

Sponsor: Committee on Academic Policy and Planning (CAPP)
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MSVU Policy and Procedures for Reviews of Academic Programs 17 March 2011

The Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission (MPHEC) requires the review of academic programs to provide assurance to government, students, employers, and the public that degree programs offered by publicly funded institutions and by institutions under provincial degree granting acts meet established standards of quality.

External reviews also permit members of programs to step away from the normal cycle of academic life in order to reflect on their programs, first among themselves and then in the company of external peers.

The core purpose of each review, under MPHEC guidelines, is to answer the following two questions: How well is the program achieving what it set out to accomplish? Is the program doing what it should be doing?

I Policy

Responsibility

Acting on the authority of Senate, the Committee on Academic Policy and Planning (CAPP), chaired by the Vice-President Academic and Provost, is responsible for overseeing the external reviews of academic programs.

Scope of the Policy and Procedures

The policy and procedures laid out in this document apply to the external review of academic programs or groups of programs, as identified by CAPP.

Objectives

Within the University's commitment to the principle of academic freedom, the review of academic programs supports the University's efforts to:

- evaluate programs in the light of the University Mission and Academic Plan
- evaluate programs according to the integrity of their respective disciplines or professions
- assess the clarity and appropriateness of program goals and stated student outcomes
- provide an opportunity for a creative exchange between program faculty and peers drawn from other institutions

- assess the curricular and pedagogical policies and practices of a program
- evaluate and suggest improvements for the academic quality and administrative effectiveness and efficiency of a program
- evaluate the way the program supports student learning and achievement
- assist a program in planning for the future.

II Procedures

Selection of Programs for Review

CAPP will establish a comprehensive schedule of programs to be reviewed based on the MPHEC requirement that programs normally be reviewed once every seven years.

In September and October of each year, Deans will consult with Chairs, Directors, and Coordinators responsible for programs to determine if there are any special circumstances that would justify the grouping of programs and/or deviating from the scheduled seven-year cycle, and make a recommendation to CAPP by 30 November.

By 1 January CAPP will update and, if necessary, revise the schedule of program reviews and submit it to the February meeting of Senate for information.

By 1 March, the Chair of CAPP will notify in writing the Chair, Director, or Coordinator of each program scheduled to be reviewed in the next academic year. If CAPP has any specific concerns with regard to the program, it will inform the Chair, Director, or Coordinator at this time.

By 1 April, the Chair, Director, or Coordinator of the program, in consultation with the Dean, will develop a Timeline for the external review (see Appendix A) and establish the program's plan for involving students (both current and graduates) in the Self Study and the Site Visit. The Dean will submit the Timeline and plan to CAPP for approval.

Selection of the Review Committee

The Review Committee will normally consist of two external experts in the field who are at arm's length from members of the program, and one MSVU faculty member not associated with the program.

All contact with potential reviewers and selected reviewers will be through the office of the responsible Dean.

The program will submit to the Dean a list of at least five external nominees and at least three internal nominees. The list of external nominees should include the following information for each proposed reviewer:

- name, rank, and position; institutional address, telephone number, and e-mail address

- degrees held, including the granting institution
- area(s) of specialization
- administrative or professional experience relevant to the program
- evidence of recent, relevant scholarly activity (e.g. references to three or four recent publications)
- details of any previous affiliation with MSVU and any association with individual members of the program (e.g. co-author, former student, friend)
- rationale for the nomination.

The Dean will make recommendations to CAPP based on the program's lists of internal and external nominees.

CAPP will prioritize and approve the internal and external nominees.

The Dean will contact nominees in the order established by CAPP until the positions are filled. Should the need arise, the Dean will request further nominations from the program and confirm the nominees with CAPP.

The Dean will consult with the selected reviewers and the Chair, Director, or Coordinator of the program to determine the precise dates for the Site Visit.

The members of the Review Committee will choose their Chair; the internal member will not normally be the Chair.

