

# **Advice to Units Preparing for Systematic Program Reviews (Frequently Asked Questions)**

This document is intended to:

- clarify and expand on the official guidelines and procedures (based on ‘frequently asked questions’ and the procedures established during implementation); and
- note some minor revisions to the official guidelines and procedures (reflecting ongoing improvements to the SPR process).

If you have any questions about the material presented here, please contact the SPR Administrator, Tonya Wirchenko (tel. 966-5757, e-mail [tonya.wirchenko@usask.ca](mailto:tonya.wirchenko@usask.ca)).

All policy and procedure documents, including Guides, are available on the SPR website at <http://www.usask.ca/vpacademic/spr>.

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## 1. *What is Systematic Program Review (SPR)?*

- ‘Systematic Program Review’ is a standardised, comprehensive process for reviewing all of the University’s degree programs over a recurrent six-year cycle.
- The primary purpose of SPR is to ensure that all programs undergo a periodic external evaluation of quality.
- SPR is intended to achieve three fundamental goals:
  - 1) to encourage program improvement and innovation;
  - 2) to demonstrate accountability for the academic programs delivered by this University;
  - 3) to provide information to assist University-level decisions about program revisions, program deletions, and resource allocation.
- As a University-level initiative, SPR is administered by the Provost & Vice-President Academic. This responsibility is shared by the Dean of Graduate Studies and Research when graduate programs are reviewed. SPR is managed by an Executive Committee consisting of the Provost, Dean GSR, Director of Institutional Planning, Academic Director and the Administrator of SPR. The Academic Director and SPR Administrator coordinate the SPR process with the assistance of a secretary.
- Each review consists of:
  - a *self-study* by the academic unit responsible for the program;
  - a *site visit* by external reviewers, one from a cognate department at this University and at least two from other universities in North America;
  - a *report* and recommendations by the external reviewers;
  - *responses* to the report by the college dean and the program head;
  - a *final assessment* by the Provost & Vice-President Academic, Dean of Graduate Studies and Research, and the Planning Committee of Council; and
  - *outcomes* such as program revisions, resource re-allocation, etc. Note: All actions resulting from reviews (e.g. major revisions, program termination) are subject to the normal approval processes of Council and its committees.
- Programs are evaluated on the basis of a standard set of criteria, including quality (as indicated by curriculum, faculty, learning environment, infrastructure and outcomes), demand, and efficiency in use of resources. For some programs, uniqueness and relevance to the province are also important factors. Criteria are rigorous, reflecting national and international standards. See *A Framework for the Evaluation of Academic Programmes*, approved by Council 1996.
- SPR reviews are primarily formative (for program improvement), but summative features (assessment categories A-D and their outcomes) have been included to ensure that the reviews result in action. The categories are described in the *Systematic Program Review Policy and Procedures*, Section XIII, pp. 7-9 (and see ‘outcome categories’, below).
- SPR is vital to the University’s renewal agenda. As described in *A Framework for Planning*, SPR will assist the University in putting into practice its core principles of autonomy, quality and accountability. It is a key strategy for achieving the University’s highest priority goals, particularly the goals of improving the quality of instructional programs and fostering the teacher-scholar model.
- Procedures are summarized in **Attachment I: Systematic Program Review Sequence and Timelines**.
- For more information: See *Systematic Program Review Policy and Procedures*, approved by Council 1999.

## 2. *Why Program Review?*

- College and departmental reviews have certain disadvantages from the perspectives of strategic planning and the student experience. They tend to miss major components of student programs which are delivered by other units, overlook interdepartmental relationships, allow interdisciplinary programs to fall through the cracks, and provide little incentive for changes to the institution's existing array of programs.
- The 'unit-based, program-focussed' approach of SPR focusses on the degree programs delivered to students, while the administrative base for each review (i.e. preparation of the self-study) is the unit with primary responsibility for the program.
- Where possible, programs within a college are reviewed in the same academic year, and undergraduate and graduate programs within a department are reviewed simultaneously. This yields insights into program interactions and provides a 'big picture' of each college's array of programs. It is also cost-effective, since programs can be grouped together for review (e.g. various majors within one department).
- *Role of research:* Since SPR reviews programs rather than units, the research focus may not be as strong as in traditional departmental reviews. However, the scholarly activities of faculty play a critical role in many SPR criteria such as quality of faculty, quality of learning environment, and relationship of research to instructional programs, particularly in the case of graduate programs.
- For more information on the rationale for SPR, see *A Background Paper and Proposal for a Systematic Programme Review Process at the University of Saskatchewan* (1994); *A Framework for the Evaluation of Academic Programmes* (1996); and *Systematic Program Review at the University of Saskatchewan: A Report Prepared by the Planning Committee for University Council* (1999).

