



Operating Procedures: Academic Program Review

Policy Hyperlink:

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Policy Administrator:

Associate Provost, Teaching and Learning

Procedures

1.00 PURPOSE OF PROCEDURES

The purpose of these guidelines is to maintain a standard of excellence and provide internal and external accountability of Academic Programs.

2.00 PURPOSE OF ACADEMIC REVIEWS

As part of its commitment to offering Academic Programs of high quality and standards, TWU has established an Academic Program Review Policy. This policy encompasses the Ministry of Postsecondary Education and Future Skills' requirements for new program approval and re-consent of programs requiring re-consent.

The four main purposes of Academic Program Review are:

- Ensure periodic in-depth reflection and review of the quality and effectiveness of Academic Programs.
- Foster ongoing collection and analysis of relevant data to guide continuous improvement of academic quality and student learning.
- Assess the relevance of academic programs in supporting the university's mission and strategic plan.
- Provide internal and external accountability of Academic Program quality.

3.00 PRINCIPLES OF ACADEMIC PROGRAM REVIEW

The Academic Program Review process is based on the following principles:

- The provision of Academic Program's teaching, scholarship, and research of the highest quality is an important goal;
- Academic endeavors should be consistent with the strategic plans and goals of the School/Faculty and of the University;
- Academic Programs should make the best use of the resources available to them;
- Accurate data is a necessary precursor to informed judgment;
- Informed judgments of academic quality should form the basis for meaningful decisions, including decisions about resource allocation; and
- Academic Units should periodically have the opportunity to examine their present and future in a more sustained and focused manner;
- Academic Program Review procedures should meet provincially recognized quality assurance standards.

4.00 INITIATING AN ACADEMIC PROGRAM REVIEW

An Academic Program Review can be initiated in the following ways:

- Program Reviews requiring Ministry re-consent shall be scheduled by the Associate Provost of Teaching and Learning two years in advance of the Ministry re-consent deadline (so that the review may be uploaded one year in advance of the re-consent deadline);
- Program Reviews shall be scheduled, according to Policy, no later than every seven years, by the Associate Provost of Teaching and Learning, in consultation with the appropriate Dean; or
- An Academic Unit or Dean may request that a Program Review be initiated.

5.00 ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT

The Academic Unit undergoing a Program Review should identify a **faculty coordinator** (normally the Chair/Director/Coordinator) and a **faculty administrative coordinator** (normally the administrative/executive assistant) to support the Program Review process. Ultimate responsibility for the Program Review will rest with the Chair/Director and the Dean, but this should also be a collaborative process that involves other faculty

who are connected to the program who then help complete the various sections of the self-study and appendices.

The Program Development and Review Coordinator (PDRC) will provide additional support with regard to procedures and processes, and liaise with the institutional research analyst and other institutional sources to provide data for the self-study and appendices.

Executive Summaries required by the Degree Quality Assessment Board for re-consent will be written by the Program Development and Review Coordinator in consultation with the Chair/Director or Dean.

6.00 COMPONENTS OF THE PROCESS

The key components and steps of the Program Review process are:

- A. Consultation with the Dean, Chair/Director and Provost Office
- B. Data Collection and the Self-Study (submitted to the Dean and Office of Teaching and Learning)
- C. Review and comments from External Reviewers
- D. Review and comments from a Committee of Senate
- E. The Academic Unit's Response to the External and Senate Committee Review
- F. Dean and Academic Unit's collaborative statement on the future of the program
- G. An Action Plan from the Academic Unit in consultation with the Dean
- H. Submission of the full Program Review, including the Action Plan, to a Committee of Senate.
- I. If the program requires re-consent, submission of review/application to DQAB one year prior to the re-consent deadline.
- J. A Mid-Cycle Progress Report, with comments from the Academic Unit and Dean regarding the steps that have been taken to implement changes outlined in the Action Plan.

The template outlining the self-study may not fully apply to all Academic Units, and Academic Units may revise processes set out in the attachments, or develop their own processes in consultation with the Program Development and Review Coordinator and as approved by the Associate Provost of Teaching and Learning. For example, programs that complete professional accreditation may use that documentation as component of a TWU Program Review. In such cases, programs will typically be required to supplement their professional accreditation with a review of their program's integration of faith with their discipline.

A. Consultation with the Dean, Chair/Director and Provost's Office

Once it is agreed that an Academic Program Review (APR) will be scheduled, the Program Development and Review Coordinator will call a meeting that includes the Dean of the Faculty, and when appropriate, the Associate Provost of Research and Graduate Studies, the Chair/Director of the Academic Unit, and the Associate Provost of Teaching and Learning. The goals of the APR will be discussed and any particular areas of concern or interest to any of the parties can be identified for particular focus as part of the APR.