Self Study

The Self Study should be the most significant and valuable phase of the review, providing the members of the program with an opportunity for reflection and the Review Committee with evidence upon which to base judgements. The Self Study report should follow the Guide to Self Study reports set out in Appendix B.

The Chair, Director, or Coordinator of the program is responsible for ensuring that all full-time faculty participate in the preparation of the Self Study, and that the process involves students (both current and graduates), part-time instructors, relevant administrative staff, and any external advisory committees, agencies, or community groups with links to the program. The Chair, Director, or Coordinator of the program is also responsible for ensuring that the program's plan approved by CAPP for student involvement in the Self Study is implemented.

The Chair, Director, or Coordinator of the program will submit the completed Self Study to the Dean by the deadline established in the Timeline. The Dean will review the Self Study to

ensure that the document conforms to the prescribed format and may make recommendations for changes. The Chair, Director, or Coordinator of the program will submit the finalized Self Study to the Dean and the Vice-President Academic and Provost by the deadline agreed to in the Timeline.

Conducting the Review

The Dean will provide members of the Review Committee with the final version of the Self Study along with appendices by the deadline established in the Timeline. The members of the Review Committee will review the Self Study and may request additional information from the Dean prior to the Site Visit.

The Dean's office will coordinate arrangements for the Review Committee's Site Visit, which will normally last two days. (A sample schedule is attached as Appendix C.) The Review Committee will first meet *in camera* to review the schedule prepared by the Dean's office and discuss procedures, concerns, questions, and additional information that may be needed.

The Review Committee must meet with:

- program faculty and staff. **Normally, there will be no meetings with individual faculty and staff.**
- students, according to the program's plan approved by CAPP
- the appropriate Dean
- the Associate Vice-President (Research)
- the Chairs, Directors, or Coordinators of any collateral or cognate programs (for instance, for joint, interdisciplinary, or inter-departmental programs), or of programs that either provide significant service to or receive significant service from the program
- the Vice-President Academic and Provost
- and any member of the University community that can provide needed information (for example, the University Librarian, Director of Teaching and Learning, Associate Vice-President Student Experience, Director of the Co-op and Internship Program).

Reviewers should take into consideration the representativeness of the opinions expressed in the interviews they conduct.

The Dean and Vice-President Academic and Provost will inform the Chair, Director, or Coordinator of the program of any questions or issues raised with the Review Committee in addition to those presented in the Self Study.

At the conclusion of the Site Visit, the Review Committee will meet *in camera* to devise an initial list of recommendations and plan the reporting process. (A template for the report is included as Appendix D.) The Review Committee will then meet with the Vice-President Academic and Provost for a debriefing session to provide preliminary feedback on the outcome of the visit, as well as an evaluation of the process.

The Review Committee, through its Chair, must submit a draft report to the Dean within six weeks following the Site Visit. The Dean will forward the draft report to the Chair, Director, or Coordinator of the program to check the factual accuracy of the report. The Dean and Chair, Director, or Coordinator will have two weeks in which to identify factual errors in the draft report and submit such errors through the Dean to the Review Committee for consideration. The Review Committee will submit its final report to the Dean two weeks thereafter. In all cases the Dean must receive the final report no later than the deadline established in the Timeline.

Response to the Review

The Dean will circulate the final Review Committee report to all program faculty members, and make it available to all those interviewed during the Site Visit, including students.

Upon receipt of the final Review Committee report, the Chair, Director, or Coordinator of the program will prepare the program's substantive response and submit it to the Dean by the date specified in the Timeline approved by CAPP.

Upon receipt of the program's response, the Dean will prepare his or her own response to the Review Committee report and the program response, and, by the date specified in the Timeline approved by CAPP, submit the Review Committee report, the program response, and the Dean's response (copy to the Chair, Director, or Coordinator of the program) to CAPP.

