



# Memorandum

**Office of the Provost**

James Administration Bldg., Room 504

Tel.: 514-398-4177 / Fax: 514-398-4768

**TO:** Senate

**FROM:** Anthony C. Masi, Provost

**SUBJECT:** Policy on Cyclical Academic Unit Reviews

**DATE:** 19 January 2011

**DOCUMENT #:** D10-32

**ACTION REQUIRED:**  INFORMATION  APPROVAL/DECISION

**ISSUE:** It is proposed to replace reviews of academic programs with cyclical reviews of academic units, starting in the 2011-2012 academic year.

**BACKGROUND & RATIONALE:** McGill has an obligation to conduct program reviews, in keeping with the Policy adopted by Quebec universities within the CREPUQ framework, to ensure quality and accountability. From 2004-2009, this provision was met by means of academic program reviews. These program reviews were conducted in very different ways across the University and they did not allow us to assess the quality of our programs in relation to the research and reputation of the professors who offer them. In addition, they did not provide academic units with the opportunity to assess their objectives, priorities and achievements. The academic unit reviews will be similar - but not identical - to the former cyclical reviews which ended in 1999.

The attached proposal incorporates points raised during discussion at the December 8, 2010 meeting of Senate, in particular clarifying the fact that reviews will be brought to Senate for discussion (see bottom of page 3 and page 8). The changes are underlined in Appendix A.

**MOTION OR RESOLUTION FOR APPROVAL:** *Be it resolved that Senate approve the Policy on Cyclical Academic Unit Reviews, attached as Appendix A.*

**PRIOR CONSULTATION:** Deans  
Academic Planning Group  
Academic Policy Committee

**NEXT STEPS:** N/A

**APPENDICES:** Appendix A: Policy on Cyclical Academic Unit Reviews

## Policy on Cyclical Academic Unit Reviews

### 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 will be 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 will 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 will 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 CREPUQ Policy.

### Review criteria

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

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

- The academic unit's goals, objectives, and priorities.
- The relationship of these goals, objectives, and priorities to Faculty and University strategic plans.
- The unit's current strengths and weaknesses, including comparison with equivalent units (normally in the G13 and/or American Association of Universities (AAU)) identified for 'bench-marking' purposes.
- The extent and nature of the unit's interaction with student groups.
- A consideration of whether current activities are the best means for achieving the unit's objectives.
- Strategies for maintaining and/or further improving the performance of the unit.
- Strategies for ensuring alignment with Faculty and University priorities and plans.

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

- Learning goals and objectives 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 metrics.

- Success of the unit in encouraging a student-centred learning environment, academic excellence, critical reasoning, inquiry-based pedagogy, promotion of research in undergraduate level teaching, professional training (where relevant), etc.
- Quality of academic environment in terms of promotion of internationalism and interdisciplinarity; scope and quality of student advising.
- Effectiveness of graduate teaching and supervision.
- Nature and extent of graduate student funding.
- Quality of students.

*3. Research, Scholarship and Creative Work:*

- Extent and quality of the unit's research, scholarship and creative work.
- Contributions towards enhancing McGill's position as an internationally recognised, publicly-funded, research-intensive, and student-centred institution.

*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.
- Financial resources.

**Preparation of the unit 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 Office of the Provost will coordinate data collection from relevant internal units (including Planning and Institutional Analysis (PIA) and the Faculties) and will provide quantitative and qualitative information to the unit head, as well as copies of the unit's reviews from previous years.

Self study documents should be brief and to the point. Maximum length for the main document (excluding appendices) is 20 pages – a template will be provided (see Appendix 1). The self-study should start with a brief profile of the unit, offering reflection and critical self-analysis, and

summarizing any significant changes since the last review (not relevant for the first cycle), as well as any matters of particular interest or concern. The self-study should then address the review criteria (see above).

Supporting documentation should take the form of appendices (see Appendix 2). 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. Cyclical reviews of academic units will commence in September 2011. (See Appendix 3 for schedules and timelines).<sup>1</sup>

The review committee will consist of 7 members, including: the committee chair (from another faculty, nominated by the Provost); 2 external members chosen from comparable academic units in peer institutions, proposed to the Academic Policy Committee (APC) of Senate by the Dean of the faculty in question (with input from the unit); 2 McGill faculty members from a different unit normally within the same faculty, nominated by the Dean of the faculty in question; 2 student members from a different unit (normally, one graduate student nominated by the Post-Graduate Students' Society (PGSS) and one undergraduate nominated by the Students' Society of McGill University (SSMU) or by the relevant Faculty Undergraduate Society). Committee membership in its entirety shall be approved by APC.