## 3. *What counts as a 'program'?*

- SPR currently is reviewing undergraduate and graduate degree programs. A degree 'program' is a generally defined set of courses and other requirements which a student must successfully complete to obtain a unique degree designation (e.g. B.Sc.(Kin), M.D., M.B.A.) or a degree designation in a Council-approved area of specialization (e.g. B.Sc. in Chemistry, M.A. in History).
- *Different majors within a Dept:* Where a department offers programs in more than one Council-approved area of specialization, a separate self-study report should be provided for each program, and each program will receive a separate assessment. For instance, the B.S.A. in Applied Microbiology and the B.S.A. in Food Science provided separate self-study reports, even though both are offered by the Dept. of Applied Microbiology and Food Science. (Common appendices may be provided where appropriate.)
- *3yr/4yr/honours:* For certain purposes (e.g. Council approval), options such as 3-year, 4-year, and honours are considered separate programs. However, for the purposes of SPR, such programs will generally be assessed together, and may be combined in one self-study document, with comments on the different options where appropriate (e.g. for objectives, curriculum, enrolment, outcomes).
- *Streams/strands/minors:* Options such as streams or strands within a program, minors, and internship years are generally not assessed separately and do not require separate self-study documents, although comments should be made on the different options where appropriate.

- *Graduate programs*: Graduate programs within one Council-approved area of specialization are generally not assessed separately and do not require separate self-study documents, although comments should be made on different programs, as well as sub-specializations or strands, where appropriate. For instance, the PGD, M.Eng., M.Sc. and Ph.D. in Mechanical Engineering could be combined in one self-study document, with separate comments where appropriate.
- *Involvement of related colleges/departments*: SPR reviews entire programs, not just the portion delivered by the unit responsible for the program. ‘Outside’ colleges/departments with a major role in program delivery should therefore be consulted for:
  - suggestions for reviewers;
  - information for the self-study (e.g. courses, faculty, facilities);
  - comments about the program, if any (to be appended to self-study);
  - involvement in the site visit.
- *Program grouping*: To increase the efficiency of the review process and show interactions among programs, the SPR process places related programs into ‘groups’ for review, where possible. Generally, all degree programs within a college are reviewed in the same academic term. In departmentalized colleges, programs are grouped by department or disciplinary area. Each program group will be reviewed by one team of reviewers with one site visit. A typical program group would consist of all the undergraduate and graduate programs offered by one department. Some SPR groups will also include related interdisciplinary or cross-college programs.

#### **4. How is the SPR review schedule determined?**

- The published SPR Review Schedule shows the academic term in which site visits are tentatively scheduled. Timing of most SPR activities is driven by the site visit date.
- The initial 6-year cycle was developed by the SPR Executive in consultation with Council committees and Deans’ Council. The schedule is forwarded annually to Deans for response.
- The SPR schedule is based on the following considerations (among others): accreditation and other existing review cycles; length of time since previous review; academic program grouping; plans for major revisions, change in leadership, etc.; special requests from Deans; review load for each year.
- Every attempt is made to accommodate special requests, but with a schedule of this complexity, revisions are not always possible.

#### **5. How does SPR differ from accreditation reviews?**

- SPR ensures that non-accredited programs are reviewed (e.g. graduate programs).
- SPR encourages improvement of all programs, even outstanding ones, while accreditation judges whether a program meets the accreditation standards.
- Although ‘academic quality’ is important to both, SPR criteria are more academically oriented and include criteria related to the mission and goals of this University (e.g. research intensiveness, education equity), while accreditation criteria are more related to the goals of the accrediting body and the profession (e.g. minimum course content in specific areas, professional designation of instructors).

- SPR considers College-level and University-wide issues such as interactions among programs, College and University priorities, and overall resource allocation.
- Unlike most accreditation processes, SPR allows input from units in the selection of reviewers.

## **6. Getting started**

- *Read about SPR.* Recommended reading:
  - this document (Advice to Units/Frequently Asked Questions);
  - Systematic Program Review *Policy and Procedures* (1999);
  - undergraduate and graduate guides for the self-study (see Section 8 below);
  - *A Framework for the Evaluation of Academic Programmes* (1996).
- *Organizational meeting:* Approx. 7 months before the academic term in which the site visits are scheduled, there will be an organizational meeting between the SPR Executive and the college/dept under review. The purpose of this meeting is to:
  - determine the structure of the review (e.g. program grouping, number of site visits);
  - determine the number of internal and external reviewers required for each site visit, and their areas of focus, if any (e.g. undergraduate/graduate, subdisciplines);
  - select approximate times for the site visits;
  - respond to questions about the SPR process.
- The College/Dept should set up a mechanism for carrying out the self-study (e.g. establish self-study committee, designate a faculty coordinator, hire a student, etc.).
- *Contact the Academic Director of SPR or the SPR Administrator if you have questions at any time, even prior to the organizational meeting.*

## **7. How is the review team selected?**

- The selection of appropriate reviewers is one of the most critical factors in ensuring a high-quality review. Units are encouraged to start thinking about potential reviewers well before the review process begins.
- The SPR and Graduate Program Review policy and procedures state that it is the responsibility of the Provost & Vice-President Academic and the Dean of Graduate Studies and Research to select review teams.
- Once the number of reviewers has been determined at the Organizational Meeting, the Academic Director of SPR will send the Dean/Dept Head a request for nominations of internal and external reviewers. Assisted by the SPR Executive, the Provost & VP Academic and Dean of GSR will then make an initial selection of reviewers, guided by but not restricted to the unit's original list.
- The SPR Director may return to the college/dept for additional nominations. Occasionally, recommendations are received from external sources (e.g. from a nominee who declined the invitation, from a Dean of another university); in these cases, an invitation will not be issued until the college/dept has been asked whether they have any strong objection to the nominee.
- For additional information, see *Guidelines for the Nomination of Reviewers* (attached).

