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|  <p style="text-align: center;">POLICY</p> | Policy No: S-201906.19 | Approval Date: June 26, 2019 |
| | Approving Authority: Senate Responsible Executive: Provost and Vice President, Academic | |
| Title: <p style="text-align: center;">Degree Program Reviews</p> | | |

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POLICY

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1** As a public post-secondary institution in British Columbia, UNBC is required to have in place policies and procedures for the periodic review of degree programs and academic services. The policies and procedures should achieve the following:
- 1.1.1** reflect the University’s mandate, mission and values;
 - 1.1.2** assess the effectiveness of its programs and services and their responsiveness to student, labour market and social needs; and
 - 1.1.3** contribute to the continuous improvement of the University.
- 1.2** As a Member of Universities Canada, the University of Northern British Columbia is required to have robust degree quality assurance policies and procedures and be in compliance with applicable provincial Ministry quality assurance standards.

2. PURPOSE

- 2.1** This Policy and the Procedures enacted under it support the commitment of the University and its faculty and staff to the quality, accountability, sustainability, and continuous improvement of the Degree Programs and Academic Service Units by providing for the following:
- 2.1.1** regular and systemic reviews of the operation, objectives, effectiveness and relevance of the degree programs;
 - 2.1.2** self-evaluation within the degree program or service unit;
 - 2.1.3** review and input from external experts;
 - 2.1.4** external reporting and accountability; and
 - 2.1.5** internal institutional reporting, follow-up and accountability.
- 2.2** The Degree Program Reviews strengthens the academic rigor of the Degree Programs and supports the following:
- 2.2.1** UNBC’s Vision to be Canada’s leading destination University, personal in character, that transforms lives and communities in the North and around the world;
 - 2.2.2** UNBC’s Mission to inspire leaders for tomorrow by influencing the world today;
 - 2.2.3** UNBC’s Values to strengthen experiential learning and discovery, inclusiveness and diversity, the community, degree integrity and academic excellence.

3. SCOPE

- 3.1 This Policy applies to all degree programs offered by UNBC, whether undergraduate or graduate, single or interdisciplinary, and whether offered on a UNBC campus or through distance delivery or other non-traditional method.
- 3.2 This Policy also applies to Academic Service Units, with reasonable modifications as required by the context.
- 3.3 For clarity, each reference herein to Academic Administrative Unit is deemed to include Academic Service Units to the extent appropriate in the context.

4. DEFINITIONS

- 4.1 An **Academic Administrative Unit** is an academic program, department or school comprised of one or more degree programs.
- 4.2 An **Academic Service Unit** is a unit that supports student and faculty learning and teaching.
- 4.3 An **Advisory Board, Committee or other External/Stakeholder Committee, Council and/or Group** is an advisory body comprised of external representatives such as professional or industry members dedicated to the external guidance of a degree program.
- 4.4 A **Degree Program** is a baccalaureate, master's or doctoral degree granted or conferred by the University.

5. POLICY STATEMENT

- 5.1 All Degree Programs undergo an external review every five to seven years, or sooner if requested by the Academic Administrative Unit or if deemed necessary by the Provost and Vice President, Academic in consultation with the responsible Dean.
- 5.2 New Degree Programs are reviewed within five years of creation.
- 5.3 The accreditation of a professional Degree Program may be substituted, or serve as partial completion of a required Degree Program Self-Study Review, at the discretion of the Provost and Vice President, Academic, in consultation with the responsible Dean.

