

Second Cycle of the MPHEC's Quality Assurance Monitoring Process

Follow-Up Report on St. Thomas University's Action Plan

December 2022



Introduction

Following their virtual site visit and review of St. Thomas University's quality assurance policies and procedures in the context of the Second Cycle of the MPHEC's Quality Assurance Monitoring Process, the Review Panel of Dr. Neil Besner and Dr. Ron Bond produced a thorough report including 22 recommendations. The University responded to the report in September 2021, outlining our action plan to address the recommendations. This plan was approved by the MPHEC board in November 2021.

The University wishes to express again our appreciation to the Review Panel, whose thoughtful report provided an excellent basis for our own review of our quality assurance process and informed the revisions of our Department/Program External Review Policy.

We are pleased to provide an update and progress report on our action plan. The table below outlines the status of the action items emerging from each recommendation.

Recommendation	Action
1. As STU develops its next academic plan, the Strategic Research Plan (2019-2024) be integrated with it.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Strategic Research Plan will be maintained as a separate document to meet Tri-Council and CRC funding requirements, but will be appended to and referenced within the University's next Strategic Plan.
2. Fortify the process through which departmental motions are articulated and conveyed to Senate. 3. Devise ways to re-animate the debate about quality assurance motions on the floor of Senate. 4. Designate a standing agenda item early in the Spring Senate meeting to discuss Departments' annual implementation reports.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Department/Program External Review Policy has been revised to specify the requirement for department/programs to develop and table an action plan to address accepted motions. (ERCC Policy 2.06 (s)) and to report annually to the ERCC on May 15 on progress toward implementation of their action plan. (ERCC Policy 2.06 (t)) The ERCC Policy has been revised to specify a timeline for department/program to provide a written response to the Review Team's final report and recommendations (2.06 (m)) and for Senate to review and discuss the response. (2.06 (n)) ERCC Policy has been revised to specify that the appropriate Dean will present non-monetary motions from the Review Team's report for discussion at Senate. (2.06 (q))
5. Expand the role of STU's Deans to include responsibilities for reviewing course	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No action required. The existing Policy on Student Course Ratings allows the Vice-

<p>evaluation surveys and involvement in performance appraisals of faculty.</p> <p>6. Provide course evaluation results to Chairs and Directors, who should be entitled to discuss them with their colleagues.</p>	<p>President (Academic and Research) to consult with the deans, chairs, and directors, including sharing the results of student course ratings when deemed appropriate or necessary.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Article 21 of the Full-time Faculty Collective agreement empowers the VPAR to include the deans and Associate Vice-President Research when reviewing annual faculty reports. This consultation process occurs regularly and will continue as deemed appropriate.
<p>7. New academic programs will be related to the Academic Planning Committee's criteria for the creation of new departments, especially the criterion calling on the unit to have teaching resources equivalent to three full-time academic appointments.</p> <p>8. Consider the potentially harmful effects of relying on a single full-time faculty member to mount or continue an academic program.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The creation of new academic programs has been and will continue to be guided by the Academic Planning Committee's criteria, and the criterion of three full-time academic appointments for new programs will be maintained when financial resources allow. • The University has acknowledged the reviewers' caution and will endeavor to expand academic staffing when feasible.
<p>9. Publicly articulate the criteria used to modify allocations of established positions when encouraged by the external review or other processes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ERCC Policy has been revised to require the University President to provide a report to the ERCC on all monetary motions of the external reviews undertaken in a given year. The President's report will include criteria for assessing changes to allocations of established positions recommended by the external reviews. (ERCC Policy 2.06 (u)) • The revised ERCC Policy specifies that the ERCC will share the University President's response to monetary issues at the June Senate meeting. (2.06 (v))
<p>10. STU should address the perception that the Collective Agreement may inadvertently constrain the pursuit of quality.</p> <p>11. STU should review and if necessary revise its formal arrangement with UNB, UNBSJ, and NBCC.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The University continues to consider the pursuit of quality when developing or reviewing formal agreements, including collective agreements, our formal arrangements with the University of New Brunswick, and in the development and review of articulated programs with the New Brunswick Community College.