## 8. *Developing the self-study (process, document, timing, etc.)*

- *Purpose:* Think of the self-study as a process of self-evaluation and discovery, not merely as a report to be delivered. Units have found the SPR self-study an extremely valuable exercise: it provides a wealth of information on the unit and its programs, assists with plans for program revision, provides an opportunity to reflect on your program array and objectives, and encourages feedback from students.
- *Timing:* aim for delivery *5 weeks prior to site visit* (must be ready to send out to reviewers one month before site visit). The ‘Review Sequence’ published in the *SPR Policy and Procedures* estimated 3 months for self-study preparation, but units are advised to allow 4-6 months, depending on program size and complexity.
- *Guides for Preparing the Self-Study Document:*
  - Undergraduate programs follow *SPR Guidelines for the Self-Study Report* (on the Web at <http://www.usask.ca/vpacademic/spr/selfstudyguidelines.html>).
  - Graduate programs follow the *Graduate Program Review Self-Study Document Guide* (on the Web at <http://www.usask.ca/vpacademic/spr/graddocuments.htm>).

(The two guides cover the same basic areas, but the graduate guide has some additional questions relevant to graduate programs. Although the SPR guide is intended to be University-wide and thus is not labelled ‘undergraduate’, in practice we are asking programs to use the SPR guide for undergraduate programs and the Graduate guide for graduate programs. Please note that the published documents do not yet reflect minor ongoing improvements to the process. Contact the SPR Administrator if anything is unclear!)

- Bear in mind that the self-study documents are primarily for the *reviewers’* use. Consult the SPR and Graduate *review team guides* to ensure the reviewers have the information they need to make their assessments.
- *Length:* Not too long! The most frequent complaint from reviewers has been “too much paper”. A suggested guideline is 15-25 pages per program under review, plus one binder of appendices.

### **Hints to keep the self-study document to a reasonable length:**

- **It is not necessary to answer every single question in the self-study guides. Follow the basic format (i.e. the main section headings), and use the questions as guidelines only.**
- **Don’t try to provide everything up front. Include a list of documents that are available on request or that will be provided on-site.**
- **Provide common appendices where possible.**
- **Be concise. Identify the issues and information essential to the reviewers’ understanding of the program.**
- **Detailed statistical analyses are NOT required; nor is eloquent text!**

- *Format:*
  - Follow the basic format of the self-study guides (i.e. main section headings).
  - All pages and tables (including appendices) should be numbered for ease of reference.
  - Please use a separate binder for each self study. The appendices should be in a separate binder also. Three- ring D binders are preferred. (Bound documents, brochures, etc. may be placed in transparent document holder pages.) Label the spine.

- There should be a separate self-study report for each program under review, as defined above; however, common appendices may be provided for a program group where appropriate (e.g. general college and departmental information, faculty CVs, infrastructure).
- Append (or provide on-site) and comment on:
  - College of Graduate Studies & Research *Graduate Program Report* (graduate programs only; should be appended to self-study) (*sample table of contents attached, Att. II*)
  - Report from University Libraries (*program heads should contact the Director of Libraries directly*)
  - Dept/College surveys of current students, graduates and/or employers, if any
  - other statistics (a guide to SPR statistics for the self-study will be distributed at the organizational meeting).
- *Faculty CVs*: We suggest including ‘condensed’ CVs in the self-study (1-2 pages each, with information relevant to self-study, e.g. qualifications and *recent* scholarly/artistic work, professional practice, public service + extension, graduate supervision, courses taught, honours + awards). Provide full CVs to reviewers on-site. Note that SPR cannot require faculty to provide CVs; however, faculty should be encouraged to provide them, as reviewers will almost certainly ask for them.
- *Number of copies*: the number of copies depends on the number of reviewers. If only undergraduate programs are being reviewed, 3 copies (plus a copy each for the review team members) must be submitted to the SPR Administrator.

If graduate and undergraduate programs are being reviewed 4 copies of study documents (plus a copy each for the review team members) must be submitted to the SPR Administrator.

The SPR Administrator then will distribute the self study as follows:

- SPR file (1)
- Provost & VP Academic (1)
- Dean of Graduate Studies & Research (1)
- site visit copy (1)
- one each for the reviewers, internal and external (3-5 copies, depending on the numbers of reviewers).
- SPR will pay for *all but two* of the submitted copies, including binders, dividers and photocopying. Charge by JV after the reports are submitted. (Two copies are considered ‘submission copies’ and are the unit’s responsibility; the remainder are ‘distribution copies’ and are SPR’s responsibility.)
- In addition, an *electronic version* of the self-study should be submitted (electronically generated material only; no need to scan).
- Please note **that this number of copies does not include copies for distribution to other units involved in the review or copies for your Dean’s office.** The college/department under review is responsible for providing additional copies to their Dean’s office and to other parties involved in the review.
- Remember that reviews are of programs as they *currently* exist; however, self-studies should comment on past revisions, future plans, etc. where relevant.
- The Academic Director of SPR or SPR Administrator can provide advice on adaptation of *accreditation* review self-studies, on request.

