The intent of this document is to provide a list of commonly asked questions about general aspects of the University of Saskatchewan's Academic Program Review process.

What is the purpose of the Academic Program Review process?

The regular review of academic programs is a priority for assessment at the university. The current process is built upon improvements of past processes including Systematic Program Review and Graduate Program Review, and will bring USask into better alignment with similar review processes in other parts of Canada and with what is expected by the Government of Saskatchewan. *In this current process, there is no scoring rubric as an outcome and the primary focus is to improve the quality of academic programming at the university. The desire is always to ensure that USask students are provided with the best possible learning experience in a robust learning environment.*

It provides a range of benefits to the University, including:
- Predictable intervals to examine the quality of all programs offered by the University
- Provision of valuable program information, including student and alumni feedback, to each Department/Unit for internal decision making and planning
- Opportunity for program teams and leaders to critically assess the strengths and weaknesses of a program
- Feedback and quality improvement recommendations from external academic leaders
- Identification of areas of strength in each program
- Opportunities for Deans/Directors to address resource and planning needs related to academic programs
- Evidence of accountability to program quality for Governments and other stakeholders
- Improved student learning experiences through a focus on the quality enhancement of teaching and learning

Who oversees the Academic Program Review Process?

The Deputy Provost will be responsible for managing the Academic Program Review process. Primary administrative support will be provided by Office of the Provost and VP Academic (Office of the PVPA) who will coordinate the review activities and provide various resources (e.g. data, report templates, review team nomination and recruitment).

Close consultation with the Dean of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies and the Vice-Provost, Students and Learning will be necessary to ensure the review process adequately evaluates the quality of undergraduate and graduate programs. The Dean will participate in the review in an evaluative capacity and will be asked to meet with reviewers.

College Deans work cooperatively with the Deputy Provost and Dean of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies in the review process. Deans should encourage and support Department Heads and program faculty throughout the review process. Deans are responsible for their College's programs and resources; they will play an important role in responding to the review and creating a plan of action to implement recommendations for improvement. This role ensures that changes made at the program and departmental levels are consistent with the College's overall strategic plan. Deans will be responsible for reporting to University Council and to the Deputy Provost on progress toward action plan implementation, typically within **two years** of a review.

How often are academic units expected to participate in the Academic Program Review process?

Under the process, the intent is to ensure all undergraduate and graduate programs are reviewed at least once every ten-year period. Typically, undergraduate and graduate programs within an academic unit will be reviewed concurrently with separate assessments of each provided by the review team. Where possible, programs in related disciplinary areas (e.g. all Agriculture or all Humanities programs) will be reviewed concurrently. Recognizing the complexity of programs offered, the Deputy Provost (or designate in the Office of the PVPA) may meet with the Dean responsible for the program to discuss the structure of the review for some programs.

My academic unit undergoes a regular accreditation process – is it necessary to also undergo the Academic Review process? If so, how are the processes integrated?

All academic units should undergo the Academic Review process as part of the regular cycle. The processes are not the same as there are some key differences in alignment (see the Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance for more information). Where possible, any academic program review will be scheduled in the same academic year as the accreditation, with the accreditation visit completed first. This will leverage efforts directed at the development of self-study reports for the different types of reviews.

Is there a publicly available schedule of upcoming reviews?

A schedule of upcoming reviews is available on the Academic Program Review webpage within the Office of the PVPA website.

What quality assessment standards are the review process based upon?

The Academic Program Review process utilizes six quality assessment standards to guide all program reviews. These are derived from the detailed degree level standards for undergraduate and graduate programs articulated by the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada. The six standards used in the USask process are as follows:

(1) Program Administration
(2) Program Structure
(3) Program Enrolment and Student Funding
(4) Learning Environment
(5) Faculty Profile
(6) Student Progression and Success

More details of these standards can be found on the Academic Program Review webpage within the Office of the PVPA website.

What is the time period that is under Academic Program Review?

The time period that is typically considered for the review is the most recently completed 5 academic years prior to the time of the review. Therefore, any data provided as part of the Self-Study Report would include data from the annual time cycle of May through April. Should there be any significant developments or updates to

programming in the year of the self-study, academic units are also encouraged to include that in the report. The Self-Study Report along with the site visit are intended to inform the review team of where programs are in the present.

When are nominations for the review team members required and what is the typical composition of a team?

Academic units are encouraged to identify potential nominees early in the Academic Program Review process. The nominations should be submitted to the Office of the PVPA as soon as possible to increase the opportunity to recruit preferred candidates. The Office of the PVPA works with the Deputy Provost to secure the members of the review team, typically two external members and one internal faculty member from USask.

If there are multiple programs are being reviewed, how does the Academic Program Review process account for the breadth of programming in such reviews?