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 details of the site visit will be co-ordinated by the academic unit, with input from the Office of the Provost.

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 the Provost's Office (via PIA) must 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 (max 10 pages in length), due within one month of the site visit. The report should conform broadly to the review criteria (see above). (See Appendix 4 for report format and Appendix 5 for a template for the report.) Units will have the option of responding to the report. Deans will be asked for written comments on the report. APC shall receive a copy of the final report, responses and comments and these reports shall be brought to Senate periodically for discussion. Feedback will be provided to deans and units. (See Appendix 3 for Timelines.)

---

<sup>1</sup> Interdisciplinary programs will be reviewed separately from academic unit reviews.

### **Administration of the reviews**

Given that there will be an average of 2 unit reviews per month, there will be a special unit within the Office of the Provost dedicated to unit reviews. In addition to a Director or Manager, who will report to an Associate Provost, there will be 2 full-time equivalent staff members. The Staff will liaise with external reviewers (making their travel arrangements, etc.), coordinate with Faculties and with PIA to ensure that the necessary information is provided to units well in advance, ensure that the committees are set up, receive and disseminate self-study documents and review committee reports, etc.

## Appendices

### Appendix 1 Template for self study documents

To be added

### Appendix 2 Appendices for the self-study (as applicable)

#### *General:*

- 1) Annual Reports from the last 6 years.
- 2) Link to current communications material, such as handbooks and/or websites.
- 3) List of peer institutions that the unit considers suitable for bench-marking purposes, and brief rationale. Appropriate benchmarking data for assessing quality in comparison with units in other institutions.<sup>2</sup>

#### *Staff:*

- 1) List of current staff members (academic and support staff), with their job title, status, description of current teaching, supervision, research and/or administrative and support responsibilities.
- 2) CVs of all tenure track academic staff.
- 3) Changes in academic staffing (new appointments, promotions, retirements, resignations) in the past 6 years. Current staffing vacancies. Staffing plan (next 6 years).

#### *Academic Programs, Teaching and Learning (Review Criterion 2):*

- 1) Programs and courses offered by the academic unit (can be done by means of links to the Calendar) and an indication of relevance and coherence of courses to the programs offered. (Initial reviews may also include summaries of the program reviews undertaken in the 2004-2009 period.)
- 2) Unit policies on teaching and learning.
- 3) Teaching development activities and initiatives.
- 4) Innovative teaching practices (e.g. use of technology in the classroom).
- 5) Teaching evaluations (aggregate details of evaluations, other sources of feedback or evaluation data, etc.).
- 6) Policies and practices regarding graduate student teaching and supervision.
- 7) Sources and amounts of graduate student funding.
- 8) Teaching awards won by professors.
- 9) 'Service' courses offered by the unit for students in other programs and 'cognate' courses taken by the unit's students in other departments. Participation in interdisciplinary programs.<sup>3</sup>
- 10) Reports of accrediting bodies (if applicable).
- 11) Participation of the unit's students in exchanges, study abroad, etc.

---

<sup>2</sup> The Office of the Provost may also be used as a resource (by units and/or by the review committees) to identify and assemble appropriate benchmarking data from other universities (e.g. G13 and AAU).

<sup>3</sup> See note 1.

***Research, Scholarship and Creative Works (Review Criterion 3):***

- 1) Research achievements (publications, creative works, etc.) of faculty members and students (if not in the Annual Reports or CVs).
- 2) Where the disciplinary culture recognises the importance of citations, a bibliometric report for the faculty members in the academic unit.
- 3) List of all research income (external and internal) for the past 6 years, including research grants and research contracts (if not in the Annual Reports).
- 4) Prizes and awards won by professors.
- 5) Names of PhD students who graduated during the past 6 years, with thesis titles.
- 6) List of student publications and conference presentations for the past 6 years (if not in the Annual Reports).
- 7) Names of postdocs, with research project titles, last 6 years.
- 8) Involvement of students (undergraduate and graduate) in research conducted within the unit.

***Administration and Support (Review Criterion 5):***

- 1) Administrative and committee structures.
- 2) Description of provision of advising and mentoring for students and junior faculty members.
- 3) Existing physical resources (e.g., space, computing facilities, equipment) and any plans for their development.
- 4) Resources provided by the unit to graduate students (e.g., work space, IT, computer software, assistance for conference travel, etc.).
- 5) Library resources available in support of teaching and research.

