



TO: Committee on Academic Policy and Programs

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AGENDA ITEM: 4(a)

ITEM IDENTIFICATION:

Report on the Reviews of Academic Units and Programs – April 2012 to October 2012

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 conducted in accordance with University policy and guidelines, that an appropriate process has been followed, that adequate documentation is provided and consultations 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 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 programs and units.² 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.

Eleven external reviews of units and/or programs were received by the Office of the Vice-President and Provost since our last report to AP&P: one commissioned by the Provost and ten commissioned by Deans. 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, and the innovativeness and quality of programs. In addition, this set of reviews highlighted the range of available opportunities for student participation in research and experiential learning.

It should be noted, however, that some reviews raised concerns about the complexity of course offerings, access to courses, and graduate comprehensive examinations. The reviews made important recommendations on how these matters could be improved. The administrative responses from the deans address these issues and others.

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.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/AcaProgs_Units_pdf.htm