

S.96-23

As amended
by Senate
04/03/96

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

OFFICE OF THE VICE-PRESIDENT, ACADEMIC

MEMORANDUM

To: Senate

From: D. Gagan, Chair *David Gagan*
Senate Committee on Academic Planning

Subject: External review guidelines

Date: February 13, 1996

Action undertaken by the Senate Committee on Academic Planning gives rise to the following motion:

Motion:

"That Senate approve the revisions to the Guidelines for External Reviews of Academic Units contained in paper S.96- 23

The guidelines set out an important process which each academic unit has to undertake periodically, a process of self-assessment, external evaluation and forward planning. The existing guidelines include an implementation plan to be developed from the external evaluation but did not provided for any formal adoption of the plan either by the Dean of the Faculty or by SCAP. The proposed revision outlines a new consultative process and introduces the concept of the unit developing/negotiating an academic plan with the Dean and SCAP which would cover its activities for the next 5-7 years.

The proposed academic plan would be used in assessing future program plans generated by the unit. The plan would also form the basis of assessing the progress of the unit at the time of the following external review.

Proposed Changes to External Review Process for Academic Departments/Programs

- provided on request and will be
11. The external review report will be circulated, for comment, to:
- (a) the unit involved (including faculty, staff and students)
 - (b) the President
 - (c) the Dean of the Faculty
 - (d) the Dean of Graduate Studies
 - (e) the Vice-President, Academic
 - (f) SCAP
 - (g) other Senate committees which may have an interest in the report.

Comments are to be forwarded to the Department Chair, School Director, or Program Co-ordinator concerned.

12. (a) The unit will review the report and the comments provided, and prepare an academic plan describing the unit's objectives in the period leading up to its next scheduled review (5-7 years). The first section of the plan should provide the unit's response to the external review, in particular the reviewers' recommendations.
- (b) The unit and the Faculty Dean will negotiate the final draft of the plan to be forwarded to SCAP.
13. The Unit's ^{academic} forward plan will be sent to SCAP for approval. Following SCAP approval, both the unit and SCAP will reference the approved plan in proposing/assessing future program and curriculum proposals from the unit.
14. Senate will receive, for information, a summary of the external review and a copy of the unit's approved ^{academic} forward plan. Members of Senate may review full documentation in the Director of Secretariat Services's office.
15. Three years after SCAP approval of the unit's academic plan, the unit will formally report to SCAP on its progress in implementing its academic plan.

Approved by SCAP for recommendation to Senate: February 7, 1996

SENATE GUIDELINES FOR EXTERNAL REVIEWS OF ACADEMIC UNITS

All academic units* are reviewed on a periodic basis, normally once every seven years. The purposes of such reviews are to enable units to conduct their own assessments of their strengths and weaknesses, to obtain the views of external experts in the field, and to engage in planning for their own future. The review process is intended to ensure that:

- a) The quality of the program is high and the unit has measures in place to ensure the evaluation and revision of the teaching programs.
- b) The quality of faculty research is high and faculty collaboration and interaction provides a stimulating academic environment.
- c) Department members participate in the administration of the unit and take an active role in the dissemination of knowledge.
- d) The departmental environment is conducive to the attainment of the objectives of the department.

Review committees should make their assessments taking into account the resources currently available to the department and the University.

Review Process

1. The review will be initiated by the Vice-President, Academic, after consultation with the Dean of the Faculty, and the unit involved. The Dean of Graduate Studies shall also be consulted about the initiation of an external review and shall be involved in external reviews in relation to graduate programs and graduate student issues.
2. The Department will engage in a period of self-study of one to two semesters, possibly including a retreat, in which the members of the unit assess all aspects of the activities falling within its mandate and prepare a report covering the following areas:
 - a) Institutional role, unit role and activities, goals and aspirations;
 - b) Quality of teaching demonstrated by student achievement, scholarships and awards, degrees completed, post-graduate employment;
 - c) Quality of the programs indicated by student demand, access to courses, student opinion on programs, educational experience including co-op and exchange opportunities, experience and satisfaction of students after graduation;

* Departments, Faculties, Schools, Programs. Parallel procedures will be used for periodic reviews of academic service units.

