

For the Committee on Academic Policy and Programs

Donald Wiebe, Faculty of Divinity, Trinity College

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**IN NEED OF INVESTIGATION:
Comments on the 2011-2012 UTQAP Review of
The Toronto School of Theology**

Sorting out some of the confusion surrounding this UTQAP review process and report(s)

- TST has been dealing with two so-called “final reports” related to this review: the “Assessors’ final report” (10 April, 2012) and the “University’s final report” (26 April, 2012).
- The 10 April “Assessors’ final report” was open to corrections of fact by both TST and by the University.
- TST received the 26 April “University’s final report” which included the removal of two sections of the 10 April report. The University signalled only one of these deletions to TST.
- TST responded to the 10 April “Assessors’ final report.” In their response, TST contested the Assessors’ ability to determine that its doctoral degree programs were “below standard” because, according to the Assessors, their “visit was not focused on the quality of specific programs but rather on the institution that is TST, and its relationship to the University of Toronto” and, secondly, that they “lacked both the data and, during our visit, the time to do a full academic assessment (e.g., visits to classes, review of syllabi, etc.)” (page 7 of the 10 April Assessors’ report).
- I discovered from the Director of TST that the half paragraph containing these comments was missing from the 26 April “University’s final report” in a conversation with him 7 September, 2012 about whether TST intended to reveal to its students the Assessors’ negative findings. I was surprised that TST had never been informed by the University that it had removed this material from its final 26 April report because the material it deleted was far more than a “correction of fact.”
- A few days later while comparing the 10 April and 26 April documents I realized that the second document had a further deletion of which TST was not aware. Professors Regehr and Corman had already informed TST that they intended to revise the first full paragraph of the 10 April Assessors’ final report (page 10)

which refers to an “imminent review of its [TST’s] programs by the government of Ontario” (letter to Daniella Mallinick from the Director of TST dated 19 April, 2012). Instead of revising the offending paragraph, however, it seems that Professors Regehr and Corman arranged for it to be deleted entirely. This deletion, too, amounts to more than a simple correction of fact. Indeed, it seems to me to hide the Assessors’ ignorance of the quality assurance process review.

- It is essential to keep in mind that the Assessors’ primary aim, contrary to the requirements of the UTCAP Framework, was never to evaluate TST’s degree programs but rather with developing a stronger relationship between TST and the University of Toronto so as to enhance “on a scholarly level Toronto’s stature as a center of interreligious dialogue” (page 7). The assessors’ main objectives, in other words, was to help to create in the University of Toronto an integration of theological and religious studies “in line with the approaches taken by the universities which we, the reviewers, represent ... together with other universities” (page 2).
- The following comments illustrate that the Assessors did not adequately follow the UTQAP review process:
 - Director of TST noted in his first “Administrative Response” to the UTQAP Report that: “The reviewers said strikingly little about matters which the UTQAP framework identifies as essential, including the suitability of program objectives, quality of curriculum, admissions standards, assessment of learning, and resources....The report does not offer analysis or evaluation of the quality indicators assembled in our self-study report. There are indications that the team did not read TST’s self-study report very carefully” (p3).
 - The Director of TST also noted in his first “Administrative Response” to the UTQAP Report that TST’s principal problem with it “is that, although the reviewers explicitly did not assess our programs, they supplied a ranking of them.... We can find no context provided in the report for these rankings” (p3).
 - The UTQAP assessors provide no account for why their assessment of the doctoral degree programs differed so drastically with the “up to standard” ranking provided by the more professional peer review of the TST in 2011 by the Association of Theological Schools (ATS).

Actions taken (and not taken) on the basis of the 26 April UTQAP review report

- Despite the Assessors’ statement that they had neither the time nor the data to carry out a proper review of those programs and provided no justification for their negative assessment, the University chose to override those important qualifications and to accept the UTQAP Assessors’ judgment of the substandard character of the doctoral programs at TST.

- On that basis, the University required TST to suspend admissions to its doctoral programs: On 4 July, (“prompted by receipt of the final report of the external review conducted January 10-11, 2012”) Vice-Provost Regehr wrote to Professor Alan Hayes (Director, TST) to “confirm the ceasing of admissions to the Doctor of Theology (Th.D.) and Doctor of Ministry (DMin) programs effective the 2013-2014 academic year.”
- It is common knowledge in TST that TST and the University are actively engaged in discussions on the creation of a new conjoint doctoral program (Ph.D) in theology.
- The University appears to have taken no action to insist that TST upgrade its current doctoral programs despite the fact it is now allowing TST to admit students to those programs.
- That is, the University has both rescinded its decision to require TST to suspend admissions to its doctoral programs and failed to support its reversal by any written documentation that these programs have now been brought up to standard. In view of this contradiction it is improper for the University to allow – and for TST to invite – applications to enter these doctoral programs without informing students of their “anomalous” standing.

Need for the Committee on Academic Policy and Program to investigate this matter:

- The confusions surrounding the quality assessment review of the Toronto School of Theology raises serious questions about the integrity of the University’s review process.
- TST students in the doctoral degree programs (and especially in the Th.D. degree program) are not being treated fairly. They will graduate with a degree considered by the University, without justification, to be “below standard.” The University, moreover, is also allowing TST to admit students to these doctoral programs for the 2013-2014 academic year without indicating in writing that the University now considers those programs to be up to standard.
- **There is a danger that the University of Toronto, in accepting this Quality Assurance Report, will be drawn into a religio-theological agenda shared seamlessly with the Toronto School of Theology**
 - According to the Assessors’ report, the University is already engaged in religio-theological discourse in the studies of Judaism and Islam in the UofT and they intend to extend further this kind of discourse. As they put it: “[W]hat in relation to Christianity usually comes under the broad heading of theology is in the UofT already being pursued in relation to

other religions” (page 3). Their aim in ignoring (and denigrating?) TST’s current doctoral degree programs is to see the creation of a Ph.D. degree program in theology because this will enhance “on a scholarly level Toronto’s [University of Toronto?] stature as a center of interreligious dialogue” (page 7), which is essentially a religious and theological undertaking. Moreover, this is precisely how the TST itself understands the value of this UTQAP report. As the Director of TST puts it in his second “Administrative Response” to the quality assurance process: “[I]t has encouraged both parties to consider the instrumental value of TST’s programs for the University’s mission, and to recognize ways in which theological studies relates to the wider work of the University” (page 2).

- **In light of the foregoing, the UTQAP review team espoused an agenda for the evaluation of the TST that far exceeded its mandate and, just as inappropriately, showed a determination to involve the University of Toronto in a religious and theological agenda to be led by the TST.**
- **As I understand the spirit of the 1978 decision by the Ontario Provincial legislature to authorize the University to grant conjoint degrees in theology, it was only intended to permit the government to fund theological education in third-party institutions in the province. The 1978 decision was certainly not intended to make the University of Toronto itself a provider of religious education.**