6. REQUIRED ELEMENTS OF A REVIEW

- 6.1** Procedures enacted under this Policy must reflect and include the following required elements or characteristics of a review:
- 6.1.1** a self-study of the Degree Program(s) by the Academic Administrative Unit;
 - 6.1.2** engagement of external reviewers with notable expertise in the discipline or service area, a site visit by at least one of the external reviewers, and a written report by the external reviewers which includes both an assessment of program quality and recommendations for improvement and growth;
 - 6.1.3** a written institutional response which includes the following:
 - i.** a response by the Academic Administrative Unit to the External Review of Degree Program Report;
 - ii.** the steps the Academic Administrative Unit intends or proposes to take in response to the recommendations from the report (Action Plan);
 - iii.** a response by the Dean to both the Degree Program Self-Study and the external review report; and
 - iv.** a response by the Provost and Vice President, Academic to the response of the Dean.
- 6.2** All best efforts are made to ensure that the institutional responses and Action Plan outlined in Section 6.1.3 above are completed within sixteen (16) weeks of receipt of the external review report.
- 6.3** Procedures enacted under this Policy outline the criteria and considerations for the selection of external reviewers.

7. IMPLEMENTATION, ACCOUNTABILITY AND REPORTING

- 7.1** The Provost and Vice President, Academic is accountable for the transparent implementation of this Policy and ensuring the following:
- 7.1.1** a schedule of past, current and upcoming reviews is publically available and posted on the Provost and Vice President, Academic's website;
 - 7.1.2** reports and responses of the Deans and Provost and Vice President, Academic are available for review by the Academic Administrative Unit whose degree programs are being reviewed and by the University's governing bodies, or such Committees of those bodies delegated with the authority to receive these reports;
 - 7.1.3** executive summary reports in the form prescribed by Subsection 4.12 of the Procedures are made publically available and are posted on the Provost and Vice President, Academic's website; and
 - 7.1.4** reports are made regularly and at least annually, to the University's Governing Bodies, on the implementation of this Policy, and progress or implementation of any recommendations made through the review process.

7.2 The Office of the Provost and Vice President, Academic is the Office of Primary Responsibility for all records relating to Degree Program Reviews and is responsible for ensuring that the process, data collection, reporting and record keeping are compliant with the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act of British Columbia*.

8. PROCEDURAL AUTHORITY

Authority to enact Procedures consistent with, and giving effect to this Policy is granted to the Provost and Vice President, Academic.

9. REVIEW OF POLICY AND PROCEDURES

9.1 The UNBC Senate or a Committee of Senate with delegated authority regularly reviews and updates this Policy at least every five years.

9.2 The Provost and Vice President, Academic regularly reviews and updates the Procedures, in consultation with the Academic Deans at least every five years and publishes a current version of the Procedures on the Provost and Vice President, Academic's website.

10. EFFECTIVE DATE AND REPLACEMENT OF FORMER GUIDE

This Policy is effective on the approval of the UNBC Senate, and replaces the former Guide to External Program Reviews, approved by Senate on April 26, 2012, Motion #S-201204.15 and S-201204.21).

11. TRANSITIONARY PROVISIONS

Degree Program Reviews in-progress at the time of coming into effect of this Policy may be completed under the terms of the previous Guide, except that, to the extent reasonably possible, the Deans, Chairs and Directors endeavor to ensure that all reviews in progress adhere to Section 6.1.3 of the Policy and produce reports in the form prescribed in Subsection 5.0 of the Procedures.

PROCEDURES

1. INITIATION

- 1.1 The Provost and Vice President, Academic initiates the review after consultation with the responsible Dean and the Academic Administrative Unit involved.
- 1.2 The Provost and Vice President, Academic and responsible Dean consider combining degree programs in larger functional Academic Administrative Units or closely connected degree programs into one review.
- 1.3 The Dean informs the Academic Administrative Units of an impending degree program review at least one year before the site visit by external reviewers.
- 1.4 The Dean encourages the Chair to limit the length of the Degree Program(s) Self-Study to a manageable number of pages, normally 30 pages excluding appendices. Large units with multiple degree programs might exceed these suggested limits.
- 1.5 The Provost and Vice President, Academic brings a list forward every June informing the Senate Committee on Academic Affairs, Senate, Institutional Research, the Office of the Registrar's Awards and Financial Aid Unit and the Office of Graduate Programs of the degree programs scheduled for review prior to the start of the academic year in which the reviews occur.
- 1.6 The Dean's Office in consultation with the Provost and the Academic Administrative Unit arranges the dates of the External Review Committee visit and detailed schedule for the visit.
- 1.7 The Provost and Vice President, Academic provides the terms of reference for the External Review Committee in consultation with-the responsible Dean and the Academic Administrative Unit.

