

# THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA



## SENATE POLICY: J-305

**Okanagan and Vancouver Senates**  
c/o Enrolment Services  
2016 - 1874 East Mall  
Vancouver, B.C. Canada V6T 1Z1

### **Number & Title**

J-305: *External Reviews of Academic Units*

### **Effective Date:**

**September 27, 2024**

### **Approval Date:**

Vancouver Senate      18 September 2024  
Okanagan Senate      26 September 2024

### **Review Date:**

This policy shall be reviewed five (5) years after approval and thereafter as deemed necessary by the *responsible committee*.

### **Responsible Committee:**

Okanagan Academic Policy Committee  
Vancouver Academic Policy Committee

### **Authority:**

*University Act, S. 37(1)*

*“The academic governance of the university is vested in the senate and it has the following powers:*

- (f) to consider, approve and recommend to the board the revision of courses of study, instruction and education in all faculties and departments of the university;*
- (i) to recommend to the board the establishment or discontinuance of any faculty, department, course of instruction, chair, fellowship, scholarship, exhibition, bursary or prize;*
- (k) to determine the members of the teaching and administrative staffs who are to be members of each faculty;*

- (o) *to make recommendations to the board considered advisable for promoting the interests of the university or for carrying out the objects and provisions of this Act;*
- (p) *to deal with all matters reported by the faculties, affecting their respective departments or divisions;*

### **Purpose and Goals:**

This policy is designed to provide structure, transparency and accountability to the process of external reviews of academic units and the unit programs. Academic unit reviews are in place to evaluate program quality and academic operations of units at UBC, highlighting the strengths and challenges of educational and research programs as well as the adequacy of resources to support the following goals:

- To ensure high quality teaching and learning for all students at UBC.
- To continue and enhance the highest quality of scholarship and research at UBC.
- To enrich student engagement and opportunities for development.
- To establish a culture of wellbeing across academic and learning communities.
- To embed Indigenous and globally diverse perspectives at all levels of University governance, teaching, and research.
- To incorporate accessible, equitable and inclusive principles and practices at all levels of University governance, teaching, and research.
- To cultivate a culture of innovation and inclusive excellence, critical self-evaluation and reflection, and continuous learning and improvement.
- To ensure the alignment of the academic unit with the University's mission.
- To facilitate accountability of academic units.

### **Guiding Principles:**

- Inclusion: Academic reviews must meaningfully engage diverse perspectives of internal and external community members, including those who are historically, persistently and systemically marginalized, to identify and address systemic inequities within academic units and programs. Inclusive excellence in academic reviews is foundational to UBC's commitment to inclusive excellence in research as well as providing transformative learning experiences to all students.

- Truth and Reconciliation: Academic reviews must meaningfully engage members of internal and external Indigenous communities to enhance **responsibility and accountability in incorporating** Indigenous ways of knowing, promoting self-determination, and inviting reciprocity in research activities and academic curriculum
- Collaboration: Academic reviews reflect relationship-building within the unit to strengthen collaborative work towards quality enhancement of programs and achievement of academic and non-academic goals.
- Innovation: Academic reviews will identify innovative ways to approach challenges and enhance research and learning efforts in the academy and the larger community.
- Accountability: Academic reviews are a mechanism to ensure public accountability and that the requirements of the University Act and other relevant legislation are met.

**Applicability:**

This policy is applicable to all Senate and Board of Governors approved *academic units* of the University including, but not limited to, Faculties and units within them, Colleges, Schools, Departments, Divisions, Centres and Institutes.

**Exclusions:**

This policy does not apply to external reviews not conducted by the *University*, such as accreditation reviews.

**Definitions:**

For the purposes of this policy:

*Academic Units* Means a faculty, college, school, department or division of the University; as well as any institute or centre of the University that offers credit courses or in which faculty have their primary appointments.

*Programs* Program means a course of study at any academic level that consists of related courses of instruction and other learning opportunities within an area of study.

*Responsible Executive* ***In the case of a Faculty or College***, the Academic Vice-President(s) for the campus(es) in which the Faculty or College is organized. Disagreements between those vice-

presidents will be resolved by the President or the President designate.