B. Self-Study

The self-study is the starting point and primary document on which the APR is based. Therefore, it is important that the self-study be well organized and concise. The self-study allows an Academic Unit to do the following:

- Examine its history (since the most recent APR), development, and expectations for the academic program;
- Indicate how its program meets both Faculty and University goals as defined in their respective mission statements, and strategic plans;
- Conduct a balanced appraisal of strengths and areas for improvement;
- Review the quality of academic program inputs and outputs;
- Evaluate its own performance;
- Consider the future direction of the academic program within its disciplinary context, including new academic programs, research directions, anticipated or desired growth in enrolments, enhancements to quality, student engagement and success, and faculty development.

The self-study is a significant and valuable phase of the APR. Therefore, it is vital that all of the Academic Unit's faculty be involved in the preparation of the self-study. Responsibility for ensuring that this consultation occurs rests with the Academic Unit head.

A template for the self-study is provided by the Program Development and Review Coordinator (PDRC). The template provides detailed questions on which the self-study should be based and the format for the self-study document. The questions in the document are linked to key criteria for program review and guide the development of

the narrative. An Academic unit is, of course, not limited to the questions/criteria and may include additional relevant information or statistics specific to its area of study.

The self-study is based on data collected as identified in the self-study template. Sources for the data are clarified in the template documents. Some data will be provided by the Program Development and Review Coordinator. Other data will be collected by the academic unit.

Once the program has completed the self-study it must be approved by the dean. The Dean should check for accuracy and comprehensive responses to questions. The Dean should read the self-study from the perspective of External Reviewers and Committee of Senate as much as possible, anticipating their questions and critique.

Once the self-study is completed and approved by the dean of the school or faculty, it is reviewed by the Office of Teaching and Learning and the Provost. The self-study report should not be made available to external reviewers until it has been approved by the Dean and the Office of Teaching and Learning.

The self-study report must be made available to the Office of Teaching and Learning at least four weeks in advance of the site visit by external reviewers.

C. The External Review

i) Membership

After consulting with the rest of the academic unit, the program chair/director/coordinator must provide the Program Development and Review Coordinator with names of 5-6 potential external reviewers. In order to ensure a high standard of relevant expertise and quality assurance, all external reviewers should meet the following **conflict of interest and selection requirements**:

- A terminal degree in the discipline of the program under review
- Must be currently employed in a continuing faculty position, or have retired within the last 3 years
- A sense that the external reviewers will be sympathetic to TWU's mission and strategic plan to avoid unnecessary distractions.
- One external reviewer must be employed at a **faith-based university or college**, and one must be employed at a **university or college in British Columbia**, and if possible, the Lower Mainland.

- A reasonable effort should be made to include external reviewers from groups that are under-represented in British Columbia's post-secondary system.
- The external reviewers must be at arms-length from the programs they are reviewing. Potential conflicts of interests include, but are not limited to:
 - A close relative
 - A collaborator
 - A former supervisor, supervisee, or student
 - A former external reviewer of the program

None of these relationships necessarily eliminates a potential reviewer, but possible conflicts must be identified for the Program Development and Review Coordinator on the nomination form.

The Program Development and Review Coordinator will contact the individuals nominated by the program and will make every effort to secure 2-3 reviewers from the list. Once they've agreed to serve as an external reviewer, the PDRC will send them the Terms of Reference and External Reviewer Rubric that they will be expected to follow.

ii) Role

The role of an APR external reviewer is to provide informed, dispassionate, and critical judgment of the quality of an academic program or Academic Unit from the perspective of an outside observer. The external reviewers will be guided by the External Reviewer Rubric and Terms of Reference as detailed in the section below. 6

iii) Terms of Reference

The purpose of external reviews is to assess a wide range of information pertaining to Academic Program quality, efficiency, and sustainability. External reviewers conduct a virtual site visit with the opportunity to meet with faculty and administrators, facilitate student and alumni focus groups, assess resources and available space, and carry out other relevant activities. External reviewers review the program self-study, data appendices, and additional material.

The assessment by the external reviewers follows the template provided in the External Reviewer Rubric and is evidence based and constructively critical, identifying strengths to be protected and enhanced, weaknesses requiring attention, and new opportunities. It considers what can be done by the Academic Unit to use existing resources more efficiently and effectively, and it recommends where new resources, if available, would likely represent a strategic investment to increase the quality of the academic program.