2. SELF-STUDY

- 2.1 The Academic Administrative Unit engages in a degree program(s) self-study for one to two semesters, during which its members consider all aspects of the degree program(s) including its vision, values, goals and strategic direction. The Academic Administrative Unit prepares a report using the *Degree Program Self-Study Template* attached to these procedures as Appendix I that reflects the following areas:

- 2.1.1** a description of the degree program's structure, admissions requirements, degree requirements, courses, degree programs, method of delivery and curriculum for the program's educational goals and standards;
 - 2.1.2** an explanation on how resources (physical, technological, financial and human) are distributed;
 - 2.1.3** information about the degree program's collective faculty performance including the quality of teaching and supervision and demonstrable currency in the field of specialization;
 - 2.1.4** a description of the learning outcomes achieved by students/graduates;
 - 2.1.5** a description of the degree program's stated goals, the credential level standard, and where appropriate, the standards of any related regulatory, accrediting or professional association;
 - 2.1.6** a description of the methods used for evaluating student progress and how these methods and the progress of students align with the degree program's stated goals;
 - 2.1.7** aggregate information about the satisfaction level of students who graduate from the degree program, student satisfaction and graduation rate; and
 - 2.1.8** where appropriate, information about the employment rates for students who have graduated from the degree program, employer satisfaction level, industry representative satisfaction level and advisory board or other external/stakeholder committee, council and/or group satisfaction level.
- 2.2** The self-study report includes the *Degree Program Review Policy and Procedures* in place at the time of the self-study as an appendix.
- 2.3** The Academic Administrative Unit prepares the self-study report and makes it available to all members of the Degree Program(s) (faculty and staff) prior to being forwarded to the External Review Committee.
- 2.4** The Academic Administrative Unit must provide the Provost and Vice President, Academic and the responsible Dean with the self-study report a minimum of one (1) month prior to the External Review Committee visit.

3. STUDENT INVOLVEMENT

- 3.1** Undergraduate and graduate students are encouraged to participate in the preparation of material for the Degree Program(s) Self-Study, and student input is sought throughout the process. Student contributions are included or reflected in the self-study. Personal information and experiences of students are included in the *Self-Study Report* only if the students have provided documented informed consent.

- 3.2 The Chair should contact the student body particular to the degree program(s) being reviewed (undergraduate and graduate), as well as publicizing the review in classes and within the Academic Administrative Unit.
- 3.3 Students have the opportunity to meet with the External Review Committee.

4. EXTERNAL REVIEW COMMITTEE

- 4.1 The External Review Committee normally consists of two people external to the university who are senior members of the discipline and have had administrative experience. Additional external reviewers may be needed if the Degree Program(s) being reviewed is a combined with other Degree Programs or if Degree Programs within an Academic Administrative Unit consist of multiple disciplinary areas.
- 4.2 At least six months prior to when the external review is to take place, the Academic Administrative Unit provides the Provost and Vice President, Academic with a list of a minimum of seven reviewers who represent a broad cross-section of the discipline and considered outstanding faculty members and objective reviewers.
- 4.3 The Provost and Vice President, Academic appoints the members of the External Review Committee. The committee is normally composed of faculty members of variable gender identity primarily from Canadian universities. The Provost and Vice President, Academic, in consultation with the Dean and/or Chair, appoints a faculty member from the University community who is a member of the committee and has the background and experience to provide the review committee with contextual advice about the environment and operations of UNBC but not be involved in the authoring of the report.
- 4.4 The site visit, which is normally two days in length, is coordinated by the Office of the Dean. The Provost and Vice President, Academic and responsible Dean meet with the External Review Committee at the start of the visit to discuss guidelines for the review and the preparation of the report.
- 4.5 The committee meets with the faculty, staff members, graduate students and undergraduate students from the Degree Program(s). The committee meets with others with responsibilities affecting the Degree Program(s), as determined by the Dean.
- 4.6 Members of the external review committee must avoid engaging in unscheduled social events outside the scope of the external review visit with members of the Degree Program(s) or the Academic Administrative Unit during the site visit.
- 4.7 Members of the external review committee must avoid engaging in other roles at the University during the site visit.

