

UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN
GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE OF COUNCIL
REQUEST FOR DECISION

PRESENTED BY: Terry Wotherspoon, Chair, Governance Committee

DATE OF MEETING: October 21, 2021

SUBJECT: Revisions to the Council Bylaws for Program Approvals Process

MOTION:

It is recommended that Council approve the proposed revisions to the Council Bylaws Part Two Sections I and V (as per Attachment 2), effective October 21, 2021.

SUMMARY:

This is a request for decision to change the Terms of Reference of the Planning and Priorities Committee (PPC) and Academic Programs Committee (APC) in the Council Bylaws in keeping with the recommendations of the *Academic Program Approvals Process Review* that was conducted in 2020-21, led by the Governance Office.

The findings of the review were jointly presented to Council by PPC and APC on June 17, 2021. A summary of the recommendations contained in the June 17th report to Council is provided in Attachment 1. This request for decision follows the requirement for 30 days' notice for changes to the Council Bylaws, as a Notice of Motion that was duly presented on September 16, 2021. No further feedback was received, nor changes made since.

PROPOSAL:

It is recommended that the Terms of Reference for APC and PPC in Part Two Sections I and V of the Council Bylaws (2021) be amended to align with the recommendations of the *Academic Program Approvals Process Review* (Attachment 1). These recommended changes to the Council Bylaws will remove the 'Notice of Intent' step at PPC; and move responsibilities from PPC to APC for assessing alignment of program proposals with USask's plans and priorities, and for financial review of proposals. To support these changes, for both committees, non-voting resource membership and the recalibration of workloads is recommended.

This new decision-making model will ensure effective and efficient, good academic governance in support of the development, revision, deletion, and approval of high-quality, current, and

innovative academic programming at USask. The proposed revisions to the Council Bylaws relate to decision-making structures, processes, and rigour, as follows:

- Structures – Eliminate the requirement for ‘notices of intent’ to PPC for new programs or major changes to existing programs; and review APC and PPC responsibilities for program approvals, changes, and reviews.
- Processes – Realign processes for financial sustainability assessment and tuition setting.
- Rigour – Reconsider resource officers and voting membership on APC.

The changes involve streamlining and removing steps, reconfiguring responsibilities, and ensuring appropriate administrative supports are available to the two committees. Workloads are also recalibrated by moving some responsibilities for reporting to Council from APC to PPC, whereas APC will now be consulted rather than having the responsibility for making recommendations to Council in these areas. These proposed realignments fit more closely with the mandates of the committees. Due to changes in Provost’s Office changes to three non-voting resource members are proposed. References to the University Secretary’s Office are updated to reflect the name change to ‘Governance Office.’

These recommended changes to the Council Bylaws are in keeping with USask’s commitment to “Boundless Collaboration,” and the goal of “Aligning Structures” as articulated in the *University Plan: 2025*. These changes to the Bylaws will improve the timeliness of the academic program approval decision-making processes, while maintaining the rigorous reviews that ensure high quality, innovative programming, and financial sustainability.

DECISION PROCESS:

The *Academic Program Approvals Process Review Project* was led by the Governance Office from September 2020 – June 2021. The objective of the review was to align governance structures and processes, and business practices for the approvals of academic programs to enable USask to meet its mission and vision in delivering high-quality and innovative academic programming. The project team included representation from the Registrar’s Office, Institutional Planning and Assessment (IPA), College of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (CGPS), and the College of Arts & Science.

The project team completed an interim report in February 2021 (Thomarat, J., 2021). The findings of the and sample ‘future state’ models then informed consultations across campus. Consultations took place from March-May 2021 with over 25 groups, representing more than 150 people. Using the data and feedback collected during the consultations, a final report was prepared by the project team and endorsed by APC and PPC in the spring of 2021. Over the summer months, the project team began working on the implementation plan, and decided to prioritize some of the recommendations contained in the report, including these proposed changes to the Bylaws.

On September 7, 2021, the Governance Committee Reviewed draft revisions to the APC and PPC Terms of Reference. The committee approved the proposed changes, pending

consultations with PPC and APC on September 8, 2021. Both PPC and APC were also satisfied with the proposed changes to their terms of reference. Therefore, the Governance Committee recommends to Council these changes to the Council Bylaws (Attachment 3).

IMPLEMENTATION STEPS AND TIMELINE:

This academic year will be a 'transition year' for academic program approvals processes. Recommendations from the report will be prioritized by the project team and implemented sequentially to ensure that the changes can be appropriately supported. These proposed changes to the Council Bylaws are a first step.

Next steps include:

- Aligning resources – Update and simplify guidelines and templates.
- Improving awareness – Enhance training and supports for chairs, committees, and proponents.
- Aligning structures - Align the timing of Senate confirmation of admissions qualifications changes with the timing Council approvals.

