

# St. Thomas University Policy Statement

Policy Name: Department Review

Classification:

General Administration \_\_\_\_\_  
Academic   X    
Unit \_\_\_\_\_

Issued by: \_\_\_\_\_ (Signature)  
Vice-President (Academic) (Title/Authority)

Date of Issue: \_\_\_\_\_ Revised: October 15, 1998  
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Policy:

## 1. Introduction

The University accepts and endorses the practice of regular Department reviews as a means of facilitating continuing programme integrity and accountability. In endorsing the practice of reviews, the following principles are to be observed:

- 1.1 Reviews are to be oriented by positive values. That is, they ought to be seen by Departments in question as ultimately serving their best interests as well as meeting University requirements.
- 1.2 Departments are to share jointly the management of the process of the review with the University.
- 1.3 A self-study document, prepared by the Department in accordance with the established guidelines (Appendix A attached), will serve as the focal instrument of the Review Team. At least one student must be involved in the preparation of the Self Study.
- 1.4 The Self Study is to be student centered, as it would aim in most cases to assess the quality of learning.
- 1.5 While formal reviews will occur regularly, at specified times, the process of self-evaluation is recognized as a desirable and natural ongoing feature of Departmental planning.
- 1.6 The impartiality of reviews can be best served by the use of external expert peer reviews.

1.7 Reviews will be conducted with the least amount of intrusion and disruption as possible.

1.8 Review policy and procedures shall be developed with clarity, precision, and fairness.

## **2. Authority and Responsibility**

**2.1 The Senate.** The authority for Departmental reviews resides with the Senate of St. Thomas University.

**2.2 The Senate Review Coordinating Committee (SRCC).** The SRCC will coordinate the review process and will formulate, based upon the recommendations of the Review Team and the Department's response, recommendations for the Senate. The SRCC will consist of the Vice-President (Academic) or designate as Chair, and the Chairs of Departments that are scheduled to be reviewed in the following academic year. The Chairs of Departments appointed to the SRCC will serve one-year terms.

**2.3 The Review Team.** The Review Team is to examine the components of the Department as outlined in the Department Self Study Guide (Appendix A attached), report on the results of the examination, and make recommendations. The Review Team will normally consist of two members, external to St. Thomas University, who will be appointed from a list of nominees approved by Senate. Guidelines for the Review Team are found in Appendix B.

## **3. Procedures**

3.1 Reviews will normally occur every seven years. Senate shall determine the schedule for Department reviews. Departments subject to mandatory external review procedures are exempt from these procedures.

3.2 Normally, before the end of an academic year, the SRCC will meet with each Department to be reviewed during the next academic year to establish a mutually-acceptable timetable, with deadlines, for the activities associated with the review.

3.3 The SRCC shall request from the Department a list of names of possible external members for the Review Team. The SRCC will prepare, in consultation with the Department and potential reviewers, a slate for Senate's consideration.

3.4 The SRCC shall request a self-study report from the Department. A copy of the self-study report shall be provided by the Department to the Review Team and Senate at least two weeks prior to the site visit. The SRCC, following the receipt of a Department Self Study, may request further information and analyses from the Department, including specific questions for the Review Team to address in the context of the Departmental Review.

3.5 Department reviews, including the Senate's consideration of the reviews, should be concluded by May 31 of the academic year in which the review takes place. Senate shall review and authorize a prioritized list of at least five individuals who may serve as external reviewers. The SRCC will conclude an agreement with the external members to participate in the Review Team.

3.6 Review Teams shall normally limit their reviews to those areas outlined in the Department's Self Study.

3.7 Site visits by Review Teams shall normally be two days.

3.8. The Chair of the SRCC shall provide the liaison contact with the Review Team, shall develop a site visit timetable in cooperation with the Chair of the Department under review, and shall be responsible for local arrangements.

3.9 The Review Team shall provide opportunity for input from faculty, current and former students, university officials, and appropriate external groups.

3.10 The Review Team shall submit its report to the SRCC within one month of the site visit.

3.11 The Review Team's report, including recommendations, shall be submitted simultaneously to Senate and the Department under review.

3.12 The Department shall have an opportunity to respond to the Review Team's report prior to its consideration by Senate. The response by the Department shall be submitted to the SRCC, and shall be filed with Senate within two months of the receipt of the report.

3.13 The SRCC shall consider the Review Team's report and the Department's response, and prepare recommendations for Senate's consideration. It is understood that SRCC recommendations will be presented in clear resolutions that can be placed before Senate in the form of a "yes" or "no" vote.

3.14 Senate shall consider the recommendations of the SRCC at a special meeting called for this purpose.

3.15 Senate shall vote to accept or reject non-monetary recommendations.

3.16 Recommendations which carry monetary implications shall be referred to the President, who will report on acceptance or rejection within six months.

3.17 The Department will be expected to report on progress with the implementation of the recommendations approved by Senate annually, or until the recommendations have been implemented.

**APPENDIX A****DEPARTMENT SELF-STUDY GUIDE****PREAMBLE**

The Self Study, to be prepared by the Department prior to the initiation of a review, shall serve as the focal instrument of the review. The Self Study shall be developed in light of the Mission Statement of the University. The Self Study ought to contain a description of Department strengths, weaknesses, and future directions. In particular, attention shall be paid to the following six components:

**1. PURPOSE AND GOALS****1.1 Objectives**

1.1.1 Explain the Department's objectives. In what way, and to what extent, are they consistent with the Mission Statement of the University?