- 4.8** The Dean's Office advertises the External Review Committee site visit to the University Community (E.g. by an email via Announce). Where the Degree Program(s) has strong connections to other Degree Programs at UNBC, the Dean, Chair or Director of that related Degree Program may request an interview with the External Review Committee.
- 4.8** Any individual or group of individuals who are unable to meet with the external reviewers during the site visit can submit a confidential memo, which includes the name(s) of the person(s) responsible for the writing the memo, to the external reviewers.
- 4.9** The External Review Committee communicates any negative or critical information or feedback regarding specific individuals to the Provost and Vice President, Academic and are handled in accordance with established University policies and procedures.
- 4.10** If the External Review Committee receives general comments or complaints that the Degree Program(s) or Academic Administrative Unit is not conducive to a high quality of teaching, learning, research and working environment, the committee may comment and make recommendations on this in its report or may take the issue up privately with the Provost and Vice President, Academic.
- 4.11** At the conclusion of its visit and normally within six weeks, the review committee submits a detailed report using the provided *External Review of Degree Program(s) Template*. The report includes
- 4.11.1** an Executive Summary; and
 - 4.11.2** an External Review of Degree Program(s) consisting of the following:
 - i.** Degree Program(s) Evaluation;
 - ii.** Faculty Review;
 - iii.** Research Review;
 - v.** Internal and External Relationships Assessment;
 - vi.** Organizational and Financial Structure Assessment;
 - vii.** Resources and Infrastructure Assessment;
 - viii.** Long-Range Planning Challenges.
- 4.12** The Executive Summary from the *External Review of Academic Unit Report* is a public document. Any documentation concerning confidential matters about identifiable individuals does not become a part of the *External Review of Degree Program(s) Report* but is made available to the appropriate University officers. Individuals named are apprised of the information and provided with an opportunity to comment.
- 4.13** The *External Review of Degree Program(s) Report* is submitted to the Provost and Vice President, Academic and circulated to the following people:

- 4.13.1 the Academic Administrative Unit involved (including faculty and staff);
- 4.13.2 the responsible Dean and;
- 4.13.3 the Vice President, Research.

5. RESPONSE TO THE EXTERNAL REVIEW OF DEGREE PROGRAM(S) REPORT AND DEVELOPING AN ACTION PLAN

- 5.1 The Academic Administrative Unit reviews the *External Review of Degree Program(s) Report* and prepares a response and action plan in collaboration with the responsible Dean and the Provost and Vice President, Academic or designate using the *Responses to External Review of Degree Program(s) Report, Action Plan and Progress Reports Template*. The Academic Administrative Unit's responses and action plan should normally be completed within eight (8) weeks of the receipt of the *External Review of Degree Program(s) Report* and include the following:
 - 5.1.1 an overall impression with respect to the report's summary of findings and recommendations;
 - 5.1.2 correction of any factual errors or areas of misunderstanding in the report; and
 - 5.1.3 the steps the Academic Administrative Unit intends or proposes to take in response to the recommendations from the report (Action Plan).
- 5.2 The Dean reviews the Academic Administrative Unit's responses and action plan and prepares an independent response to the External Review of Degree Program(s) Report. The Dean may consult with members of the Academic Administrative Unit, the External Review Committee, the Provost and Vice-President, Academic or others as necessary.
- 5.3 The responsible Dean must endorse the Action Plan.
- 5.4 The Dean is responsible for submitting the *Responses to the External Review of Degree Program(s) Report and Action Plan* to the Provost and Vice President, Academic for consideration normally within four (4) weeks of the receipt of the Academic Administrative Unit's responses and action plan.
- 5.5 The Provost and Vice President, Academic meets with the Dean and the Chair or Director of the Academic Administrative Unit as appropriate to discuss the *External Review of Degree Program(s) Report*, responses, and the action plan.
- 5.6 The Provost and Vice President, Academic prepares a response to the Dean's and the Academic Administrative Unit's responses normally within four (4) weeks of the receipt of the Responses to the *External Review of Degree Program(s) Report and Action Plan*.