CAPP will consider the Review Committee report, the program response, and the Dean's response, and prepare a draft report for Senate. CAPP will submit its draft report to the Chair, Director, or Coordinator of the program, who may within one month prepare a written response for submission to CAPP or ask for an interview with CAPP or both.

Upon receipt of the program response to the draft report, CAPP will prepare its final report and recommendations to be submitted to Senate for information.

One year following CAPP's submission of its report to Senate, the Chair, Director, or Coordinator of the program, and any other individual, unit, or group designated in the report as being responsible for a recommendation, will submit a report to the Dean, who will submit it to CAPP. This report should indicate the program's progress in addressing the recommendations made in the CAPP report.

III Periodic Review of the Policy and Procedures for Reviews of Academic Programs

CAPP will establish a Task Force to review its Policy and Procedures for Reviews of Academic Programs, normally every five years, and include the Task Force in the schedule of program reviews submitted to Senate.

IV Appendices

Appendix A: Timeline

Within one month of written notification from the Chair of CAPP that an external review is to take place, the Chair, Director, or Coordinator of the program, in consultation with the Dean, will develop a Timeline for the external review and establish the program's plan for involving students (both current and graduates) in the Self Study and the Site Visit. The Dean will submit the Timeline and program plan to CAPP for approval.

Site Visit

The most appropriate starting point for establishing a Timeline is the Site Visit. Site Visits should take place when the likelihood of faculty and student participation is high, typically during the fall/winter terms. March is frequently selected.

Working back from the Site Visit

Members of the Review Committee should receive the program's Self Study at least one month prior to the Site Visit. The Dean should receive the Self Study for review at least two weeks prior to the date of the intended mail out to the members of the Review Committee.

The time needed to prepare the Self Study will vary from program to program. It is the responsibility of the Chair, Director, or Coordinator of the program and the Dean to ensure that sufficient time is built into the Timeline to allow for the completion of the Self Study.

The Chair, Director, or Coordinator of the program should submit a list of potential external and internal reviewers to the Dean at least six months prior to the date selected for the Site Visit.

Working forward from the Site Visit

The Review Committee, through its Chair, must submit a draft report to the Dean within six weeks following the Site Visit. The Dean will forward the draft report to the Chair, Director, or Coordinator of the program to check the factual accuracy of the report.

The Dean and Chair, Director, or Coordinator will have two weeks in which identify factual errors in the draft report and submit such errors through the Dean to the Review Committee for consideration.

The Review Committee will submit its final report to the Dean two weeks thereafter.

Upon receipt of the final Review Committee report, the Chair, Director, or Coordinator of the program will prepare the program's substantive response and submit it to the Dean. The time necessary to prepare such a response will vary, particularly according to the time of year the report is received.

Upon receipt of the program's response, the Dean will prepare her or his own response to the Review Committee report and the program response, and submit the Review Committee report, the program response, and the Dean's response (copy to the Chair, Director, or Coordinator of the program) to CAPP.

At a minimum the Timeline should specify the date for:

1. submission of five external nominees and three internal nominees for the Review Committee to the Dean (six months prior to 4)
2. submission of the draft Self Study to the Dean (2 weeks prior to 3)
3. submission of the final Self Study to the Review Committee (1 month prior to 4)
4. the Site Visit
5. submission of the draft Review Committee report to the Dean. The Dean will forward the draft report to the Chair, Director, or Coordinator of the program for a check of factual accuracy (6 weeks after 4)
6. submission of the program's factual response through the Dean to the Review Committee (2 weeks after 5)
7. submission of the final Review Committee report (2 weeks after 6)
8. submission by the Chair, Director, or Coordinator to the Dean of the program's substantive response to the Review Committee report
9. submission by the Dean of the Review Committee report, program response, and Dean's response to CAPP.

Appendix B: Guide to the Self Study

The Self Study provides the Review Committee with a substantial range of documentation about the program, and, based on this information, the program's analysis of its present state and future prospects.

