



## External Review of Units and Programs

### Preamble and Purpose

Universities, like all organizations, experience change. To assist in this process, it is essential that academic and administrative activities are reviewed on a regular basis.

The purpose of an external review is to encourage forward-looking changes, program development, and high quality scholarship and services. Such reviews are usually best carried out by external assessors who can take an objective look at the situation and consider both the strengths and weaknesses of a particular unit. Reviews are best undertaken as a continuing part of the process of improvement and responsiveness of the units. Reviews should be formative and approached in a positive manner. Reviews provide an opportunity for the unit or program to work collegially to find ways of improving what it does. Conducted in this way, the constructive advice emanating from the review guides the unit in developing its respective policies, programs, and future directions.

Specifically, the purposes of program review are:

- To evaluate the quality, success, and role of academic and administrative units/programs in the fulfillment of their own and the University's mission and goals;
- To encourage strategic planning, innovation and improvement in units and programs;
- To provide an occasion for units and programs to identify opportunities and discover new ways to pursue these; and
- To gain fresh perspectives from colleagues outside the University and the unit.

The common elements of all reviews include:

- Preparation of a self-assessment report by the unit/program being reviewed;
- An external review and completion of a report by a review team;
- Response to the review team's report from the unit/program;
- Response to the review team's report from the Dean/Director; and,
- Recommendation from the Provost & Vice-President (Academic) including comments as to the feasibility of the recommendation, a plan identifying follow-up actions and a timetable for implementation.

### Policy Statements

1. In order to ensure that academic units and programs maintain academic excellence, all units and programs shall be reviewed at least once every 7 (seven) years.
2. In cases where academic programs are subject to review by external accreditation or licensing bodies, such accreditation reviews shall be considered equivalent to reviews conducted under this policy, unless the Provost & Vice-President (Academic) determines otherwise.
3. The Provost & Vice-President (Academic) will recommend to Senate the schedule of reviews annually after consultation with the President, the Deans, and the Curriculum and Academic Planning Committee of Senate or the Graduate Studies Committee of Senate. Any unit can, through its Chair, Dean or Director, request a review.
4. The term "unit" (hereafter referred to as "the unit"), is intended to be applied in a flexible rather than rigid fashion. In practice, it can be applied to an academic or administrative unit. It could be a

discipline or group of disciplines within a department, a faculty, or unit that comprise different departments or faculties.

## Preparation for a Review

To be effective, a review must be planned for in advance. Experience has shown that the more thorough and complete the advance preparation, the more effective the work of the Review Team. Reviews are not intended to concentrate on minutiae but rather to address the broad questions that provide the direction and rationale for the unit or program's operation in the context of the University's strategic plan.

## Self- Assessment Guidelines

The unit or program should include in their self-assessment report a clear picture of the unit's current status (students, programs, research activities and funding, outreach and professional community service, number of faculty and staff, available resources, services provided, frequency of service use, support materials/equipment, budgetary information, and other relevant information); its objectives and how they are being met; and an indication of where it hopes to go in the future.

*Additionally, the unit should address such questions as:*

- *Why are things being done in this way?*
- *Is the current way the best way?*
- *Is it necessary to do it at all?*
- *Does what is being done match up with any specified standard and performance?*
- *What uncertainties and/or opportunities exist?*
- *In what directions are we moving?*
- *Are we providing the best programs/services?*
- *Are we making the best use of the talents and resources available?*
- *Are we being responsive to change?*
- *What are the limitations on the improvements we wish to make?*

The unit being reviewed should address these questions in a fairly concise form. This list is not intended to be exhaustive of any major questions which the program or unit may wish to address and for which to seek comment and advice.

## Review Schedule

Rather than developing a periodic review process that could result in ill-time reviews, the process of initiating a review is based upon need, desire, and/or circumstances. Major faculty changes, significant program alterations, dramatic enrolment shifts, restructured services, instances of disagreement, and/or anticipated or recently completed organizational changes are examples of circumstances when reviews might be beneficial.

## External Review Team Membership

The Review Team will normally be composed of three members:

- One person from outside the unit/program appointed by Senate;
- One person from outside the unit/program chosen by the Unit; and

One person chosen by the Provost & Vice-President (Academic) after consultation with the head of the Unit and the Dean/Director

At least two of the above individuals must be external to Brandon University, and are acknowledged authorities in the relevant program/service. The third member of the team must be internal to Brandon University.

## **Role of the External Review Team**

- To examine the program/unit and provide an assessment of the current status and recommendations for the future;
- To provide an assessment of current programs and make recommendations on future development;
- To provide observations vis-à-vis faculty research, scholarly and/or creative activities, and professional community service and provide recommendations for future directions including linkages and partnerships;
- To examine and provide observations and recommendations on the structure of the unit or service and its organization within the University so as to enable it to maintain and develop its activities most effectively;
- To examine and provide observations and recommendations on any matters that may affect the present and future well-being of the program/unit; and
- In connection with each of the above, to identify and provide recommendations on space, facilities, and other resources to implement the recommendations.

The External Review Team will normally conduct a two-day review. The Review Team will meet with members of the Unit (either individually or in functional groups or both as appropriate), the relevant Dean(s)/Director(s)/Program/Unit Head(s), the Provost & Vice-President (Academic), students and staff. Meetings will also be arranged with administrators in other units/programs with which the Unit has significant interaction.

## **Report of the External Review Team**

In preparing its report, the Review Team should address any major issues facing the Unit, comment on the compatibility of the unit's purpose, achievements, plans and goals with those of the University and suggest strategies for achieving unit and University goals. The report shall include recommendations, which, in the view of the Review Team, will lead to improvements in the Unit.

Within three weeks of the review, the Review Team will provide a draft report to the Provost & Vice-President (Academic). The Provost & Vice-President (Academic), the unit/program head, and the Dean/Director will review the report for factual accuracy and return it to the Review Team. The Review Team will submit the final report to the Provost & Vice-President (Academic) within two weeks. Upon receipt of the report, the Provost & Vice-President (Academic)

and will provide copies to the unit/program head, Dean/Director, and the President.

The unit/program head will submit a written response to the Review Team's report to the Dean/Director. After consultation with the Unit/Program Head, the Dean/Director will submit his/her comments on the report and the unit/program report to the Provost & Vice-President (Academic). The Provost & Vice-President (Academic) will meet with the unit/program head and the Dean/Director to discuss what action should be taken.

The Provost & Vice-President (Academic), the Unit head and the Dean/Director will meet with the Curriculum and Academic Planning Committee of Senate or the Graduate Studies Committee of Senate to discuss the report, proposed actions and to add its recommendations for proposed action and submit its recommendations to Senate.

## **Implementation of Review and Follow-Up**

The unit/program head in consultation with the Dean/Director will provide a progress report to the Provost & Vice-President (Academic) on the implementation of agreed-upon actions on an annual basis. These reports will be shared with the Curriculum and Academic Planning Committee of Senate or the Graduate Studies Committee of Senate for information.