- 5.7** The *Responses to the External Review of Degree Program(s) Report and Action Plan* and the Executive Summary from the *External Review of Degree Program(s) Report* are presented to the Senate Committee on Academic Affairs for review and to Senate for discussion and advice in an open session.
- 5.8** *The Degree Program(s) Self Study and appendices*, and the *External Review of Degree Program(s) Report* are presented to the Senate Committee on Academic Affairs in a closed session for information and to Senate, only on the recommendation of SCAAF or the request of Senate, in a closed session for information.
- 5.9** The Dean considers the advice of SCAAF and Senate and amends the *Action Plan* if necessary.
- 5.10** The Academic Administrative Unit is responsible for implementing the *Action Plan* according to the outlined timeline.

6. FOLLOW UP

- 6.1** The Office of the Provost and Vice-President, Academic is responsible for maintaining the records created during the Degree Program Review. These documents are used for the purpose of long term planning.
- 6.2** The Executive Summary from the *External Review of Degree Program(s) Report and the Responses to the External Review of Degree Program(s) Report and Action Plan* are made publically available on the Provost and Vice President, Academic's website subject to issues relating to privacy and confidentiality.
- 6.3** The Academic Administrative Unit submits an *Action Plan Progress Report* to the Dean 12 months, 24 months and 36 months after the submission of the Action Plan. The report outlines the progress the Academic Administrative Unit made on the actions outlined in the action plan.
- 6.4** Changes to the actions are noted in the *Action Plan Progress Report* if the direction of the Academic Administrative Unit has changed, and/or one or several recommendations are no longer valid.
- 6.5** The Dean is responsible for providing the Action Plan Progress Reports to the Provost and Vice President, Academic.
- 6.6** The Provost and Vice President, Academic maintains a record of the progress reports.

- 6.7** The Dean submits the 36 month Action Plan Progress Report to the Senate Committee on Academic Affairs and Senate for information in an open session.
- 6.8** The 36 month Action Plan Progress Report is made publically available on the Provost and Vice-President, Academic's website.
- 6.9** The Provost and Vice President, Academic provides a summary of the upcoming Degree Program reviews annually to the Senate Committee on Academic Affairs and Senate and reports on the status of Degree Program Reviews.

7. ACCESS TO DEGREE PROGRAM REVIEW DOCUMENTS

The following chart outlines who has access to the various Degree Program Review documents.

| | The Degree Program(s) Self Study | The Degree Program(s) Self Study Appendices | External Review of Degree Program(s) Report | External Review of Degree Program(s) Report Executive Summary | Responses to the External Review of Degree Program(s) Report and Action Plan | 12 month Action Plan Progress Report | 24 month Action Plan Progress Report | 36 month Action Plan Progress Report | Documents concerning confidential material |
|---|----------------------------------|---|---|---|--|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--|
| Academic Administrative Unit - Chair | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | |
| Academic Administrative Unit - Faculty | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | |
| Academic Administrative Unit - Staff | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | |
| Dean of Faculty | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | |
| Vice President, Research | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | | ✓ | |
| Provost and Vice President, Academic | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| External Review Committee | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | | | | |
| SCAAF open session | | | | ✓ | ✓ | | | ✓ | |
| SCAAF closed session | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | | | | | |
| Senate open session | | | | ✓ | ✓ | | | ✓ | |
| Senate (Upon the recommendation of SCAAF or the request of Senate) closed session | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | | | | | |
| Publically Accessible on the Provost and Vice President, Academic Website | | | | ✓ | ✓ | | | ✓ | |