- College-specific issues that might affect the self-study (e.g. recent or planned program revisions, amalgamation of departments) may be discussed at the organizational meeting.
- The SPR office does not ‘vet’ self-studies prior to distribution; they are forwarded to the reviewers as received. It is the responsibility of the units under review to ensure that their self-study documents are complete and well presented.
- The College of Graduate Studies and Research can provide some graduate student assistance on request, for graduate self-studies only.
- The college/dept should provide the SPR Administrator with the name of the contact person for each program self-study.
- A note re. the *Graduate Program Review* policy and procedure documents: Graduate program review was developed as a separate process before SPR was finalized, but it has since been incorporated into SPR. Some components of Graduate Program Review have been superseded by SPR: for instance, the committee structure (there is no “Graduate Program Review Committee”), timelines, and outcome categories. It is recommended that the *SPR Policy and Procedures* be followed as a general guide to the process, but that the *Graduate Program Review Self-Study Document Guide* be followed for the graduate self-study report.

#### 9. ***Receiving feedback from graduates (survey templates)***

- Student outcomes surveys are not required by SPR, but they are ***strongly recommended*** for the feedback they provide on student satisfaction with programs and student ‘success’ after graduation (e.g. employment, further study).
- Survey development should be started as early as possible, since the results will need to be analyzed in time to be incorporated into the self-study.
- Surveys of former students require ethics approval; surveys of current students do not.
- *SPR Student Outcomes Survey Templates*: There are survey templates which were granted approval by the University Advisory Committee on Ethics in Behavioural Science Research. These templates are accessible on the web at <http://www.usask.ca/vpacademic/spr/surveytemplates.html>
- These templates assist depts/colleges by providing:
  - pre-approval for the survey process and questionnaire; and
  - a complete set of tested questions relevant to SPR, including general and program-specific options, so that units can quickly create a questionnaire that serves the needs of their program.
- The Guidelines must be followed, or the templates will lose their pre-approved status.
- The templates can easily be adapted for use in surveying current students.
- Some assistance is available for designing, administering and analyzing *graduate* program surveys. Contact the SPR Administrator to arrange assistance (usually in the form of a Graduate Service Fellow). At the moment, no central assistance is available for undergraduate program surveys, but College Deans might provide support on request.
- If the College/Dept does not have its own contact list for graduates, the Office of Alumni Relations can provide contact information, as far as it is known.
- Questionnaires may be as long or short, general or detailed as the unit wishes. Many options are provided (which is why the templates look so long!). In some cases, e.g.

student satisfaction, the templates provide a ‘general’ and a ‘detailed’ option; do not use both in one questionnaire.

- Questions about survey templates should be addressed to Institutional Analysis.
- Survey Guidelines and templates are available on the SPR website at <http://www.usask.ca/vpacademic/spr/surveytemplates.html> (pdf and Word).
- Employer surveys are also useful for some programs (e.g. professional programs). No SPR templates are available for those, as they tend to be short, to vary greatly from program to program, and do not require ethics approval.

### **10. How is the site visit organized?**

- Depending on the number and complexity of the programs under review, the site visit may take two or three days. A two-day site visit usually means two *complete* days, with reviewers arriving the previous evening and departing the morning of the third day.
- The itinerary will be developed by the department/college in close collaboration with the SPR Administrator, and will be subject to final approval by the SPR Executive. The SPR Administrator will send detailed guidelines for development of the site visit itinerary to the department/college approximately one month prior to the site visit, and also will meet with the department/college to discuss the itinerary.

Here are some general guidelines, extracted from the ‘Site Visit Guidelines’:

- These are *program* reviews, therefore:
  - site visits must include interviews with non-departmental/college faculty and staff, tours of other facilities, etc., where these make a major contribution to students’ programs; and
  - all site visit activities and interviews must be relevant to the program under review, not just to the unit responsible for the program.
- The review team should have plenty of time to confer and work on the report, including evenings and working lunches. The itinerary should also leave ‘white space’ in case of additional meetings or delays, especially on the second day. Individual meetings should generally be no shorter than 20 minutes, group meetings no shorter than half an hour, larger focus groups one hour. Try not to schedule several short meetings back-to-back, as that almost always leads to delays.
- Meetings should be scheduled with the following categories of interviewees:
  - Provost & Vice-President Academic and Dean of Graduate Studies and Research. The review team will be reporting to them, therefore these should be the first and last meetings of the site visit. The SPR Administrator will schedule these meetings.
  - College Dean(s).
  - Faculty (program heads and faculty from this and other units as appropriate; may include associate members and adjuncts where they play an active role in program delivery; individually or in groups).
  - Staff (administrative, research, technical support, lab demonstrators, etc. as relevant).
  - Students (separate graduate and undergraduate focus groups, representing all program options, one hour if possible; could also have a focus group of former students if available; also consider whether there are any student groups which might have special concerns, e.g. Aboriginal, women, internship, who might wish to meet separately).