<p>12. Incorporate the learning objectives expressed in “Goals of the Liberal Arts” in the University’s quality assurance Policy Statement on Department/Programme Reviews.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The “Goals of the Liberal Arts” statement is referenced in the Guidelines for Department/Program Self-Study Document in the revised ERCC Policy (Appendix B) and has been added to the list of materials to be sent to the Review Team (Appendix D).
<p>13. Ensure that the Policy Statement on Department/Programme Reviews references the need for an <i>annual</i> internal curriculum review.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The University’s quality assurance process has been extended to include annual internal curriculum reviews within each department. • The ERCC Policy has been revised to specify that department/programs will report annually on all curricular changes approved by Senate. (2.06 (t)) A template has been provided in the ERCC Policy to assist departments/programs in producing this report.
<p>14. Ensure that the Policy require that External Reviews include a STU faculty member who belongs to another Department than the one under review.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ERCC Policy has been revised to specify that the Review Team will meet with a STU faculty member belonging to a department/program other than the one under review. (2.06 (i) vii.)
<p>15. The Policy should make explicit that external reviewers are expected to comment on the review process itself.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ERCC Policy has been revised to include an explicit request that the Review Team provide feedback on the review process itself. (Appendix E.4.3 p.)
<p>16. The Policy should stipulate that the external reviewers’ reports and responses to them be published online.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ERCC Policy has been revised to state that the final report and all supporting documents will be housed online as part of the St. Thomas University Senate webpage. (Appendix E.4.4)
<p>17. The Policy should ensure that the professional qualifications of the external reviewers form part of the record.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ERCC Policy has been revised to specify that the Review Team’s final report should include the reviewer’s names and professional qualifications. (Appendix E.4.3. a.)
<p>18. Re-consider the sufficiency of asking professional departments to submit a copy of the external accrediting review report to Senate only for information and archival purposes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Education Department currently participates in and will continue to participate in the University’s External Review process. • The ERCC Policy has been revised to note the rationale for excluding the School of Social Work from the University’s External Review process. (2.06 (a)) A detailed description of the Canadian Association for Social Work Education (CASWE-ACFTS) accreditation process with which the

	School of Social Work must comply is included in the revised ERCC Policy. (Appendix F)
19. The Policy should require an Appendix to the Self-Study providing a synopsis of Senate-approved curriculum changes since the last external review.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The ERCC Policy has been revised to require that self-studies include an Appendix providing a synopsis of Senate-approved curriculum changes since the last external review. (Appendix B 1.3.4)
20. The Policy should enunciate explicitly the sanctions available, if and when a department refuses, without good and sufficient reason, to participate in the external review process.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The ERCC Policy has been revised to specify the responsibilities of the ERCC and Deans in overseeing the undertaking of external reviews following the model timeline outlined in the Policy. (2.05) This includes meeting with Departments and Chairs at the outset of the review process to explain the procedures and expectations of an external review (2.05 (b)) and again within the first year to facilitate a mentoring process and review the timetable and expectations of the external review process. (2.06 (c)) See also Appendix A: Model Timeline for External Review Process.
21. STU should continue to seek an appropriate pathway to facilitate its ongoing access to the UNB Library in a way acceptable to constituencies at both institutions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The University regularly discusses shared resources with UNB, including access to library resources.
22. STU should formulate a method for the regular formal review of non-academic units.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In our opinion, no new action is required to address this recommendation. Non-academic units at St. Thomas University conduct regular self-evaluations and engage in unit-level strategic planning processes consistent with the University's overall Strategic Plan. Unit directors provide quarterly reports that are reviewed by the Vice-President (Academic and Research) and inform reports to the Board of Governors. The University also regular monitors student satisfaction with units and services through satisfaction surveys. Non-academic staff members also undergo an annual performance review.