

## Guidelines for Academic Units

Prepared by the Senate Academic Planning and Review Committee as required by Senate policy on Quality Management for Academic Units

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The intention of the policy on quality management is to encourage Schools, Faculties, Departments, and interdisciplinary program committees to reflect on their activities and to develop plans for improving teaching, learning, and research.

The Senate policy on Quality Management of Academic Units requires reviews of academic units to comprise three parts: self-assessment, evaluation by an advisory team, and an action plan based on the self-assessment and report of the advisory team. The Senate Academic Review and Planning Committee has prepared the following guidelines for each of these components:

### Self-assessment:

- *Not including appendices and statistical information, self-assessments should be no longer than ten (10) single-spaced pages.* Emphasis should be placed on the unit's assessment of strengths, areas needing improvement, risks, opportunities, and strategic direction.
- Self-assessments should be undertaken with due regard for fiscal and resource possibilities and constraints. It should be taken as given that every unit at UPEI would offer students more choices and do more research and service with additional resources. Arguments for new resources should be accompanied by strong evidence that the new resources are needed to deliver the current program. Where arguments for expansion of current programs are made, they should be supported by strong argument connecting the strategic goals of the unit to the successful fulfilment of the University's mission and/or evidence of enrolment pressures. Such cases for expansion should be accompanied by a plausible assessment of the fiscal implications (expenditures and revenues) for the University.
- *Fulfilment of Mission, Teaching:* This section should establish the unit's goals and objectives with respect to teaching and review current program design and delivery in light of those goals and objectives. Some specific items that might be considered are:
  - Aims and objectives of the unit's curriculum
  - Structure of programs
  - Delivery of programs
    - Teaching methods (background/discussion material to be provided to focus discussion)
    - Modes of program delivery, including on-line and blended delivery
    - Methods of assessing student achievement (background/discussion material to be provided to focus discussion)

- Attention to core student achievements: communication including literacy and numeracy, the ability to carry out research, problem solving, critical thinking, self-directedness, opportunities for experiential learning.
  - Student satisfaction and opinion: As part of the preparation of the self-assessment, the unit should consult with current students to discuss the items identified above. It is suggested that a meeting be held with students. Faculty and instructors might also review student evaluations of teaching to identify recurring comments that might indicate particular strengths or areas for improvement.
- *Fulfilment of Mission, Research and Creative Activity:* This section should establish the unit's goals and objectives with respect to research and creative activity. It should assess the general level and quality of research activity in light of those goals and objectives. (Note that details of research activity will be reported in the appendices.)
- *Fulfilment of Mission, Service:* This section should establish the goals and objectives of the unit with respect to service activities. In light of these goals and objectives, it should assess the level and quality of service to the University, discipline, and community provided by members of the academic unit.
- *Fulfilment of Mission, Balance among teaching, research, and service:* This section should assess and make recommendations about the relative weight and distribution of work among teaching, research, and service. The unit should strive to identify a balance among the three that will allow the unit, if not each individual in it, to fulfil all parts of the mission.
- *Fulfilment of Mission, Relationship to Broader External Context:* This section should assess the overall goals and objectives of the unit in relation to the current and future trends in the discipline or field of enquiry, the mission and goals of the University and, where applicable, the mission and goals of the relevant Faculty, School or AVC.
- *Infrastructure and support:* Taking into account budget and resource constraints and realities, and focussing on the ability of the unit to achieve its aims and objectives, the unit should assess and make recommendations about the levels and quality of support services and facilities. These might include:
  - Staff: (current levels, evaluation, plan to correct shortcomings)
  - Library: *the units should consult the University Librarian for an assessment of the collection as it relates to the unit's program(s)*
  - Facilities:
    - Classrooms
    - Laboratories
    - Information technology
    - Other