- External people as required, e.g. from professional bodies or industry.
  - CGSR administrative staff (graduate programs only).
  - SPR Administrator and the departmental/college person in charge of site visit arrangements, briefly each morning.
  - Others (e.g. heads of research centres, advisory committees, Library, etc.) if relevant to the program.
- The site visit should also include a tour of facilities, and an exit meeting with the Dean, program heads and faculty before the exit meeting with the Provost and Dean of GSR.
  - SPR will pay for review team lunches and dinners (a few additional guests may be invited to lunch but only after consultation with the SPR Administrator). Coffee break refreshments and focus group catering are the program's responsibility to organize and pay for.
- *Location of meetings:* Normally we suggest that all meetings take place in the college under review, and that the review team should be provided with a 'base' (office or lockable meeting room) in the same building, so that all documents are on hand and time is not wasted walking across campus. If suitable rooms are not available in the college, the College of Graduate Studies and Research might be able to offer some meeting space; but it is preferable to have all meetings in the same building, if possible.
  - It is also recommended that the college/dept provide a computer and printer for the review team, if possible.

### **11. What do the outcome categories (A, B, C, D) mean?**

- A special feature of SPR is that programs are assigned an 'outcome category' ('assessment category') — A, B, C or D — each of which carries specified consequences. This ensures that the review reports lead to action, rather than simply sitting on a shelf!

The following abbreviated explanations of the assessment categories are not the official descriptions and must not be used as formal criteria. Please refer to the *Systematic Program Review Policy and Procedures* (1999), Section XIII for a full description of the categories.

- A:** Program has achieved at least a national reputation, and might be expected to develop as a centre of excellence. Few changes are required. There will be a commitment to maintain and possibly enhance program strength. Graduate programs may be given increased autonomy. (Most universities find that only a small percentage of their programs — less than 10% overall — hold this outstanding, 'world-class' status.)
- B:** Program shows evidence of academic vitality sustained over a period of time, but there are some weaknesses which should be addressed. There will be a commitment to sustain the program at approximately the current level. (These are good, steady programs which should form the bulk of the University's program offerings.)
- C:** Program has fundamental deficiencies which must be addressed within a given timeframe. A concrete and realistic action plan must be approved by a specified deadline or the program will be considered for termination.

- D:** Program has shown little evidence of academic vitality over a number of years, and there is little likelihood of improvement without significant new resources. It may suffer additional liabilities such as low demand and no service to other programs. Procedures for program termination will be initiated immediately.
- The outcome categories are assigned initially by the external review team. After responses to the reviewers' report are received, the Provost & VP Academic and Dean of Graduate Studies make a recommendation to the Planning Committee of Council, noting whether they agree or disagree with the review team's assessment. The Planning Committee makes the final decision on outcome categories and reports the outcomes to Council.
  - Two revisions were made to the official wording of the categories, effective June 1, 2002:
    - A: "Few, if any, fundamental changes are required" is revised to read "Few, if any, changes are required."
    - B: "Some fundamental changes should be made" is revised to read "Some changes should be made."
  - Outcomes of program reviews are posted on the SPR website.

## **12. What are SPR 'Action Plans' and 'Graduate Action Responses'?**

- The 'Action Plans' described in the original SPR *Policy and Procedures* are in the process of being superseded by the University's new *Integrated Planning Process*, whereby plans in response to undergraduate and graduate SPR reviews are incorporated into college and unit strategic plans.
- At the *graduate* level, the College of Graduate Studies and Research has established additional procedures:
  - An SPR Outcomes Subcommittee has been established by CGSR as a joint committee of the PhD and Academic Committees, together with additional members of the Graduate Faculty. This Subcommittee evaluates and assists in the development of 'Graduate Action Responses', which are required from all graduate programs rated 'C'.
  - Graduate programs rated 'C' are asked to submit an action response to the Outcomes Subcommittee by a specified date. If the action responses are not approved by the graduate committees and Dean of Graduate Studies, admissions to the program in question are suspended as of a specified date, until a satisfactory response is received and approved.
  - The Subcommittee, graduate outcomes procedures, and action responses are described in *SPR Outcomes Sub-Committee: Terms of Reference and Outline of the Process* (October 2001), available from the College of Graduate Studies & Research.
- Potential actions in response to SPR may be discussed in the program head's and Dean's responses to the review team's report as well as in the College's Integrated Plan.

## **13. What information and assistance is provided to units?**

- A *Guide to Statistics for Systematic Program Review Self-Studies* will be distributed at the initial organizational meeting, and is available on the SPR website.
- The University Libraries will provide a report on Library resources available to support the program. *Program heads should contact the Director of Libraries directly to request this report.* It should be appended to the self-study or provided to the reviewers on-site.

