

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY
OFFICE OF THE VICE-PRESIDENT, ACADEMIC
MEMORANDUM

S.94-6

To: Senate
From: J.M. Munro, Chair, Senate Committee on Academic Planning
Subject: Revision of External Review Guidelines
Date: 15 December 1993

In 1990 Senate approved new guidelines for conducting external reviews which specified the external review process consisting of a self-study, external committee site visit, report and departmental response. The guidelines have been followed for the reviews in the past three years. We have sought feedback on the review process from the chairs of units reviewed and from the internal and external members of the review committees. The experience with the external reviews of the past three years has prompted the development of revised guidelines which include these changes:

- a) inclusion of a statement outlining the purpose of external reviews;
- b) more detail about what should be contained in the self-study prepared by the unit;
- c) acknowledgement that the departmental environment should be one of the elements considered in the review;
- d) clarification of the role of the internal committee member;
- e) specification of a common data set to be included in the self-study;
- f) addition of a requirement that the reviewers take into consideration the existing resources of the unit;
- g) reorganization of the post-review actions; the department would develop an implementation plan to be attached to its response on the external review;
- h) clarification that Senate would receive a summary of the external review report and the implementation plan prepared by the department, and that the full report would be available to Senators.

The existing guidelines S 90-33 are attached for information.

MOTION

That Senate approve the revised guidelines for external reviews, as outlined in S 94-6

Attachments: 2

J. M. Munro

**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

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

co-op and exchange opportunities, experience and satisfaction of students after graduation;

- 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.

EXISTING GUIDELINES

S 90-33

GUIDELINES FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF EXTERNAL REVIEWS

All units -- academic and administrative -- are reviewed on a periodic basis, normally once every seven years. The purpose of such reviews is to encourage units to conduct their own assessments of their strengths and weaknesses and to engage in planning for their own future.

The stages of the review of academic departments are as follows:

1. Initiation by the Vice-President, Academic, acting as Chair of SCAP, of the review, after consultation with the Dean of the Faculty and of Graduate Studies and with the unit involved.
2. Period of self-study, possibly including a retreat, in which the members of the unit assess all aspects of the activities falling within its mandate. A report by the unit is produced at the end of a self-study period which normally does not exceed two semesters in length.
3. Identification of the external review group, in consultation with the Deans and the unit involved. Normally the unit will provide a list of suitable reviewers for the assistance of the Vice-President, Academic, who shall make the decision on the membership and composition of the external review group in consultation with the unit.
4. The external review group will consist of at least three persons external to the university who are senior in the discipline or field involved. The Vice-President, Academic, may include an additional member of another unit at Simon Fraser, to act as a resource person for the external reviewers.
5. After consultation, a visit is scheduled of the external review group. The group will meet with the Vice-President, Academic, before commencing the review, in order to discuss guidelines for the review and the report.
6. The reviewers will be informed that their reports will be made available in their entirety to the unit under review, Senate Committees and Senate, and that the assessment of individual personnel may raise questions of fairness and due process. Normally such reports will include discussion of individual personnel matters only where such matters are closely allied to the recommendations being made. In such cases, where an assessment of an individual is included in the report, the individual will be given the opportunity to respond.

7. 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 program as a whole and of the various specializations within it, and the resource allocation within the unit being reviewed.
8. The unit being reviewed will respond in a timely fashion to the report of the external reviewers, and to any other matter related to its self-study report. The Dean of the Faculty and the Dean of Graduate Studies will then prepare assessments of the situation.
9. The report of the review committee may, at the discretion of the Vice-President, Academic, be forwarded to other appropriate Senate Committees for their consideration and/or recommendations. Such committees might include the Senate Committee on Graduate Studies and the Senate Committee on Continuing Studies, for example.
10. The responses of the Department, the Deans and other Senate committees, together with the original self-study report and the report of the external review group will be tabled for discussion at SCAP.
11. Once SCAP has accepted these reports, they will constitute a framework for planning and future developments by the unit involved. The unit will prepare a plan of implementation, and SCAP, in turn, will use the review documents as a basis for assessing proposals for new programs or courses.
12. The review documents, along with the decisions taken by SCAP, are tabled in Senate for information.
13. One year after Senate has received the review, a progress report by the unit that was reviewed is to be brought to SCAP for acceptance and to Senate for information.
14. All documents related to the reviews are to be kept on file in the office of the Vice-President, Academic, and are to be available to members of Senate.