A request for decision will be presented to Senate to align the processes and structures for confirmation of changes to admissions qualifications on October 30, 2021.

The project team will continue to work together and with program proponents from colleges and schools throughout 2021-22 to ensure a smooth transition to a more effective, efficient, and robust academic program approvals decision-making process at USask.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. *Academic Program Approvals Process Review* – Summary of Recommendations
2. Proposed revisions (highlighted and marked in yellow and strikethrough) to Council Bylaws – Part Two Sections I and V

Attachment 1 – Academic Program Approvals Process Review: Summary of Recommendations

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommended changes to USask's academic program approvals decision-making model involve structures, processes, timeliness, rigour, resources, and awareness. The findings and recommendations of the *Academic Program Approvals Process Review* used a conceptual framework based on public policy and higher education administration literature. The framework involves examining decision-making either as structure or as process (Bess and Dee 2008, p.592). From there, the appropriate balance between expediency and rigour determines timeliness. Resources are required to enact the chosen decision-making framework, and to communicate the requirements to stakeholders. In summary, the recommended changes are as follows.

Structures

- Eliminate the requirement for 'notices of intent' to PPC for new programs or major changes to existing programs.
- Review APC and PPC responsibilities for program approvals, changes, and reviews.
- For graduate program proposals, reduce the number of approval steps with committees of CGPS in alignment with the College's governance review.
- Align the timing of Senate confirmation of admissions qualifications changes with the timing Council approvals.

Processes

- Develop holistic process maps, from application to implementation.
- Realign processes for financial sustainability assessment and tuition setting.
- Enhance coordination and collaboration between supporting offices.
- 'Right-size' the approval process for the type of qualification or credential.

Timeliness

- Start new program offerings two times each year, in June and January.
- Reduce time-to-approval through collaboration, delegation, and coordination.
- Consider tuition-setting for new academic programs separately from the annual tuition-setting process for existing programs.

Rigour

- Reconsider resource officers and voting membership on APC.
- Align financial sustainability assessments with the Financial Authority Policy.
- Augment the 'consultation with the registrar' procedures.

Resources

- Update and simplify guidelines and templates.
- Consider curriculum management software to eliminate duplication, confusion, and 'paper-based' work.
- Assign a central contact point for proponents and to steward the process.
- Appropriately manage the workload implications of twice-per-year new program starts.

Awareness

- Enhance training and supports for chairs, committees, and proponents.
- Ensure early, expert, and coordinated support through role and process clarity.
- Identify opportunities for collaboration by broadly communicating new program proposals.

Attachment 2 – Proposed Revisions to Council Bylaws for APC and PPC

(Proposed additions are highlighted in yellow and deletions with ~~strikethroughs~~.)

PART TWO, I. ACADEMIC PROGRAMS COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE

Membership

Eleven members of the General Academic Assembly, at least five of whom will be elected members of Council, normally one of whom will be chair.

One Sessional Lecturer

One undergraduate student appointed by the USSU

One graduate student appointed by the GSA

Ex Officio

Vice-Provost, Teaching, Learning, and Student Experience

University Registrar

Vice-President, Finance & Resources or designate (non-voting member)

President (non-voting member)

Chair of Council (non-voting member)

Resource Personnel (Non-voting members)

Assistant Vice-Provost, Strategic Enrolment Management

~~Associate Provost, Institutional Planning and Assessment (IPA)~~

Interim Associate Provost, Strategic Priorities

Director, Resource Allocation and Planning

Associate Registrar, Academic

~~Administrative Support~~

~~The Office of the University Secretary~~

Committee Coordination

Governance Office

The Academic Programs Committee is responsible for:

- 1) Recommending to Council policies and procedures related to academic programs and sustaining program quality.
- 2) Evaluating the fit of academic program proposals with University priorities; reviewing financial sustainability of proposals for new academic programs and program deletions; and recommending to Council on new programs, major program revisions and program deletions, including their budgetary implications.
- 3) Approving minor program changes, including additions of new courses and revisions to or deletions of existing courses and reporting them to Council.