- d) Quality of scholarship demonstrated through grants, graduate student achievements; knowledge distribution and utilization, awards, citations, honours, appointments;
 - e) Service to the community demonstrated by public service activity, involvement in related community groups, membership on boards or similar bodies;
 - f) Collegial environment for all members of the unit,
 - g) Appropriate orientation and training, support for employee development;
 - h) Resources for unit activities; faculty, staff, operating budget, space, equipment (program for renewal), library holdings (process for determining collections directions).
3. Undergraduate and graduate students will be encouraged to participate in the preparation of material for the departmental self-study and student input will be sought throughout the process. The Chair/Director should contact the student union and student representatives on departmental committees, as well as publicizing the review in classes and within the department. Student contributions will be included or reflected in the self-study and students will have meetings with the external review committee.
4. The self-study report prepared by the unit shall be made available to all members of the unit (faculty, staff and students) prior to being forwarded to the external review committee. The self-study shall include a standard set of data provided by Analytical Studies, the Office of the Dean of Graduate Studies and the unit. The unit will supplement this if it wishes.
5. The external review committee will normally consist of three persons external to the university who are senior members of the discipline, some of whom have had administrative experience. The Vice-President, Academic will normally appoint an internal member from the University community who will be a full member of the committee. The internal member can provide the review committee with contextual advice about the environment and operations of Simon Fraser University. The unit will be asked to provide the Vice-President, Academic with a list of reviewers who represent a broad cross section of the discipline and who are considered to be outstanding scholars and objective reviewers. The Vice-President, Academic shall appoint the members of the external review committee after consulting with the Dean of the Faculty, the Dean of Graduate Studies and the unit involved. The external review committee will primarily be composed of faculty members from Canadian universities outside British Columbia. Both genders should be represented on the committee.
6. The terms of reference for the review committee will be prepared by the Vice-President, Academic in consultation with the Dean of the Faculty, the Dean of Graduate Studies and the unit. At the conclusion of its visit, the review group is expected to submit a detailed report including a full and frank assessment

of the mission, the various activities, the quality of the unit and its programs, and the resource allocation to and within the unit being reviewed.

7. The dates of the visit of the external review committee and the detailed schedule for the visit will be arranged by the Office of the Vice-President, Academic in consultation with the Deans and the Chair of the unit. Members of the external review committee should avoid informal social events with members of the unit during the site visit.
8. The committee will meet with the Vice-President, Academic and the Deans at the start and at the end of the review to discuss guidelines for the review and the report. The committee will also meet with the unit's faculty and staff members, and graduate and undergraduate students, as well as with others with responsibilities affecting the unit.
9. If the review committee receives information or allegations regarding specific individuals, these will be transmitted to the appropriate persons within the University and handled in accordance with established University procedures. These persons might include the Chair, and Dean and/or the Harassment Policy Coordinator. If the review committee receives general comments or complaints that the environment in the unit is not conducive to a high quality of teaching, learning, research and working, the committee may comment and make recommendations on this in its report, and the appropriate persons within the Department, Faculty and University shall be advised.
10. The review committee shall prepare a report which will become a public document. Any supplementary reports concerning confidential matters will not form part of the public record, but will be made available to the appropriate University officers, and any individuals named will be apprised of the information and provided with an opportunity to comment.
11. The unit being reviewed will consider the external review report, comment on it and within six months prepare a plan for implementing the recommendations accepted by the unit. The Dean of the Faculty and the Dean of Graduate Studies will provide comment on the external review and the unit's implementation plan.
12. The external review report may, at the discretion of the Vice-President, Academic, be forwarded to other appropriate Senate Committees for their consideration and/or recommendations.
13. The external review report, the response of the Department and the Department's implementation plan, and the comments of the Deans and other Senate committees will be tabled for discussion at SCAP.

14. Once SCAP has received these reports and commented on them, they will constitute a framework for planning and future developments by the unit involved. SCAP will use the review documents as a basis for assessing proposals for new programs or courses or making any other recommendation to Senate it deems appropriate.
15. Senate will be provided with a summary of the external review report and the implementation plan prepared by the unit. Copies of the self-study, external review report and the unit's response received by SCAP will be available to all members of Senate for review.
16. Two years after SCAP has received the review, a progress report by the unit shall be brought to SCAP for information.

Approved by Senate, 10 January 1994
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