- For graduate programs, the College of Graduate Studies and Research provides a CGSR *Graduate Program Report* to assist units in preparing their self-study. Any discrepancies with the unit's own data should be discussed with the CGSR before the report is appended to the self-study document. A sample table of contents is attached (Att. II).
- The College of Graduate Studies and Research may be able to provide a 'graduate service fellow' on request, to assist with graduate self-studies and graduate student surveys.
- When SPR was approved, it was anticipated that Deans of departmentalized colleges would provide some assistance to their units in preparing for SPR reviews, especially in cases where funds were formerly directed to internal review processes. Examples of such assistance have been the provision of college-level information (statistics, text, appendices), college-wide student outcomes surveys, provision of a boardroom for the site visit, and assistance with the costs of self-studies and site visits.
- SPR will pay for all but two of the submitted copies of the self-study document, including binders, dividers and photocopying.
- SPR can also pay for casual help (two hours per program under review) to assist with binder compilation, if the unit wishes. Payment will be made by JV after the reports are submitted.
- Besides covering all of the reviewers' expenses, SPR will pay for a site visit luncheon with the program head and a few other invitees. (Incidental refreshments and focus group catering are the program's responsibility.)

#### ***14. What are the roles and responsibilities of Program Heads?***

- For SPR, a 'Program Head' may be the Dean of a non-departmentalized college, head of a department where that department has primary responsibility for the program under review, or Chair of the coordinating committee of an interdisciplinary program.
- Responsibilities of the program head include:
  - keeping faculty and staff informed about the review process and timelines;
  - setting up a mechanism to prepare the self-study (e.g. establishing a committee, designating a faculty member, hiring a graduate student, etc.), and ensuring that it is completed on time;
  - encouraging faculty to see the review as a positive, formative process and to participate fully in it;
  - liaising with other departments, if relevant, to obtain information for the self-study;
  - overseeing the nomination of internal and external reviewers and submitting nominations to the Academic Director of SPR;
  - meeting with the reviewers on-site;
  - providing a response to the reviewers' report; and
  - collaborating with the college Dean (if other than the program head), Provost & Vice-President Academic and others in developing an action plan to implement the review outcomes.
- Deans of departmentalized colleges have additional responsibilities, including:
  - providing some centralized assistance for self-studies (e.g. college-level information and statistics, an asst./assoc. Dean to coordinate the process, etc.);
  - vetting self-study documents prior to submission;
  - providing a response to the reviewers' reports, including comments on the program array and college plans;

- discussing review outcomes and action plans with the Provost & VP Academic and Dean of Graduate Studies and Research.

### **15. What benefits have been realized from SPR?**

- *Program improvement:* SPR is leading to improvements in areas such as the array of programs within colleges, the objectives, curricula and delivery of programs, support for scholarly activities of faculty, administrative processes, service to students, recruitment of faculty and students, support for interdisciplinary programs, and many others.
- *Positive impression made on external reviewers:* Reviewers have commented that they were impressed with the process, enjoyed the visit, and found it very worthwhile. Internal reviewers have noted that the review gave them a new perspective on their own programs and will be helpful for their own reviews, while externals appreciated learning about programs and review processes at another university, and brought back a favourable impression of the U of S.
- *Self-study process:* Units have commented that the self-study process provided them with a wealth of useful information about their unit and programs and motivated them to reflect on their program array and objectives. Some units noted that the SPR process was much more a true 'self-study' than their accreditation self-study. Programs that were about to propose or were in the midst of major revisions reported that the self-study and the external reviewers' comments helped them to improve their plans for change and implementation. The process also provided a strong stimulus to make changes which might have been 'in the pipeline' for years with little action.
- *Other practical benefits:* As a result of SPR, Calendar entries are being clarified, certain administrative functions have improved, central databases are more up-to-date, and units are more aware of the importance of submitting and verifying statistics.
- *Mechanisms for student feedback:* SPR has encouraged units to survey their graduates, and the survey templates have proved useful as the basis for surveys of both graduates and current students. Some units have used the templates to design non-SPR surveys as well.
- Longer-term anticipated benefits include:
  - fulfillment of the three objectives of program improvement, demonstration of accountability, and provision of information for decisions on programs and resource allocation;
  - improvement of the extent to which programs contribute to the University's broader goals;
  - improvement of central databases in terms of both accuracy and completeness; and
  - identification of programs as areas of potential institutional priority.

## 16. SPR Contact Information

- SPR Website: <http://www.usask.ca/vpacademic/spr>
- **First contact for all queries (except as noted below): Tonya Wirchenko, SPR Administrator (tel. 966-5757, e-mail [tonya.wirchenko@usask.ca](mailto:tonya.wirchenko@usask.ca))**
- Queries are encouraged!