I Program Self-Analysis

Program

The Self Study should open with a brief description of the program, including history and structure.

The Self Study should define the objectives of the program and then assess them in the light of:

- the University Mission and Senate-approved Academic Plan
- the integrity of the discipline and/or professional standards
- student learning and achievement
- service to the community.

The Self Study should also:

- orient the program within the context of regional and national programs in the same field.
- outline the relationship of the program to other programs at MSVU and any plans for new linkages

- comment on the role of distance education within the program
- highlight changes that have occurred in the program over recent years, particularly those undertaken as a response to recommendations from the last review
- outline the process for ongoing program development and review, and the way students are involved in the process
- identify specific areas of concern that the program would like the Review Committee to address.

The Self Study should include a self-assessment of how well the program is meeting its objectives.

Curriculum

The Self Study should explain how the program objectives are implemented in the curriculum.

In particular, the Self Study should explain the structure of the curriculum, particularly with regard to:

- learning expectations as students progress through course levels
- how student outcomes are assessed
- rationales for honours, majors, concentrations, minor, certificates, and, where applicable, graduate degrees
- the pattern of course offerings over the previous five years, including an explanation for courses listed in the Calendar but not taught in the previous five years
- management of multi-section courses
- management of cross-listed courses and courses required or recommended in other programs
- qualitative distinctiveness of graduate-level courses
- the culminating writing experience for graduate students in both traditional and applied programs.

Admission and Enrollments

The Self Study should analyze enrollment levels in the program over the past five years. Are enrollments rising or falling? Is it possible to account for trends? What plans does the program have to deal with rising or falling demand?

In particular, the Self Study should document and comment on:

- the number of honours, majors, concentration, minors, and, where applicable, graduate students
- the number of students from other programs taking courses, required or otherwise
- admission policies that are specific to the program and the effectiveness of communication to applicants
- information provided to graduate students concerning areas of faculty competency to teach and direct research
- adherence to acceptance criteria

- graduation rates and strategies for retention
- program recruitment strategies, either program-specific or University-wide initiatives.

Student Engagement and Support

The Self Study should outline how students were involved in its preparation and the form of their participation in the Site Visit. If student surveys were undertaken, the rationales and methodologies should be explained.

The Self Study should comment on:

- the level of graduating scholarships and other awards
- if relevant, results of professional certification or licensing examinations
- placement after graduation (for example, acceptance to graduate school or employment)
- student advising
- support for international students
- financial aid opportunities
- student space
- student involvement in program governance
- strategies for student engagement in the program.

Teaching

The Self Study should evaluate the teaching strengths of the program and comment on:

- distinctive aspects of formal and informal teaching within the program, including teaching practices and innovations
- approaches to distance education
- experiential learning opportunities (for example, co-op placements, practicum, and service learning)
- teaching undertaken to meet the needs or requirements of other programs
- student-faculty ratios, actual course enrollments, and variations in class size
- work load distribution
- faculty teaching evaluations compared to University norms and other forms of assessment where available
- graduate teaching, if relevant
- contemplated changes or innovations.

Scholarly and/or Professional Activity

The Self Study should summarize the level of scholarly and/or professional activity in the program as defined in Articles 20.30-35 of the MSVU Collective Agreement, and describe how it supports the objectives of the program at the undergraduate and/or graduate levels. Specific areas of strength or specialization should be identified.

Service

The Self Study should provide a summary of the service commitments of faculty members as defined in Articles 20.36-37 of the MSVU Collective Agreement.

Faculty Complement

The Self Study should evaluate the full-time and part-time faculty complement, highlighting trends over the previous five years and anticipated future changes.

Resources

The Self Study should comment on:

- non-academic staff
- program budget
- physical facilities and space, including laboratory, classroom, and other space
- equipment and services
- Library resources, including collections, services, and expenditures.

