

## Regulations on Cyclical Academic Unit Reviews

Last revised by:  
Senate

December 3, 2014

Minute IIB3

*Full history appears at the end of this document.*

### Rationale

McGill has an obligation to conduct program reviews to ensure quality and accountability, in keeping with the Policy adopted by Quebec universities within the CREPUQ framework (1991-1999). Furthermore, in keeping with McGill's commitment to excellence in research and in undergraduate and graduate teaching, as judged by the highest international standards, there is a need for a procedure to assess the quality of our programs in relation to the research and reputation of the professors who offer them, as well as the student experience. For these reasons, cyclical reviews of academic units were introduced in 2011, to replace the academic program reviews that were implemented from 2004 to 2009.

Cyclical academic unit reviews are intended to go beyond program reviews; they allow the University, the Faculties, and the units themselves to assess their objectives, priorities, activities and achievements, and to compare themselves to equivalent units in peer institutions, with a view to improving quality and maintaining excellence. Academic unit reviews help to ensure that the unit's objectives are aligned with Faculty and University priorities and plans, as well as meeting the requirements of the Bureau de coopération interuniversitaire.

### Review criteria

Each cyclical academic unit review is conducted by a committee, reporting to the relevant Dean and to the Provost. The following criteria should be addressed in the unit's self-study document, as appropriate, as well as the review committee's report:

#### 1. *Objectives, Priorities and Activities*

- The academic unit's objectives, and priorities. A multi-year plan, including strategies for maintaining and/or further improving the performance of the unit and a consideration of whether current activities are the best means for achieving the unit's objectives.
- The relationship of these objectives, and priorities to Faculty and University strategic plans. Strategies for ensuring alignment with Faculty and University priorities and plans.
- The unit's current strengths and weaknesses, including, where feasible, comparison with equivalent units elsewhere (normally in the U15 and/or American Association of Universities (AAU)) identified for 'bench-marking' purposes.
- Degree of involvement of students and student groups in the unit's activities.

#### 2. *Research, Scholarship and Creative Work:*

- Extent and quality of the unit's research, scholarship and creative work (publications, research contracts, patents, etc.).
- Success in obtaining peer-reviewed external funding for research, including collaborations and interdisciplinary research.
- Impact of research, as indicated by citations, honours and awards, and other evidence of recognized achievement.

- Involvement of members of the unit in highly regarded academic or professional journals and associations.
- Other contributions towards enhancing McGill's position as an internationally recognised, research-intensive institution.

### 3. *Academic Programs, Teaching and Learning*

- Learning goals of the unit's undergraduate and graduate programs.
- Scope, quality and potential of undergraduate and graduate programs, considered in light of learning goals and outcomes, enrolment trends, disciplinary trends, graduation rates, and other relevant performance indicators.
- Success of the unit in encouraging a student-centred learning environment, academic excellence, critical reasoning, inquiry-based pedagogy, promotion of research at the undergraduate level, professional training (where relevant), etc.
- Quality of academic environment; promotion of internationalism and interdisciplinarity; scope and quality of student advising.
- Effectiveness of graduate teaching and supervision; nature and extent of graduate student funding; success rate regarding graduate student employment in the field, etc.
- Quality of students.

### 4. *Diversity and Community Involvement:*

- Contributions of the unit to relevant external communities, professional bodies and disciplines.
- Performance on issues related to employment equity and equal educational opportunity.

### 5. *Structure, Management and Administration:*

- Effectiveness and appropriateness of the unit's structure, management and administrative processes.
- Adequacy of staffing arrangements.
- Processes in place to ensure quality and to track how well the unit is doing.
- Quality and effectiveness of institutional resources: libraries, IT services, etc.

## **Preparation of the self-study document**

Each academic unit will prepare a self-study document. The head of the academic unit under review will be responsible for overseeing the preparation of the self-study and will ensure that the process is inclusive, involving academic and non-academic staff, as well as students.

In order to minimise workload and duplication, to the maximum extent possible, the self-study will draw on existing data and information such as Annual Reports and other documents that are prepared routinely. The Cyclical Unit Review Office (CURO) will provide quantitative and qualitative information to the unit head.

Self-study documents should be brief and to the point. Supporting documentation should take the form of appendices. The self-study (including appendices) should be submitted in electronic format.

## **Timing and committee structure**

Academic units (including departments, schools, institutes, and faculties without departments) will be reviewed approximately once every 7 years, commencing in September 2011.<sup>1</sup> The review committee will consist of the following: the committee chair (from another faculty, nominated by the Provost); two external members chosen from comparable academic units in peer institutions; one or two McGill faculty members from different units normally within the same faculty, who are not members of the Faculty Administration,

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<sup>1</sup> Interdisciplinary programs without an administrative home unit will be reviewed separately, using a similar process.

nominated by the Dean; one or two student members from a different unit nominated by the relevant student societies.

As part of the review process, the committee will conduct a site visit. The review committee will meet with individuals/groups associated with the unit, such as the unit head, faculty members support staff and students. Planning and setting up of the site visit will be coordinated by the academic unit and CURO.

The unit's self-study documentation must be submitted not later than one month prior to this site visit. The information provided to units by CURO will be submitted to the unit not later than 4 months before the site visit, in order to allow sufficient time to prepare the self-study.

The review committee will prepare a report, due within one month of the site visit. The report should conform broadly to the review criteria (see above). Units have the option of responding to the report, before the dossier is forwarded to the Dean and Provost, for action as appropriate. Outcomes of the reviews shall be reported to APC and Senate for information.

### **Administration of the reviews**

Reviews are overseen by the Cyclical Unit Review Office (CURO), which reports to the Associate Provost (Policies, Procedures and Equity). Templates and other administrative procedures are available on the CURO website (<http://www.mcgill.ca/curo/academic-unit-reviews>).

#### *Legislative History:*

##### *Approved:*

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| Senate | January 19, 2011 | Minute IIB1 |
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##### *Amended:*

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| Senate: | December 3, 2014 | Minute IIB3 |
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