*To ask about:*

*Contact:*

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ reviewer selection</li> <li>▪ rescheduling of reviews</li> <li>▪ policy issues</li> <li>▪ major program-related issues</li> </ul>	<p><b>Academic Director of SPR</b> Trevor Gambell Telephone: 966-1933 E-mail: <a href="mailto:trevor.gambell@usask.ca">trevor.gambell@usask.ca</a></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ self-study document</li> <li>▪ site visit itinerary</li> <li>▪ status of reviews</li> <li>▪ routine queries re. process</li> </ul>	<p><b>SPR Administrator</b> Tonya Wirchenko Telephone: 966-5757 E-mail: <a href="mailto:tonya.wirchenko@usask.ca">tonya.wirchenko@usask.ca</a></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ site visit scheduling</li> <li>▪ document delivery</li> <li>▪ meeting scheduling</li> <li>▪ invoices</li> <li>▪ site visit catering</li> </ul>	<p><b>SPR Secretary</b> Ginny Cherepacha Telephone: 966-2489 E-mail: <a href="mailto:ginny.cherepacha@usask.ca">ginny.cherepacha@usask.ca</a></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ statistics in Graduate Program Report from CGSR</li> </ul>	<p>Doug Dombrosky College of Graduate Studies &amp; Research Telephone: 966-2774 E-mail: <a href="mailto:douglas.dombrosky@usask.ca">douglas.dombrosky@usask.ca</a></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ delivery of Graduate Program Report from CGSR</li> </ul>	<p>Brenda Wright College of Graduate Studies &amp; Research Telephone: 966-2022 E-mail: <a href="mailto:brenda.wright@usask.ca">brenda.wright@usask.ca</a></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ University Statistics Book and undergraduate statistics</li> </ul>	<p>Rob Schultz Institutional Analysis Telephone: 966-7822 E-mail: <a href="mailto:robert.schultz@usask.ca">robert.schultz@usask.ca</a></p>

## Attachment I: *Systematic Program Review Sequence and Timelines*

ACTION SEQUENCE	APPROXIMATE TIMELINE
<b>Establish Review Schedule:</b> Provost and VP Academic and Dean, CGSR identify programs for review in each academic year on basis of initial 6-year cycle and consultation with Deans. (Schedule may be revised after publication, e.g. at a Dean's request.)	ca. 2 years before each academic year's site visits
<b>Inform Dean:</b> Provost informs Deans of review schedule for their programs	1 1/2 years < visit
<b>Establish structure of review:</b> Provost and Dean, CGSR meet with Dean and program head(s) to establish structure of review	ca. 7 months < visit
<b>Prepare Self-Study:</b> College/Dept begins self-study process	5-7 months < visit
<b>Appoint Review Team:</b> P&VPA and Dean, CGSR appoint review team after consultation with Dean and program head(s)	4 - 5 months < visit
<b>Submit Self-Study:</b> College/Dept submits self-study document to P&VPA and Dean, CGSR	5 weeks < site visit
<b>Site Visit:</b> Review team visits campus (2-3 days)	
<b>Review Team's Report:</b> Review team submits report to P&VPA and Dean, CGSR	1 month > site visit
<b>Program Head's Response:</b> Program Head responds to reviewers' report (correction of factual errors and comments on assessment)	1 month > receipt of reviewers' report
<b>Dean's Response:</b> Dean (if other than program head) responds to reviewers' report and program head's comments (may wait until all college program reviews for that academic year have been completed)	1 month > receipt of program head's response
<b>Prepare Assessment Recommendation:</b> Provost and Dean, CGSR consider all reports and responses and prepare recommendations on assessment outcomes	1-2 months > receipt of Dean's response
<b>Recommend Assessment:</b> Provost and Dean, CGSR forward all review documents to Planning Cttee along with recommendations on assessment outcomes.	
<b>Notification to the Dean:</b> the Provost will indicate to the Dean, in writing, the recommended assessments of the review and will request information on which recommendations will be acted upon immediately and which will be included as part of the College's Integrated Plan	Immediately after assessment is recommended to Planning
<b>Report Results of Review:</b> Planning Committee reports results of reviews to Council	
<b>Actions resulting from the review</b> are to be included in the College's Integrated Plan.	
<b>Use of Review Information:</b> All program review documents are available to Council/CGSR committees for use in considering program proposals and resource allocation	
<b>Follow-up:</b> P&VPA and Dean, CGSR monitor progress	

Notes:

- Procedures accurate as of August 2003, but subject to revision as the process is improved.
- Timeline includes activities that may occur concurrently.
- For further information, see documents on website: <http://www.usask.ca/vpacademic/spr>.



## **Attachment II: CGSR GRADUATE PROGRAM REPORT SAMPLE TABLE OF CONTENTS**

- The report will be provided by the College of Graduate Studies and Research approx. 5 months prior to site visit, to assist with self-study preparation. It should be appended to the self-study report, and commented on in the report text. Units are encouraged to discuss discrepancies and queries with CGSR as early as possible.
- Sources are noted in italics.
- Report structure will vary slightly by program (not all sections below are applicable to all programs).
- Data will be provided for the most recent five-year period.