Future Plans

The Self Study should lay out the program's views on possible future developments or changes over the next five years.

II Accompanying documentation:

Provided by the program:

- A. curricula vitae for all full-time faculty (in the format required by the University Review Committee)
- B. list of part-time faculty who have taught courses in the program over the previous five years, with their highest qualification indicated
- C. list of all courses taught over the previous five years, with instructors indicated
- D. course syllabi for all courses taught within the program, including those offered through the Teaching and Learning Centre and Online Learning, over the previous three years
- E. faculty workload for the previous five years (from Annual Reports)
- F. program teaching evaluations compared to University norms (based on raw data provided by the Deans' Office)
- G. external and internal faculty research funding, complete with aggregate amounts and sources, for the last five years (from faculty curricula vitae)
- H. admission policies and procedures specific to the program.

Provided to the Chair, Director, or Coordinator of the program by the Institutional Analyst:

- I. course enrollments (including the number of honours, majors, concentrations, minors, and, where relevant, graduate students) and graduations in the program for the previous five years
- J. summary of University-wide average course enrollments for the previous five years
- K. relevant University exit polls or other surveys of students.

Provided to the Chair, Director, or Coordinator of the program by the office of the Vice-President Academic and Provost:

- L. MSVU Strategic Plan
- M. Senate-approved Academic Plan
- N. MSVU Undergraduate Calendar and, where applicable, Graduate Calendar
- O. MSVU Collective Agreement with the Faculty Association
- P. the most recent annual budget reports for the University and the program
- Q. a copy of the previous program review and CAPP's recommendations to Senate based on the review
- R. financial aid opportunities for students
- S. support for international students

The Chair, Director, or Coordinator of the program may request the inclusion of any other information not mentioned above, for example, the reports of accreditation bodies.

Appendix C: Sample Site Visit Schedule

Schedules will be established in advance of the Site Visit by the Dean in consultation with members of the Review Committee and the Chair, Director, or Coordinator of the program. Reviewers typically arrive the day before the on-campus Site Visit, and meet *in camera* over dinner to select their Chair and discuss the review. On campus Site Visits normally last two days, with time set aside on the afternoon of the second day for members of the Review Committee to meet *in camera* to plan their report.

Schedules will vary according to program size and complexity, and relationships with support and other academic units. Times below are estimates only.

Review Committee *in camera* meeting (typically over dinner the evening prior to the on campus Site Visit)

Vice-President Academic and Provost	30 minutes
Dean	60 minutes
Chair, Director, or Coordinator	90 minutes
Full-time faculty	120 minutes
Students (according to the plan approved by CAPP)	90 minutes
Part-time faculty and staff	60 minutes
Chairs, Directors, or Coordinators of collateral or cognate programs	60 minutes
Associate Vice-President (Research)	30 minutes
Director of Teaching and Learning	30 minutes
IT&S Director	30 minutes
University Librarian	30 minutes
Co-operative Education Manager	30 minutes

Tour relevant campus facilities	30 minutes
Review Committee <i>in camera</i> closing meeting	90 minutes
Debrief with the Dean	30 minutes
Debrief with the Vice-President Academic and Provost	30 minutes

Appendix D: Review Committee Report Template

Name of Program(s) Reviewed:

Reviewers (names and affiliations):

Site Visit Dates (please append a copy of the itinerary for the Site Visit):

Program Review (please summarize your comments under the following headings):

I Program

Are the program objectives clearly defined?

Assess the program objectives in light of:

- the University Mission and Senate-approved Academic Plan
- the integrity of the discipline and/or professional standards
- student learning and achievement
- service to the community.

Assess the program within the context of regional and national programs in the same discipline or profession.

Assess the program within the context of its relationship to other programs at MSVU. Is the program working effectively with other programs at present? Should new linkages be explored?

Assess the role of distance education within the program.

Assess processes for ongoing program development and review, and student involvement in these processes.