Although a typical review team would include three members, with two being external, in certain instances an additional reviewer may be added to the review team if requested by the academic unit and approved by relevant leaders.

What is the timeline for completing the Self-Study Report as part of the Academic Program Review?

Ideally, the final version of the Self-Study Report should be ready for distribution to the review team a month prior to the planned site visit. The program unit leader(s) can obtain commentary on the draft from other academic leaders, if desired and where appropriate. For example, if site visits are commonly held in late November or late March, reports should be ready in late October or February, respectively.

What happens after the site visit?

The external reviewers are responsible for authoring an External Review Report, typically expected by the Office of the PVPA about 30 days after the completion of the site visit.

What is done with the External Review Report after it is received?

The report is shared with the academic leader of the program(s), the Dean responsible for the program(s) (in departmentalized colleges), the Deputy Provost, Teaching, Learning and Student Experience (TLSE), and the Dean of the College of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (CGPS).

A response from the academic leader of the program(s) is expected within 30 days from receiving the External Review Report. The response should address each recommendation provided in the report and will form the basis for the action plan approved by the Dean of the program(s) (in departmentalized colleges). The recipients of the response are the same as those who received the External Review Report.

The Dean/Director responsible for the program(s) then provides a response to the Self-Study Report, External Review Report, and academic unit response (if review was at department level). The purpose of this is to provide a comprehensive plan of action with timelines in response to the outcomes of the review process.

What is expected in the way of implementation/change and how is this monitored?

The Office of the PVPA will draft a Review Summary on behalf of the Deputy Provost which summarizes the various details and findings of the academic program review, and this is provided to the Academic Programs Committee. The memo is then forwarded to University Council for information and the Office of the PVPA publishes it on-line.

The Dean and Department Head (or Dean/Director only, as applicable) are responsible for implementing the action plan, and it is expected that they would update the Deputy Provost with a progress update within two years of the review (also to be shared with Academic Programs Committee).

Who do I contact for more information about the cyclical program review process?

The primary contact for any questions regarding the Academic Program Review process or the scheduling of reviews for academic units is the Assessment and Analytics team within the Office of the PVPA using the following email address: analytics@usask.ca.

Self-Study Report

What is a Self-Study Report?

A Self-Study Report is developed by the academic unit that administers the program(s) under review. The group tasked with the development of this report is often referred to as the Self-Study Committee. The report provides detailed background information about the program(s) under review and ideally is organized in alignment with the six quality assessment standards. It will include data from various sources and will provide the foundation for the review process and the review team.

Are there best practices for developing the Self-Study Report?

The size and scope of the effort can vary from academic unit to unit. Although templates are provided for the six primary sections of content ideally included, there is flexibility with presentation and how much detail is provided. Most commonly, it is an individual (or a few) who assumes core responsibility for authorship and whom coordinates with available resources. Irrespective of the approach, collaborative discussions amongst unit leader(s), faculty and instructors, are often important to making final decisions about the self-study content. Academic units are encouraged to leverage existing structures within their units such as student groups and curriculum committees.

How are students best engaged in the Academic Program Review process?

An important piece of the Self-Study Report content is student feedback on their own experience in the unit programming. Program unit leader(s) are encouraged to strongly consider how they best engage students in the process to obtain the optimal input into the process. A couple of common methods include student inclusion in the stakeholder meeting during the site visit, as well as obtaining feedback through the administration of a student survey.

Are faculty CVs commonly included as part of the Self-Study Report?

Depending on the size of the academic unit related to the review, sometimes faculty CVs are included as part of an appendix of the Self-Study Report. Another common approach is to include faculty summaries or profiles in the same appendix. Otherwise, it is not unusual to just note that CVs are available upon request of the review team.

Site Visit

What is a site visit?

A site visit provides an opportunity for the review team members to meet in-person with a variety of internal and external stakeholders about the academic program(s) under review. Being provided a Self-Study Report provides core information about the program, but having an opportunity to have dialogue with participants involved in delivering the program or having experienced the program, are invaluable. A site visit also provides the review team with the opportunity to see the physical space and facilities where the program is held.

Are site visits always arranged to be on-site or in-person visits?

Typically, site visits are carried out in-person and the external reviewers are brought to the university, and meetings take place over a two-day period. This results in a fairly busy time where meetings run over the timeframe with relevant stakeholders invited to come to a central meeting location to interact with the review team. This approach also allows for the review team to observe and tour space and facilities, as relevant. However, there remain some instances where a virtual site visit is preferable or more appropriate, and in such cases the stakeholder meetings are typically set-up over a three-week period.

What time of the academic year do the site visits typically occur?

Site visits are usually scheduled when students are on campus in the fall or winter terms. The most common time is late November in the fall term, and late March in the winter term. The visits are never scheduled during Reading Week or exam periods.