

GUIDELINES FOR THE REVIEW OF NON-ACADEMIC UNITS

Background

Periodic review mechanisms and procedures have been more commonly associated with the operation of academic units than of administrative units. The current academic review procedures in use at Dalhousie have largely emerged since 1984. An assessment of the academic review process at Dalhousie was prepared by the Office of Institutional Affairs in 1991. Although non-academic units are clearly different from academic units, particularly in their structure and culture, together they form a unique institution and both are impacted upon in varying ways by the same factors. The operation of academic reviews can provide some insight into methodological factors that may have an impact on the process used for non-academic units.

The above-mentioned assessment together with a handbook for non-academic unit reviews prepared by a sub-committee of Canadian Association of University Business Officers (CAUBO) have been consulted in the preparation of these guidelines.

Introduction

Review and evaluation are essential if we are to be able to measure our ability to meet expected levels and quality of service.

The purposes for non-academic reviews are the following:

- To provide Directors and Managers with constructive feedback to sustain, stimulate and promote effective service delivery;
- To confirm or modify the unit's terms of reference which must be consistent with the University's mission;
- To provide an opportunity to explain the unit's objectives to the University community; and
- To provide information to university-wide processes supporting institutional planning and the setting of institutional priorities.

Review Methodology

Reviews will be periodic in nature, conducted as openly as possible and convened by the "Vice-President responsible for that particular unit" (hereinafter referred to as the Vice-President).

1. Internal Review Committee

The Internal Review Committee (IRC) will be an ad hoc committee composed in the following way:

- 3 to 5 members including, one each appointed by the Board of Governors, the Senate and the Administrative Directors as a group. Members should be chosen by their group on the basis that they reflect at least one skills area needed for such a review - that is finance, human resources, knowledge of the service, broader concerns of the University at large, or are a significant user of the service in question.
- up to 2 additional members appointed by the Vice-President in consultation with the President.

The Chair will be selected by the Vice-President from among the members.

IRC members will not serve as representatives of particular interests.

2. External Assessors

Following consultation with the unit under review, two (or more) external assessors will be appointed by the Vice-President. These assessors may be selected from among University Vice-Presidents, Directors responsible for similar units, or individuals possessing a specific expertise in relation to the services provided by the unit.

External assessors will be given an honorarium for their services that is consistent with the University's normal practice in such matters. In addition, the University will pay for the assessor's reasonable expenses.

3. Self-Study

The unit under review shall be asked to submit a self-study. This self-study shall contain the following:

- Unit objectives and relationship to the University's mission/priorities
- History of the unit for the past five years to include reference to earlier reviews and their results, budgets, sources of revenue, organizational structure, staffing levels (include all FT,PT and casuals), operational data (eg. sick time, absenteeism, grievances, training time, personnel evaluations), external contracts and finally services provided.
- External factors (ie. occupational health and safety, environmental safety, employment equity, pay equity) that impact on the unit

- "Industry" standards applied in the unit's operation
- Strengths and limitations
- Future goals

The self-study shall be provided to the IRC and external assessors.

4. Review Process

In addition to the self-study the internal review committee and the external assessors will be provided with pertinent internal documents such as mission statements, planning documents, and reviews of the unit conducted within the previous five years.

The IRC and the external assessors will review the above-mentioned information and where appropriate, invite submissions from unit clients and conduct interviews.

The IRC and the external assessors will each compile separate reports which will be provided to the unit under review for their response. This response should contain corrections to errors that may appear in any of the reports.

The IRC will compile their findings, those of the external assessors and the unit's response into a final report to be submitted to the Vice-President.

The final report should also include an assessment of the review process and appropriate recommendations for its future effectiveness.

In the case where the IRC and/or the external assessors reach conclusions of a personal nature about an employee(s), these conclusions shall be treated as confidential and given only to the Vice-President.

5. Length of Review

The length of the review process including the time for the self-study will normally not exceed six months.

6. Implementation

The Vice-President will accept, modify, or reject the recommendations in the Report, with explanations as appropriate.

The Vice-President will request from the unit an implementation schedule regarding operational recommendations. The Vice-President will be responsible for initiating any action required for the implementation of policy recommendations. The Vice-President shall report on the progress in implementing the recommendations within one year of receipt of the report.

7. Future Use of Reports

All unit review reports may be made available to planning processes and their committees that may arise from time to time within the University community and to standing or ad hoc committees where appropriate.

8. Staff Support

An appropriate level of secretarial and administrative staff support will be provided to assist the review process.

9. Cost of The Review Process

All costs associated with the convening of a review process shall be covered by the General University budget.

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