- 4) Considering outreach and engagement aspects of programs.
- 5) ~~Reporting to Council~~ Consulting with PPC on processes and outcomes of academic program review, following consultation with the Planning and Priorities Committee and other Council committees as appropriate.
- 6) ~~Undertaking the academic and budgetary review of~~ Consulting with PPC on proposals for the establishment, disestablishment or amalgamation of any college, school, department or any unit responsible for the administration of an academic program. ~~and forwarding recommendations to the planning and priorities committee.~~
- 7) ~~Undertaking the academic and budgetary review of~~ Consulting with PPC on the proposed or continuing affiliation or federation of other institutions with the University. ~~and forwarding recommendations to the planning and priorities committee.~~
- 8) Reporting to Council on the academic implications of quotas and admission standards.
- 9) Approving the annual academic schedule and reporting the schedule to Council for information, and recommending to Council substantive changes in policy governing dates for the academic sessions.
- 10) Approving minor changes (such as wording and renumbering) to rules governing examinations, and reviewing and recommending to Council substantive changes.
- 11) Recommending to Council classifications and conventions for instructional programs.
- 12) Designating individuals to act as representatives of the Committee on any other bodies, when requested, where such representation is deemed by the Committee to be beneficial.
- 13) Consider the priorities of the University, such as Indigenization and internationalization, when assessing current and new academic programs and policies.
- 14) Carrying out all the above in the spirit of a philosophy of equitable participation and an appreciation of the contributions of all people, with particular attention to rigorous and supportive programs for Indigenous student success, engagement with Indigenous communities, inclusion of Indigenous knowledge and experience in curricular offerings, and intercultural engagement among faculty, staff and students.

PART TWO, V. PLANNING AND PRIORITIES COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE

Membership

Eleven members of the General Academic Assembly, at least six of whom will be elected members of Council, normally one of whom will be Chair. At least one member from the General Academic Assembly with some expertise in financial analysis will be nominated.

One Dean appointed by Council

One undergraduate student appointed by the USSU

One graduate student appointed by the GSA

One Sessional Lecturer

Ex Officio Members

Provost and Vice-President, Academic or designate

Vice-President, Finance & Resources or designate

Vice-President, Research or designate

Vice-Provost, Indigenous Engagement

President (non-voting member)

Chair of Council (non-voting member)

Resource Personnel (Non-voting members)

Deputy Provost ~~Associate Provost, Institutional Planning and Assessment~~

Director of Resource Allocation and Planning

Director of Assessment and Analytics

Chief Information Officer and Associate Vice-President Information and Communications Technology

Executive Director, International – Office of the Vice President Research

Committee Coordination ~~Administrative Support~~

Governance Office ~~Office of the University Secretary~~

The Planning and Priorities Committee (PPC) is responsible for:

- 1) Conducting and reporting to Council on university-wide planning and review activities in consultation with the Provost and Vice-President Academic.
- 2) Evaluating college and unit plans and reporting the conclusions of those evaluations to Council.
- 3) Recommending to Council on academic priorities for the University.
- 4) Recommending to Council on outreach and engagement priorities for the University.

- 5) Seeking advice from other Council committees to facilitate university-wide academic planning.
- 6) **Undertaking the review and recommending** to Council on the establishment, disestablishment or amalgamation of any college, school, department, or any unit responsible for the administration of an academic program, with the advice of the Academic Programs Committee.
- 7) **Undertaking the review and recommending** to Council on the establishment, disestablishment, or review of any institute or centre at the University in accordance with the Centres Policy and with the advice of the Research, Scholarly and Artistic Works committee.
- 8) **Undertaking the review and recommending to Council on proposed or continuing affiliation or federation of other institutions with the University, in consultation with APC.**
- 9) Balancing academic and fiscal concerns in forming its recommendations.
- 10) Providing advice to the President on budgetary implications of government funding requests and reporting to Council.
- 11) Considering the main elements of the comprehensive budget and financial reports and reporting to Council.
- ~~11) Advising the Academic Programs Committee on the fit with University priorities and the general budgetary appropriateness of proposals for new academic programs and program deletions.~~
- 12) Integrating and recommending to Council on matters referred to it from other Council committees.
- 13) Advising the President and senior executive on operating and capital budgetary matters, including infrastructure and space allocation issues, referred from time-to-time by the President, providing the advice is not inconsistent with the policies of Council. The Planning and Priorities Committee will report to Council on the general nature of the advice and, where practicable, obtain the guidance of Council. However, the committee need not disclose to Council matters the disclosure of which would be contrary to the interests of the University.
- 14) Designating individuals to act as representatives of the Committee on any other bodies, when requested, where such representation is deemed by the Committee to be beneficial.
- 15) Proactively supporting equity, diversity, and inclusion in all processes and matters coming before the Committee.

Centres Subcommittee

The mandate of the PPC Standing Subcommittee on Centres is:

- To facilitate the creation of new centres
- To monitor adherence to the Centres Policy
- To develop and review the Centres Policy and Guidelines
- To oversee the establishment and disestablishment of centres
- To maintain a list of active centres
- To report on and bring recommendations on these issues to PPC

Membership on this Subcommittee will be drawn from the Academic Programs, Planning and Priorities, and Research, Scholarly and Artistic Works Committees of Council, the offices of the provost, vice-president finance, and vice-president research, centre directors, and will be supported by the Governance Office.