***Statistical data to be provided by the Office of the Provost (via PIA)  
(due to the unit not later than 3 months before the site visit)***

- 1) FTE statistics (last 6 years) by program, including gender, nationality and previous institution, if applicable, for:
  - a) Undergraduate
  - b) Diploma
  - c) Honours
  - d) Masters
  - e) PhD
- 2) Admission statistics by program (last 6 years) (applications received, selectivity and yield rates, etc.).
- 3) Enrolment in (i) all courses and (ii) all programs offered by the unit for the past 6 years.
- 4) Student retention rates.
- 5) Graduation rates (undergraduate and graduate programs).
- 6) Academic staff/student numbers and ratios (last 6 years).
- 7) Teaching load distributions (last 6 years).
- 8) Master's students and their characteristics and programs of study.
- 9) Doctoral students:
  - a) Number of current doctoral students by year of study.
  - b) Number of doctoral students graduating in each of the 6 most recent years.
  - c) Percentage of faculty involved in supervision; average number of supervisees per professor.
  - d) Average length of time to complete a PhD (based on latest 6-year data).

***To be provided by the relevant Dean's Office:  
(due to the unit not later than 3 months before the site visit)***

- 1) Current faculty planning documents and/or strategic plan.
- 2) An indication from the Dean of the unit's contributions to – and place in –the Faculty's planning (goals, objectives, and priorities).
- 3) Statement of administrative/financial/IT support resources provided for the unit, including – but not necessarily limited to – budget and/or financial statements.
- 4) Current and anticipated resource context and resource allocation formulae (financial and human) applied to the unit (e.g., norms on staff-student ratios).
- 5) Reorganisation or other plans that may affect the unit under review.

**Appendix 3  
Cyclical unit reviews: Scheduling and timelines**

- Review committee established (and the unit informed) a minimum of 3 months prior to the date for submission of the unit self-study document. The Provost's Office will be responsible for selecting the review committee chair and for seeking nominations from student groups for the student committee members. The Dean will be responsible for nominating 2 faculty members from a different unit to serve on the committee, as well as for proposing 2 external members (in consultation with the unit under review).
- Data provided by PIA to the unit under review at least 3 months prior to the date for submission of the unit self-study document.
- Unit self-study document to be submitted to Office of Cyclical Unit Reviews no later than 1 month prior to the date set for the site visit.
- Site visit (1 day)
- Review committee report submitted to Office of Cyclical Unit Reviews within 1 month of site visit.
- Review committee report provided to Unit for response.
- Unit response (optional) to be submitted to Office of Cyclical Unit Reviews within 2 weeks of receipt.
- Self-study document, review committee report, and unit response submitted by Office of Cyclical Unit Reviews to Dean within 2 working days of receipt of unit response.
- Decanal comments to Office of Cyclical Unit Reviews within 1 month of receipt of Review Committee report.
- Self-study document, review committee report, unit response (if applicable), and decanal comments forwarded to APC by Office of Cyclical Unit Reviews.
- Provost, as Chair of APC, provides feedback for Dean and unit head within 1 month of the APC meeting at which the particular unit review dossier was discussed.
- Reports brought to Senate for discussion.

## **Appendix 4** **Suggested format for report of the review committee**

### ***Cover Page***

McGill University  
Report of the Committee established to review 'xxx unit'  
Date of the Report  
Confidential (until reported to APC)

***The report will conform to a template (see Appendix 5) and will include the following:***

- Executive summary
- Findings and recommendations for each of the review criteria
- Any other recommendations
- Comments from the external reviewers
- Appendices

### ***Length and format:***

- The report, excluding the executive summary and appendices, should not exceed 10 pages.
- The executive summary (comprising a summary of key findings and a list of recommendations) should not be more than 500 words. Each recommendation should be supported by a brief discussion.
- The major headings of the report should correspond to the review criteria. For each criterion, the report should be structured around findings and recommendations.
- Where relevant, the report should identify the appropriate unit(s) which should take action if the recommendations are accepted (e.g., department; faculty; service unit; etc.).

### ***Appendices***

- Composition of the review committee.
- List of exemplary unit practices that could be shared with the University community.
- Identification of unit needs (space, staffing, funding, professional development, etc.)
- Other

## **Appendix 5 Template for report of the review committee** To be added