

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

MEMORANDUM

TO: Senate

FROM: Liora Salter
Acting Vice-President,
Academic

RE: Guidelines for Implementation
of External Reviews

DATE: April 27, 1990

The Senate Committee on Academic Planning, at its April meeting, approved the attached set of proposed guidelines for implementation of external reviews. The intent is that these guidelines be appended to existing Senate Policy on Program Reviews (S81-⁶⁷).

MOTION:

That Senate approve, and recommend approval to the Board of Governors, the proposed guidelines for implementation of external reviews, as outlined in S90-33.

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SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

MEMORANDUM

To: Senate

From: Liora Salter
Acting Vice-President, Academic

Subject: Guidelines for External
Reviews

Date: May 1, 1990

In Paper S.81-¹⁵⁷~~81~~, Senate approved that SCAP should conduct program reviews, including reviewing and recommending to Senate proposals for new programs or major modifications to existing programs and the review of existing programs for purposes of assessment, expansion, curtailment or discontinuance. Item 7. within that Paper set out the following:

"Existing programs may be referred for review and assessment to the Senate Committee on Academic Planning either by 1) the Dean of the Faculty, or 2) the Vice-President, Academic, or 3) the Senate. The criteria attached in Appendix A will guide the review and assessment of existing programs".

The criteria in Appendix A (attached) set particular characteristics against which the program might be measured, but they made no reference to the process that should be followed. Therefore, it is the recommendation of SCAP that the attached guidelines for implementation of external reviews be appended to S.81-¹⁵⁷~~81~~ as clarification of the guidelines under which the process of departmental review should be conducted.

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 *the unit under review* will be informed that their reports will be made available in their entirety to 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.

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

VICE-PRESIDENT, ACADEMIC



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SAMPLE LETTER

April 30, 1990

To External Reviewers

Dear :

I want to thank you for agreeing to be a member [chair] for the external review group for the [Department, Faculty of _____]. By now, you should have heard from the secretary of the [Department, Faculty of _____] and have arrived at a convenient schedule for your visit to Simon Fraser University.

I have attached the Guidelines for the Implementation of External Reviews. You will note that the review process begins with a period of self-study, and that a report is produced prior to your visit. You will receive a copy of this report, and any other documentation considered relevant before you arrive. Do not hesitate to contact either the [department, faculty, etc.] or myself if you wish to receive additional information.

As the guidelines indicate, both you and the [department, faculty, etc.] are being asked to assess the mission, activities, quality of the program and its specializations and matters of resource allocation. This assessment will in all likelihood address organizational issues both within the [department, faculty, etc.] and in a broader context within the university. In this connection, you might also wish to know that Simon Fraser University is a signator to the Federal Contractor's Employment Equity Program, and that efforts at Simon Fraser are underway to assess and improve the quality of teaching. Your comments upon these and other matters not directly addressed within the guidelines are of course welcome.

In your conversations with the [department, faculty, etc.] arrangements will be made for the schedule of meetings during your visit. Typically, in addition to the faculty members of the Department, you should expect to meet with students (graduate and undergraduate), the Dean of Graduate and of Continuing Studies and with members of the administration including the Faculty Dean and the Vice-President, Academic. If there are other groups or individuals you want to see, do not hesitate to let us know so that these meetings can also be scheduled.

The review process is an integral part of the intellectual life of the University and of its planning for the future. We look forward to your visit and to your assessment.

Yours sincerely,

APPENDIX A*
(Taken from S.81-81)

CRITERIA FOR PROGRAM ASSESSMENT

It is expected that the identification of the purposes to which Simon Fraser will direct its efforts and energies will encourage and facilitate the development of a number of new and innovative programs. Assigning priorities to various proposals will be a difficult task. Ranking should be based partly on how a proposal is measured against the following characteristics.

1. The program has intrinsic academic excellence and is something this University can expect to do well.
2. The program substantially enriches the existing teaching programs of the University.
3. The program builds upon existing programs and resources in the University.
4. The program anticipates provincial or national needs.
5. The program does not unnecessarily duplicate existing programs at other universities in the Province.
6. The excellence of the program attracts students to the University.

Existing programs should also be subject to periodic review. Such reviews provide an opportunity to assess individual programs and to provide a basis for recommending their expansion, curtailment or discontinuance.