



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

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 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 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 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
- 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

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.

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 the UTQAP 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 the University's UTQAP 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's *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.

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the Committee recommend to Academic Board:

THAT the proposed *Policy on Approval and Review of Academic Programs and Units* be approved, replacing the *Policy for Assessment and Review of Academic Programs and Units*, approved by the Governing Council on February 21, 2005, with effect immediately upon ratification of the University of Toronto Quality Assurance Process by the Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance. At that time, proposals for related governance Terms of Reference revisions will be brought forward to governance for consideration.

³ <http://www.towards2030.utoronto.ca/governance/index.html>
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APPENDIX 1

Policy for Approval and Review of Academic Programs and Units

February 10, 2005

Revisions – April 22, 2010

The University of Toronto is committed to excellence in all our academic programs. Thus, quality assurance through assessment of new program proposals and review of academic programs and units in which they reside is a priority for the University.

This Policy outlines university-wide principles for the approval of proposed new academic programs and the review of existing academic programs and academic units. The Policy aligns the University's quality assurance processes and the provincial Quality Assurance Framework.

The purpose of the Policy is to establish consistency at the University so that:

- Proposals for new undergraduate and graduate degree and diploma programs undergo thorough appraisal to ensure that they are of high academic quality and merit.
- Existing programs are externally reviewed on a cyclical basis to assess their academic quality and merit.
- Program appraisals and reviews include consideration of degree level expectations.
- The processes of appraisal and review provide governance the wherewithal to make approvals or recommendations. The review processes must address the quality of programs, and how the programs and the units in which they reside compare to the best in their field among international peer institutions.
- The quality of the scholarship of the faculty, and the degree to which that scholarship is brought to bear in teaching are the foundations of academic excellence. More generally, all of the factors that contribute to collegial and scholarly life —academic and administrative complement, research and scholarly activity, infrastructure, governance, etc.—bear on the quality of academic programs and the broad educational experience of students. Reviews are intended to help assess and then improve quality in all of these aspects.

Scope

This Policy applies to submissions for approval of new academic undergraduate and graduate programs, and the reviews of existing programs and academic units that offer programs. Reviews of programs are commissioned by academic administrators at the University of Toronto.

For the purpose of this Policy, a “program” is defined as an identified set and sequence of courses and other learning opportunities within an area of study, which is completed in full or partial fulfillment of the requirements for the granting of an undergraduate, second-entry, or graduate degree. This Policy applies to all such programs to which resources are dedicated.

Procedures

- 1) Administrative procedures for the approval and review of academic programs will be set by the Office of the Vice-President and Provost, within the *University of Toronto Quality Assurance Process*, as ratified by the Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance (the Quality Council) and reported for information to Governing Council.
- 2) The *University of Toronto Quality Assurance Process* will address the protocols by which approvals and reviews will be conducted, the content of the required documents, as well as the circulation of proposals and reports to governance.
- 3) Authority for periodically revising and ensuring implementation of the *University of Toronto Quality Assurance Process* and associated manuals rests with the Office of the Vice-President and Provost. Changes to the procedures will be presented to Governing Council for information.
- 4) 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 proposed and existing programs. Such assessments may serve different purposes than those commissioned by the University. In conducting a review of a program or unit, external reviewers should be presented, where appropriate, with any non-University commissioned reviews (for example, professional accreditation or Ontario Council on Graduate Studies) completed since the last review of the program or unit.
- 5) Where possible, the University process should aim to streamline the review process by aligning the scheduling of undergraduate program reviews, graduate program reviews and reviews of academic units.

Accountability

1) New Programs

The assessment of proposed new programs is part of our governance procedures. Proposal assessment is a critical process that ensures the quality and merit of the proposal is fully developed before entering governance so that appropriate decisions can be made as to whether the program should be established.

2) Existing Programs and Units

Reviews are important mechanisms of accountability. Academic administrators are accountable for the discharge of their responsibilities through a line of accountability that reaches from chairs and directors to deans and principals to the Provost to the President and ultimately to University governance. As part of this structure of accountability, governors have a responsibility to ensure that appropriate mechanisms for reviewing academic programs with a view to ensuring and improving their quality are in place.

APPENDIX A

Accountability Framework for Cyclical Review of Academic Programs and Units

Responsible Agent	Responsibilities	Mechanism
Governing Council:	Ensuring that University administration is monitoring the quality of academic programs and units and is taking the necessary steps to address problems and achieve improvements	Receive program review report (including summaries of all reviews) and record of AP&P and Executive Committee discussion
a) Executive Committee	Monitoring overall review audit process; identification of any changes required in process; discussion of any major unresolved issues with President and Provost	Receive program review report (including summaries of all reviews) and record of AP&P discussion
b) Agenda Committee of Academic Board	Identifying any specific academic issues raised by the overview of reviews that warrant discussion by the Academic Board	Receive program review report (including summaries of all reviews) and record of AP&P discussion
c) Committee on Academic Policy and Programs	Undertaking a comprehensive overview of review results and administrative responses	Receive program review report including summaries of all reviews, identifying key issues and administrative responses. Discuss report at dedicated program review meeting with relevant academic leadership; forward to Executive Committee
Provost	Monitoring quality of all academic programs and units in the University and taking necessary steps to address problems and achieve improvements	Ensure all programs, and the units in which they reside, are reviewed on a cyclical basis not to exceed eight years. Commission reviews of Faculties Receive reviews of programs and academic units Prepare summaries of reviews and administrative responses Forwarding to Governing Council
Deans	Monitoring quality of all academic programs and units in the Faculty and taking necessary steps to address problems and achieve improvements	Commission and respond to reviews of academic programs, and the units in which the programs reside, within the Faculty and programs that are offered jointly with external institutions.