**1.2 Development and Evaluation**

1.2.1 Describe the Department's procedure for the ongoing and effective self study and evaluation of its programme.

1.2.2 Describe how the objectives of the Department are responsive to new developments in the discipline and advances in knowledge.

1.2.3 Describe action taken by the Department in response to its most recent review.

**2. CURRICULUM**

2.1 Describe the curriculum, including organizing principles, and the provisions for minors, majors, and honours.

2.2 Explain how the curriculum is consistent with the stated objectives of the Department.

**3. ADMINISTRATION**

A clear plan of the administration of the Department is required. This plan shall address academic governance, policy and decision-making procedures, and communication within the Department, and management of resources (where appropriate).

**4. RESOURCES**

#### **4.1 Faculty**

Describe the scholarly/professional qualifications and contributions of faculty and how those qualifications and contributions relate to the delivery of the programme. Updated CVs of all faculty members are to be appended to the Self Study.

#### **4.2 Support Staff**

Describe and assess the adequacy of staff to meet the needs of the Department.

#### **4.3 Equipment**

Describe and assess the adequacy of equipment against that required to carry out programme objectives.

#### **4.4 Space**

Describe and assess the adequacy of space.

#### **4.5 Library**

Describe the adequacy of library holdings and access.

### **5. STUDENTS**

5.1 How well does the curriculum meet the expectations of the students?

5.2 How well does the instruction meet the expectation of the students?

5.3 To what extent are students meeting the objectives of the Department as described in 1.1.1?

5.4 Describe practices for the advising of minors, majors, and honours. How satisfied are students with the department's academic advising?

5.5 Describe enrolment and attrition rates, including the number of students obtaining minors, majors, and honours.

### **RESEARCH**

6.1 Describe the research record of full-time members of the department since the last review.

6.2 Describe the long-term research plans of every person in the Department who is tenured or tenure track.

### **6. SERVICE**

7.1 Describe the service record of the members of the Department. Include both service to the University and service of a professional nature to the profession or to the larger community.

Senate: October 15, 1998

## 1. **MATERIALS**

1.1 The Review Team will be provided with the Self Study from the Department under review. This will cover the period since the last review (or seven years, whichever is greater.) The Review Team will also be provided with:

- a) the previous self study,
- b) the previous external review,
- c) the department's response to the previous review,
- d) the senate's decisions arising from the previous review,
- e) the President's responses to the previous review and any subsequent decisions of relevance to the recommendations made to the President.

1.2 The Department's Self Study will be available to the Review Team before they make the site visit.

1.3 A timetable for the site visit will be sent to the Review Team as soon as the timetable becomes available.

## 2. **AREAS OF REVIEW**

2.1 The areas to be reviewed will normally be limited to those identified in the Department's Self Study. These will normally include commentary on programme objectives, curriculum, the Department's experience and success with students, and an assessment of the adequacy of space, funding, library and laboratory resources, academic and support staff, academic standards, research and service records of full-time members of the Department, and any other relevant aspects of the programme including plans for future development.

## 3. **THE SITE VISIT**

3.1 Before the site visit, the Review Team will receive the Department's Self Study. The Review Team may request further material through the SRCC (Senate Review Coordinating Committee).

3.2 The site visit will normally last two days.

3.3 During the site visit, the Review Team may request additional information and may request to meet with any member of the academic community.

3.4 The Review Team shall provide opportunity for input (including meetings) from faculty, students, university officials, and appropriate external groups.

3.5 As a result of the site visit, the Review Team will be expected to prepare a written report. A two-hour session will be time tabled so that the Review Team may begin structuring this report while they are still together at St. Thomas.

3.6 Review Teams shall normally focus their reviews on those areas outlined in the Department's Self Study.

3.7 Site visits by Review Teams shall normally be two days.

3.8 The Chair of the SRCC shall provide the liaison contact with the Review Team, shall develop a site visit timetable in cooperation with the Chair of the Department under review, and shall be responsible for local arrangements.

3.9 The Review Team shall be provided with an opportunity to receive input from faculty, current and former students, university officials, and appropriate external groups.

3.10 The Review Team shall submit its report to the SRCC within one month of the site visit.

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Senate: October 15, 1998

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\*Policy Origin:

This policy was prepared by \_\_\_\_\_

. Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Guidelines for Nomination of Potential Reviewers:**

Article 3.3 of the policy governing the department review process calls on departments to forward a list of possible reviewers to the Senate Review Coordinating Committee. The SRCC is then responsible for formulating a prioritized slate of candidates for consideration by Senate.

In order to facilitate the effective functioning of this process, the SRCC would like to make the following suggestions to departments.

1. Please be sure to include the names of at least five potential reviewers.
2. The SRCC generally proposes a priority list that ensures both gender balance and representation from the region of Atlantic Canada.
3. The persons nominated should be relatively senior; ideally, they will have had some experience as department chair.
4. For the sake of promoting objectivity, it is best not to propose candidates who have or have had close personal or professional ties to any member of the department.
5. To the extent that reviewers should comment on the department's relationship with the corresponding department at UNB, we should refrain from nominating colleagues from that institution.
6. It is important that you provide a short rationale explaining why each nominee would make a good reviewer. It is also helpful to provide your own ranking of the nominees if you can.

Richard Myers  
Vice-President (Academic)

November 2000