

External Reviews of Academic Units

University Policy No.: AC1145
Classification: Academic and Students
Approving Authority: Senate
Effective Date: October, 2020
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Purpose

- 1.00 The purpose of this policy is to:
- (a) provide regular and systematic reviews of the operation and objectives of academic units;
 - (b) foster continuous improvement of the quality and effectiveness of academic programs, research and creative activity, and community engagement;
 - (c) assess the alignment of the academic unit in supporting the university's mission;
 - (d) support academic programming so that it is responsive to disciplinary change; and
 - (e) provide internal and external accountability of academic units.

Scope

- 2.00 External reviews are normally conducted for departments, schools, and non-departmentalized faculties. However, some programs without department-equivalent status (e.g. interdisciplinary inter/intra-faculty programs) are also reviewed on a regular basis. Such programs may be attached to a home academic unit for the purpose of external review or may hold a free-standing external review (the term academic unit as used in this policy may refer specifically to an academic program in this instance); the Associate Vice-President Academic Planning and disciplinary dean(s) determine the most appropriate option.
- 3.00 With the approval of the Vice-President Academic and Provost, the accreditation of professional school(s), units, and/or program(s) may be substituted for, or serve as a component of, an external review of an academic unit.

Policy

- 4.00 Academic units will undergo an external review every seven years or earlier at the request of the Vice-President Academic and Provost. New academic units are first reviewed after five years, then follow the seven-year cycle. In exceptional

circumstances, a unit may request to defer an external review with the approval of the Vice-President Academic and Provost.

- 5.00 Unless otherwise specified, the external review will be comprehensive and focus on:
- (a) the effectiveness of the academic in supporting the university's mission;
 - (b) the quality of the teaching and learning environment for both undergraduate and graduate students;
 - (c) the quality of the research and creative activity;
 - (d) available resources and their effective utilization; and
 - (e) the academic unit's service to the university and its relevant external communities and professions.

Components

- 6.00 The key components of the external review process are:
- (a) the Associate Vice-President Academic Planning consults with the dean(s) and head of the academic unit to discuss the goals of the review and any areas of particular focus;
 - (b) the Associate Vice-President Academic Planning invites a team of three reviewers (two external and one internal to UVic) to provide informed, objective, and critical judgement of the quality of the academic unit;
 - (i) the Associate Vice-President Academic Planning selects potential committee members from nominations brought forward by the academic unit and dean;
 - (ii) principles of equity and diversity inform the composition of the review team;
 - (c) the academic unit completes a self-study that addresses the teaching and learning environment, the student experience, research and creative activity, resourcing, and campus and community engagement;
 - (i) to support collegial governance, all faculty, staff, and students in the academic unit should be consulted and have the opportunity to contribute to the self-study;
 - (d) the external review team assesses the unit's infrastructure and meets with administrators, faculty, students, and staff, and others who can most appropriately provide informed comment. Normally, the external review team conducts a site visit of two to three days; any alternative arrangements will require the agreement of the chair or director, dean, Associate Vice-President Academic Planning and approval of the Provost;

- (e) the external review team completes a report that is informed by the self-study and site visit and that includes a set of recommendations; normally, the report is due within two months of the site visit;
- (f) the academic unit and dean(s) complete separate responses to the report that evaluate the relevance and benefits of all of the recommendations;
- (g) the academic unit completes action plans detailing how the recommendations can be implemented within a one-to-five year timeline;
- (h) the action plans are reviewed and approved by the deans(s) and the Associate Vice-President Academic Planning convenes a meeting of the head of the academic unit and the dean(s) to review responses and approve action plans; and
- (i) the Associate Vice-President Academic Planning convenes milestone meetings with the head of the academic unit and the dean(s) to review progress at one, three and five-year intervals after the approval of the action plans; a report is completed at the meeting to track progress.

Reporting

- 7.00 The Vice-President Academic and Provost holds final authority for the approval of action items stemming from the external reviews of academic units.
- 8.00 The Vice-President Academic and Provost will report annually to the Senate Committee on Planning, the Senate, and the Board of Governors on the status of external reviews of academic units.
- 9.00 An executive summary of the external review team report will be made publicly available, subject to issues relating to the Protection of Privacy Policy ([GV0235](#)) and associated procedures.
- 10.00 External review documentation will be maintained by the Office of the Vice-President Academic and Provost for the purposes of long-term planning and reporting.

Authorities and Officers

- 11.00 The following are the authorities and officers for this policy:
 - i) Approving Authority: Senate
 - ii) Designated Executive Officer: Vice-President Academic and Provost
 - iii) Procedural Authority: Vice-President Academic and Provost (in consultation with the Senate Committee on Planning)
 - iv) Procedural Officer: Associate Vice-President Academic Planning

Relevant Legislation

[University Act, RSBC 1996 c 468](#)

Related Policies and Documents

Protection of Privacy Policy ([GV0235](#))