Based on the information from the self-study and accompanying data gathered from elsewhere, the external reviewers complete the External Reviewer Rubric and email it to the Program Development and Review Coordinator within three weeks of the virtual site visit. The Program Development and Review Coordinator will forward a copy of the report to the Dean, the Academic Unit head, and, if necessary, the Associate Provost, Research and Graduate Studies.

iv) Site Visit and Interviews

The purpose of the site visit is to provide an opportunity for interviews with faculty, students, staff, and others who can most appropriately provide informed comment. The Program Development and Review Coordinator will arrange for meetings between the external reviewers and appropriate groups or individuals and develop an itinerary and agenda that typically includes meetings with the following groups:

- TWU and Program Administration (The Provost, the Associate Provost of Teaching + Learning, the Dean of the Faculty, and, if necessary, the Associate Provost of Research and Graduate Studies.
- Faculty members in the Academic Unit
- Current students and alumni of the Academic Unit
- External reviewers are free to suggest other individuals and groups with whom to meet during the site visit.

v) The Report

The report begins with a brief executive summary that highlights the major strengths of the academic program, identifies any significant areas of weakness or in need of further development, and comments on the future direction of the academic program.

The external reviewers then complete the Rubric that has been provided by the Program Development and Review Coordinator. The items that reviewers are asked to comment on correspond to questions in the self-study. For each category/area, reviewers will indicate whether they believe the program to be below, at, or above disciplinary and institutional standards/expectations.

The areas that external reviewers are asked to consider include the following:

- Quality of curriculum;

- Student learning and success;
- Quality of faculty;
- Program viability and sustainability;
- The academic unit's own analysis of program strengths, areas for growth, and action plan.

D. The Senate Committee Review

In addition to the external reviewer site visit, the self-study and assessment data appendices are reviewed by a committee of Senate. The senate committee will complete the same rubric as that given to the external reviewers, and is asked to provide general comments on the program's strengths and/or areas for improvement.

Once the self-study and assessment data appendices are completed, the Program Development and Review Coordinator will provide them to the appropriate senate contacts. The completed rubric and comments will be returned to the Program Development and Review Coordinator, who will make it available to the head of the academic unit.

E. The Academic Unit's Response

The Academic Unit responsible for the program review offers a response to the observations, assessment, and recommendations of the external reviewers and Senate committee, as outlined in their respective reports. The layout of the Academic Unit's response includes an acknowledgment of the strengths of the program that the external reviewers identified and an acknowledgement of the issues that the external reviewers raised in their reports.

The issues that the external examiners raised in their reports are itemized in the Academic Unit's response so that clear responses to each issue can be offered. These responses include an agreement or disagreement with the issue raised and reasons for either of these responses, an affirmation or denial of what needs to change and reasons why, and further explanations and recommendations as appropriate.

F. Dean and Academic Unit's Collaborative Response

Once the Academic Unit's response is completed, the head of the program meets with the dean of the faculty or school to discuss the reviewers' comments and the program's response. They should then discuss and describe key areas for improvement below. Although this is not the formal Action Plan itself, this statement should reflect the

opinion of both the dean and the program head about key priorities that will guide program development over the next five years. The Academic Unit head and dean of the faculty/school sign this statement.

G. The Action Plan and Consultation with the Office of the Provost

The Dean, Program Coordinator, and Academic Unit collaborate on an Action Plan that outlines the actions that the program plans on taking to address the issues raised in their self-study and by the external and senate reviewers in their reports. The Action Plan follows a template that asks for the identification of each action, the person who will complete each action, and a target date for the completion of each action. The Dean then meets with the Provost to have the action plan modified and approved and woven into the institution's strategic plans. The approved Action plan is signed by the Dean and Provost.

H. Submission of the Program Review to a Committee of Senate.

Upon completion and signing of the Action Plan the Program Development and Review Coordinator will compile all of the components into a single document and submit the full program review to a committee of senate. Program Reviews will also be stored on the Quality Assurance SharePoint Site. If the program requires consent from the Ministry of Postsecondary Education and Future Skills, the program review must be submitted to the Senate committee before the Program Development and Review Coordinator uploads the program review to the Post-Secondary Institution Proposal System (PSIPS).

J. Submission to DQAB for Consent Renewal (if applicable)

TWU is legally required to obtain ministerial consent to offer degrees that it was not already offering on April 11, 2002.¹ All other degrees, referred to here and elsewhere as "consented" programs, require regular renewal of ministry consent. After a consented program completes its internal program review, an Executive Summary using the DQAB Template with the items above will be sent to DQAB one year prior to the re-consent deadline. The full Program Review will be submitted as an Appendix.

The Program Development and Review Coordinator will draft the Executive Summary, using information from the program review, and send it to the Academic Unit head for

¹ <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/education-training/post-secondary-education/institution-resources-administration/degree-authorization>

approval before submitting it to the DQAB. The Program Development and Review Coordinator will continue to liaise with the Ministry of Postsecondary Education and Future skills until consent is renewed.

I. Mid-Cycle Progress Report

Within 3 years of completing their program review, the academic program will submit a mid-cycle progress report outlining and commenting on their progress in implementing the steps outlined in the Action Plan. This report also includes comments from the dean of the faculty or school. This progress report will be reviewed, and commented on, by a committee of Senate.