Did the program respond effectively to the recommendations the last external review?

Overall, are the program objectives appropriate and how well are they being met?

II Curriculum

Are the program objectives effectively implemented in the curriculum? Assess the structure of the curriculum, particularly with regard to:

- learning expectations as students progress through course levels
- how student outcomes are assessed
- rationales for honours, majors, concentrations, minor, certificates, and, where applicable, graduate degrees
- the pattern of course offerings over the previous five years
- management of multi-section courses
- management of cross-listed courses and courses required or recommended in other programs
- qualitative distinctiveness of graduate-level courses
- the culminating writing experience for graduate students in both traditional and applied programs.

III Admission and Enrollments

Assess enrollment levels in the program over the past five years. Is the program responding appropriately to identifiable trends?

In particular, assess:

- the number honours, majors, concentration, minors, and, where applicable, graduate students
- the number of students from other programs taking courses, required or otherwise
- admission policies that are specific to the program and the effectiveness of communication to applicants
- information provided to graduate students concerning areas of faculty competency to teach and direct research
- adherence to acceptance criteria
- graduation rates and strategies for retention
- program recruitment strategies, either program specific or University-wide initiatives.

IV Student Engagement and Support

Describe and assess the level of student involvement in the Self Study and the Site Visit. If student surveys were undertaken, were the rationales and methodologies clear and appropriate? Were the results useful?

What strengths and weaknesses of the program were identified by the students? Please summarize comments received from students and their suggestions for improvement.

In particular, assess:

- the level of graduating scholarships and other awards
- results of professional certification or licensing examinations
- placement after graduation (for example, acceptance to graduate school or employment)
- adequacy of student advising
- adequacy of support for international students
- adequacy of financial aid opportunities
- adequacy of student space
- student involvement in program governance
- strategies for student engagement in the program.

V Teaching

Assess the pedagogical approaches employed to deliver the curriculum at each course level and overall. Where relevant, comment on:

- distinctive aspects of formal and informal teaching within the program, including teaching practices and innovations
- approaches to distance education
- methods of assessing and evaluating student learning (for example exams or portfolios)
- experiential learning opportunities (for example, co-op placements, practicum, and service learning)
- teaching undertaken to meet the needs or requirements of other programs
- student-faculty ratios, actual course enrollments, and variations in class size
- work load distribution
- faculty teaching evaluations compared to University norms and other forms of assessment where available
- graduate teaching
- contemplated changes or innovation.

VI Scholarly and/or Professional Activity

Assess the level of scholarly and/or professional activity in the program as defined in Articles 20.30-35 of the MSVU Collective Agreement. Is it appropriate to the mandate and size of the program and rank of the faculty? Does it adequately support the objectives of the program at the undergraduate and/or graduate level? Do faculty actively seek outside funding to support research and students? Are faculty given adequate opportunity for scholarship and professional development? Are there distinctive or special areas of strength?

(Please address strengths and weaknesses of scholarship without reference to individual faculty.)

VII Service

Assess the overall level of faculty service commitments as defined in Articles 20.36-37 of the MSVU Collective Agreement. Is the level of service provided to the University and community appropriate to the mandate of the program?

(Please address strengths and weakness of service without reference to individual faculty.)

VIII Faculty Complement

Assess whether the full-time and part-time faculty complement is at present sufficient to meet the program objectives.

IX Resources

Comment on the adequacy and effectiveness of non-faculty resources to support the program, in particular:

- non-academic staff
- program budget
- physical facilities and space, including laboratory, classroom, and other space
- equipment and services
- Library resources, including collections, services, and expenditures.

X Future Plans

Comment on the program's views on possible future developments or changes over the next five years and other opportunities the Review Committee envisions for the program.

XI Recommendations for Policy and Procedures

Does the Review Committee have any recommendations to make for the improvement of the MSVU Policy and Procedures for Reviews of Academic Programs?