposed *Policy for Approval and Review of Academic Programs and Unit* be approved, replacing the Policy for Assessment and Review of Academic Programs and Units, with effect immediately. Following ratification of the University of Toronto Quality Assurance Process by the Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance, proposals for related governance Terms of Reference revisions will be brought forward to governance for consideration.