### Section I: CGSR Evaluation of Program Administration

#### Section II: Tables re. Faculty, Students and Courses

Table 1 Graduate Faculty, Adjunct, and Professional Affiliate Status within <program area> – *CGSR*

#### Tables 2: Graduate Student Enrolment – SIS

Table 2.1 FT + PT Enrolment by Citizenship (international/Canadian)

Table 2.2 FT + PT Enrolment by Gender

#### Tables 3: Convocation Rate – SIS reconciled with University stats

Table 3.1 Convocation Rate – <program area>

Table 3.2 Convocation Rate – College of <college>

Table 4 Timeline of Graduate Students that Convocated from Fall <xx> to Fall <xx> – *GSIS, SIS (# times reg. in 992), manual check of student files for Evaln. of Prog. Admin.*

Table 5 Ph.D. External Examiners – *GSIS*

#### Tables 6: <Program Name> – All Courses Taken as Part of Programs of Studies of Students Convocating Fall <xx> to Fall <xx>: – SIS

Table 6.1 Graduate Courses Taken

Table 6.2 Special Topics Courses (898's) Taken

Table 6.3 Special Topics Courses (898's) Taken from Other Academic Units

Table 6.4 Graduate Courses Taken from Other Academic Units

Table 6.5 Undergraduate Courses Taken

Table 6.6 Undergraduate Courses Taken from Other Academic Units

Table 7 Number of Special Topics Courses Given by Discipline – *SIS*

Table 8 Applications Submitted for University NSERC/SSHRC Scholarship Competition

Table 9 Graduate Scholarship Allocation – *CGSR Awards area*

#### Graduate Scholarship Plan – CGSR Awards area

### Section III: <program area> M.Ed. (Thesis) and Ph.D. Student Exit Survey Results – CGSR

### Section IV: Summary of Course Offerings from University Calendar 1979 - <most recent year> – University Calendar



## *Systematic Program Review Guidelines for Nomination of Reviewers*

The number of internal and external reviewers and their areas of focus, if any (e.g. graduate-undergraduate, subject areas) will be determined at the initial organizational meeting of the SPR Executive and representatives of the College under review. Shortly after that meeting, the Academic Director of SPR will send a formal memorandum to the Dean of the College and/or Department Head, requesting nominations of reviewers by a specified date. The following are guidelines for the selection and submission of nominations.

### *General Guidelines:*

- Reviewers will be appointed by the Provost & Vice-President Academic after consultation with the heads of the programs under review.
- Program heads should consult with faculty members regarding nominations (this also ensures that any connections with program faculty are known). Where units outside the college or department make a significant contribution to delivery of the program under review, heads also should consult with those units.
- Information about nominees is *not to be solicited directly from the nominees, nor are nominees to be contacted regarding their nomination as reviewers.*
- The more information that is provided on each nominee, the more efficient the selection process will be. The SPR Office solicits full CV's for each nominee.
- *All connections with the University of Saskatchewan must be declared*, whether personal, familial, or professional. This is not intended to disqualify potential reviewers, but rather to ensure that all such connections are identified and acknowledged.
- In order to maintain flexibility, particularly in the case of internal reviewers (where the pool of candidates is limited), no strict definition of conflict of interest has been established. Possible conflicts of interest include: co-supervising a student in the program, graduate of the program.

### *External reviewers:*

- External members of the review team will normally be individuals in the same discipline as the program under review.
- External members of the review team will be of senior academic rank, distinguished and active scholars, well-respected nationally and internationally, and capable of rendering a sound judgment on the academic merit of the program(s).
- External reviewers will have a well-established arm's-length relationship with the program, department and college. Possible conflicts of interest include: ongoing collaboration with a faculty member (e.g. shared research grants), graduate of the program, former faculty member in the department/college, thesis supervisor of a faculty member.

- The nominee's institution should have a strong reputation in the discipline under review and should offer programs in the discipline at as advanced a level as the program under review (e.g. if you offer a PhD program or are considering one, do not select reviewers from institutions which only offer a Master's).
- Since SPR is intended to assess program quality in an international as well as national context, *we recommend including some nominees from other countries*. While finances are a factor, it is important to select the most highly qualified reviewers even if they must travel from distant sites. Resources are available to cover reasonable travel costs from outside Canada.
- Provide the appropriate information each nominee as per template provided.
  - Provide 8-10 nominees if there are no special areas of focus, 5 nominees per area of focus if areas have been identified (e.g. undergraduate-graduate, different majors, program strands).

*Internal reviewers:*

- Internal reviewers are internal to the University but external to the unit(s) responsible for the program(s) under review. They will normally be from a cognate discipline, preferably from a College other than that of the program under review.
- Internal reviewers will normally be distinguished faculty, at the full professor level, who are scholars with at least a national reputation in their discipline.
- Internal reviewers should have an arm's-length relationship with the program. Possible conflicts of interest include: co-supervising a student in the program, graduate of the program.
- Try to avoid nominating candidates who will be involved in a review of their own program at the same time (consider workload).
- Provide the following information for each internal nominee:
  - Name;
  - Department (or College);
  - Brief rationale for nomination.
- Provide 5 potential internal reviewers for each review team. Please check with the SPR Office if in doubt of nominee status (i.e. on sabbatical or administrative leave or having served before).