- Non-salary budget
- *Appendices:* To provide appropriate information to members of the advisory team, the following will normally be appended to the self-assessment:
  - Department profiles (last seven years, if available): these will be generated from the University's data bases and distributed by the Vice President, Academic. The profiles will include quantitative summaries of items such as those listed below: (detailed contents of the profiles will be developed by the Vice President, Academic, in consultation with Deans, Chairs, and Program Coordinators):
    - Faculty and instructional resources:
    - Support staff resources:
    - Graduated students
    - Course enrolments
    - Sections taught
    - Class size
    - Student attrition
    - Service Teaching
    - Research grants held
    - Non-salary budget, budgeted for current year; budgeted and actual for most recent year.
  - Departmental annual reports (last seven years, if available).
    - Teaching:
      - Curriculum development or changes during the year.
      - A list of courses taught by each faculty member.
    - Scholarly Research and/or Creative Activity:
      - List of research grants held by faculty members
      - List of publications by relevant category: (books, edited collections, refereed articles, non-refereed articles)
      - List of conference presentations
      - List of in-progress research projects
    - Service:
      - List for each faculty member of service to Department, Faculty or School, University, profession and community.
    - Quality Management:
      - Report on steps taken to implement changes resulting from most recent self-assessment and external review.
      - For each area covered by the self-assessment, the unit should report: the current situation or practice; the unit's appraisal of the current situation or practice; the unit's assessment of strategic directions and proposed actions.
- Results of surveys of current students and recent graduates: The University will facilitate surveys of current students and graduates of programs offered by the academic unit being reviewed. The questions in Appendix A will form the core of the survey instrument(s) which will be administered electronically by the Office of the Vice President Academic:

- current *Curriculum vitae* for each member
- Section of the current Calendar that pertains to the Department's programs and courses.
- Representative sample of course outlines, student assignments, tests, exams
- Copies of survey instruments (student opinion, graduate follow-up)

### **The Advisory Team**

- The advisory team will normally consist of two scholars from relevant units at other universities as well as one faculty member from a cognate unit at UPEI.. If the unit believes there is need for more than a three-person advisory team, the unit should make the case when it recommends names of potential advisors.
- Members of the advisory team will be provided with the unit's self-assessment, Senate's *Policy on Quality Assurance for Academic Units*, ARPC's *Guidelines for Advisory Teams*, ARPC's *Guidelines for Academic Units* and the University's policy on travel expenses. The University and the unit being reviewed will provide other information and material to the advisory team when asked and if possible.
- The internal advisor will be selected by the Academic Review and Planning Committee from a list of three nominees provided by the unit being reviewed. If the ARPC believes none of the nominated advisors is appropriate, it will ask the unit for additional names.
- Internal advisors should be senior and experienced enough to have a good understanding of the University's structure, programs, students, and constraints.
- The external advisors will be selected by the Vice President Academic in consultation with the Chair of the unit being reviewed and the responsible Dean, from a list of at least three nominees for every external advisor selected. This list should include the contact information and rationale for the selection of each nominee. If the Vice President Academic and Dean believe none of the nominated advisors is appropriate, it will ask the unit for additional names. The academic unit and Chair should not consult with nominees in regards to the review in advance of the selection process.
- External advisors should normally be nominated from senior members of faculty in appropriate disciplines at Canadian universities. For some disciplinary areas, it may be more appropriate to nominate one or more external advisors from universities outside of Canada. They should have a broad understanding of the discipline and of the practical issues associated with delivering programs and conducting research at a small university. If possible, they should have served as Chair (or equivalent) of an academic department. In compiling the list, the academic unit should exclude anyone who they believe may be in a conflict or bias situation.

- The University and/or the AVC will cover expenses incurred by advisors. Such expenses will include travel, accommodation, and food in accordance with UPEI policy on travel expenses. In addition, the University and/or the AVC will provide an honorarium of \$1,000 to each external advisor.
- The unit being reviewed should consult with the Purchasing Department to identify hotels that offer preferred rates to the University. When advisors fly to Charlottetown, the unit being reviewed should make every effort to secure the lowest possible fare.
- The unit being reviewed will normally arrange a social occasion such as a reception or an informal dinner so the advisory team can meet faculty and students informally. The University will provide up to \$300 for such an event.

### **Advisory Team Report**

- The Advisory Team will submit a report no later than one month following the visit and using the structure as laid out in the *Guidelines for Advisory Teams* document.

### **Action Plan**

- The unit's Action Plan constitutes a response to the Advisory Team Report and should be no more than four pages. It should have the same general structure as the self-assessment and advisory team report.
- The Action Plan should specify:
  - those things that the unit intends to do as a result of the self-assessment and the report of the Advisory Team in order to make improvements, better serve students and the discipline, and build on strengths;
  - With due regard for fiscal and resource possibilities and constraints, those things that the unit believes must be done by other units at the University and/or by the University administration to allow it to meet its objectives, make improvements, better serve students and the discipline, and build on strengths;
  - An estimate of the resource implications of the actions intended.
- In the context of the Action Plan, the unit must take into account and respond to the comments and recommendations of the Advisory Team.