*In the case of all other academic units*, the Dean(s) of the Faculty in which the academic unit is organized. Disagreements between those Deans will be resolved by the Academic Vice-President(s) for that campus

**Policy:**

1. All academic units shall be externally reviewed, normally once every 5 to 7 years. Where the normal frequency is not operationally feasible, the Deans are to discuss their intentions and seek permission from the Academic Vice-President(s) for alternative arrangements. External academic unit reviews include the review of the unit's programs, undergraduate and graduate, and may also coincide with the upcoming end-of-term of a Dean or Head/Director. However, where there has been a rotation of deans or other considerations, the Academic Vice-President(s) can instigate a Faculty review.
2. An external review will have at least the following components:
  - i. A self-study report;
  - ii. An external review committee visit;
  - iii. A review committee report;
  - iv. A unit response to the report which includes an implementation/action plan; and,
  - v. A progress report to the Offices of the Provost and Vice-President Academic and Senate Secretariat Office 2 years following the visit.
3. The responsible executive shall be responsible for:
  - i. The selection of the external review committee;
  - ii. The terms of reference for the review;
  - iii. The distribution of the external review to appropriate governing bodies; and,
  - iv. Ensuring the relevant portion of the external reviews will be made public.
4. An external review is a separate process from an accreditation review, although similar information may be required for either process. Programs that undergo external accreditation processes are expected to comply with this policy. However, the unit leadership is encouraged to work with the Responsible Executive to ensure harmonization of processes instead of

duplication of efforts.

5. All cross-Faculty degree programs, programs offered by more than one academic unit, and any interdisciplinary programs shall be reviewed, independently, every 5 to 7 years.

**Calendar Statement:**

There are no calendar statements under this policy.

**Consultation:**

The following were invited to comment on the draft policy:

All faculty members including Professors, Associate Professors, Assistant Professors, Professors of Teaching, Associate Professors of Teaching, Assistant Professors of Teaching, and lecturers; sessional instructors; ISPEAC; UBCO Deans' Council; UBCO Senate Learning & Research Committee; UBCV Deans, Directors and Heads; UBCV Associate Deans; Equity and Inclusion Office; UBCV Senate Research & Scholarship Committee.

**History:**

This policy replaces *Review of Administrative Units* which was approved on September 14, 1977, amended on May 18, 1983 and extended to the Okanagan Campus in 2005.

**Related Policies:**

Board Policy AP8: Extension of Appointments for Deans

Board Policy AP9: The Appointments and Extension of Appointments for Heads of Academic Units

**Appendix:**

The following will be available on the Offices of the Provost and Vice President Academics websites:

*UBC Vancouver Academic Unit External Review Guidelines*

*UBC Okanagan Academic Unit External Review Guidelines*

## **Procedures:**

### **1. Scheduling of Reviews**

- i. Reviews are normally conducted every 5 to 7 years. Where the normal timeline is not operationally feasible, the Deans are to discuss their intentions and seek permission from the Academic Vice-President(s) for alternative arrangements.
- ii. A rolling schedule will be made publicly available by the Offices of the Provost and Vice-President Academic (Provost's Offices). The Dean's office will confirm with the relevant Provost's Office when a scheduled review has been initiated.

### **2. Self-Study Report**

- i. Request preparation of supporting materials as outlined in the guidelines available on the Provost's Offices websites.
- ii. Become familiar with review goals and guiding principles to incorporate in the components of the self-study and program information.
- iii. The self-study report shall include:
  - a. Summary of previous review recommendations in addition to actions taken by the unit;
  - b. Summary of operations of academic unit;
  - c. Assessment of quality of instruction, research, and service or outreach and to include quality enhancement plans for each area;
  - d. Assessment of the embedding of the Indigenous Strategic Plan and incorporating principles of accessibility, equity, diversity, and inclusion;
  - e. Assessment of the value to students' education (undergraduate and graduate) and preparation;
  - f. An evaluation of the adequacy and effective use of resources (physical, technological, financial and human);
  - g. An evaluation of strengths and challenges across all administrative and student services within the unit;
  - h. Role within UBC and effectiveness in fulfilling that role including Health and Safety requirements; and,
  - i. Future objectives and resources or change necessary to achieve them.
- iv. Program information:
  - a. The continuing appropriateness of the program(s) structure, admissions requirements, method of delivery and curriculum for

- the program's educational goals and standards;
  - b. The embedding of Indigenous and globally diverse perspectives at all levels including engagement with community members;
  - c. How accessible, equitable and inclusive principles and practices at all levels of teaching are included;
  - d. Faculty performance including the quality of teaching and supervision and demonstrable current knowledge and expertise in the field of specialization;
  - e. That the learning outcomes achieved by students/graduates meet the program's stated goals, the degree level standard, and where appropriate, the standards of any related regulatory, accrediting or professional association;
  - f. The continuing adequacy of the methods used for evaluating student progress and achievement to ensure that the degree level standards have been achieved; and,
  - g. Where appropriate, the graduate employment rates, graduate satisfaction level, employer satisfaction level, advisory board satisfaction level, student satisfaction level, and graduate rate.
- v. Length of self-study report to be no more than 50 pages, with a maximum of 300 pages for the appendix. While a large amount of information will be reviewed for this document it is anticipated that the main document will contain a summary or assessment of the information with the data and background information added to the appendices.
- vi. Timeline:
- The majority of external reviews will require 8 to 12 months from start to completion with Faculty reviews taking approximately 18 months, inclusive of the Deans search. A rough timeline is provided within the guidelines available on the Provost's Office website.

### 3. External Review Committee (ERC)

#### i. Composition:

- a. Approximately 2 to 4 external reviewers with the exact number of external reviewers determined by the academic unit responsible executive;
- b. The reviewer selection should span the academic unit's research and teaching interests, including faculty with experience in the development and delivery of undergraduate and graduate curricula and programs (if the unit under review engages in these) who also represent a diversity of lived experiences and any required or

desired professional credentials and/or related work experience;  
and,

- c. Professional programs may also include a member from the relevant professional community on their review teams.

ii. Selection process:

- a. Faculty or College reviews: The Dean provides to the Academic Vice-President a list of suggested reviewers' names with their contact information, academic rank, and a synopsis of academic qualifications and field(s) of expertise for approval. For cross campus Faculties the lead Dean's office will provide leadership and be inclusive in working across campuses on the review.
- b. Academic units within Faculties: The Head or Director provides to the Dean a list of suggested reviewers' names with their contact information, academic rank, and a synopsis of academic qualifications and field(s) of expertise for approval. Depending on the size and complexity of the unit, the Dean, in consultation with the unit leadership, recruits 2 to 4 candidates to serve on the ERC considering the following for selection:

- Academic leadership from peer institutions, Faculties or departments;
- Relevant academic experience in quality assessment and enhancement, research, curriculum design, teaching and learning, and administration;
- Any required or desired professional credentials and/or related work experience;
- Understanding of the BC post-secondary educational context;
- Potential conflicts-of interest;
- Members of internal and external Indigenous communities;
- Equity Representation of diverse lived experiences and perspective across historically, persistently and systemically marginalized groups;
- Understanding of competency-based education or expertise in the development and delivery of undergraduate/graduate curricula within the disciplinary context.

- iii. In the case of a Department, Institute, Centre, or similar review, the Dean will share the list of ERC members along with a summary of their biography and any relevant information to the Office of the Provost and VP Academic on the respective campus.
- iv. Terms of Reference (ToR) – An expanded description is included in the guidelines available on the Provost's Offices websites. Those units/

programs with accreditation reviews may select the ToR sections that are most relevant to them to harmonize their accreditation processes, so as not to duplicate efforts.

#### 4. External Review Committee Report

- i. Prepared according to the ToR provided by the academic unit under review and considering the unit's successful incorporation of the review goals and guiding principles.
- ii. For reviews within Faculties, the Responsible Executive (Head/Director) reviews the report with the Dean within 2 weeks for factual errors and reports back to ERC for clarification if found.
- iii. The final report is submitted to the Responsible Executive within 30 days following the site-visit, and is forwarded to: Head, Director or Dean, the Provost's Office and, where the unit under review has a graduate program, the respective Dean of Graduate Studies.

#### 5. Academic Unit Response to the Report and Implementation/Action Plan

- i. The academic unit leadership, Head, Director, or Dean engages with groups/communities who were part of the self-study and the site-visit. This includes the Dean of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies or Dean of College of Graduate Studies where there has been a review of graduate programs. Invite all to provide input to the writing of the response and action plan, normally 8 to 10 pages. This may take units up to 3 months to ensure meaningful engagement.
- ii. Within 3 months of the completion of its external review, the academic unit Head, Director or Dean generates a Response to External Review report. In addition, the academic unit Head, Director or Dean will create an action plan for addressing these recommendations in the short and long term.
- iii. The Response to External Review is approved by the Dean and submitted to the Responsible Executive.
- iv. The Responsible Executive files a copy of the ERC report with the Office of the Senate, the Provost's Office and, where the unit under review has a graduate program, the respective Dean of Graduate Studies.
- v. The Unit will be asked by the Provost's Office to prepare a maximum 2-page summary of the key findings, key recommendations of the ERC, as well as summarize the preliminary response, for the Provost Office's Report to Senate on External Reviews.

## 6. External Review Progress Report

- i. Two years after submission of the academic unit's response and implementation /action plan, the unit Head, Director or Dean prepares a Progress Report reflecting on the unit's successes and challenges in meeting the ERC's recommendations,
- ii. The Progress Report is submitted to the Responsible Executive, the relevant Provost's Office, the Office of the Senate and, where the unit under review has a graduate program, the respective Dean of Graduate Studies, simultaneously.
- iii. The academic unit Head, Director or Dean shares the Progress Report, or a summary of it, with all academic unit members and engaged parties, internal and external to the academic unit. This includes, but is not limited to, faculty, students, staff, alumni, and community groups.