

Second Cycle of the MPHEC's Quality Assurance Monitoring Process:

Assessment of St. Thomas University's Quality Assurance Policies and Procedures

Final Report

Prepared by

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March 2022

MPHEC
Maritime Provinces Higher
Education Commission



CESPM
Commission de l'enseignement
supérieur des Provinces maritimes

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SECTION I: INTRODUCTION

A. Overall purpose of the 2nd Cycle of Quality Assurance Monitoring Process

Universities are responsible for ensuring the ongoing quality of the programs and services they provide to students. This is largely accomplished through cyclical internal and external reviews managed independently by each university. The MPHEC's primary role is to confirm that such reviews are taking place and to validate the extent to which institutional quality assurance (QA) frameworks meet agreed-upon regional standards, while at the same time providing advice and assistance to institutions. The 2nd cycle of the Quality Assurance Monitoring (QAM) process is intended to serve that purpose, and builds on the MPHEC's "first cycle" of the QAM process, which was carried out between 2001 and 2009.

The QAM process aims to answer the following questions:

1. What progress have institutions made since the "first cycle"?
2. To what extent are institutions following their own QA framework?
3. To what extent are institutions' QA frameworks aligned with the MPHEC's 2016 Guidelines for Maritime Universities' Quality Assurance Frameworks?

B. Description of the Monitoring Process with St. Thomas University

At the request of the Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission (MPHEC), the Review Panel was asked to carry out the QAM review of St. Thomas University's (STU) quality assurance framework. The members of the Review Panel were:

1. **Dr. Neil Besner** – He is the former Provost and Vice-President, Academic, University of Winnipeg. He has assessed Canadian universities and colleges and their programs in British Columbia, Saskatchewan, and Alberta; he was a member of Campus Alberta Quality Council from 2014-2016, and since 2018 has been a member of the Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance.
2. **Dr. Ron Bond** – A Professor of English, he is Provost Emeritus at the University of Calgary. He chaired the Campus Alberta Quality Council for six years, was a founding member of the Ontario Universities Quality Council, and chaired the Saskatchewan Higher Education Quality Assessment Board. He has conducted many quality assurance reviews for the Degree Quality Assessment Board in B.C. and for the Postsecondary Education Quality Assessment Board in Ontario.

The QAM Process at STU included the following steps:

1. An institutional progress report prepared by STU (October 2019);
2. An analysis of all pertinent documentation by the Review Panel (February-March 2021);
3. A virtual¹ site visit (see agenda under Appendix C) (April 8-9, 2021);
4. A draft report prepared by the Review Panel to STU to validate factual information and correct any errors (May 2021);
5. Validation of draft report by STU (May 2021);

¹ An initial site visit was scheduled for March 2020, but was rescheduled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

6. A final report, incorporating STU's comments, to STU (May 2021);
7. A follow-up action plan (see Appendix A) prepared by STU (September 2021; revised November 2021);
8. Recommendation by the joint Association of Atlantic Universities and MPHEC Quality Assurance Committee to approve the final report and follow-up action plan and subsequent approval by the MPHEC board (November 2021);
9. The Review Panel report, with the action plan from STU appended, posted (in the language of the institution) on the MPHEC and STU's website (March 2022); and,
10. A follow-up report to be submitted by STU to the MPHEC one year following Commission approval of the Review Panel report. The follow-up report will outline how STU has addressed the actions it had identified in its follow-up action plan.

C. Preamble to the Panel's Assessment

As context for the Report commissioned by MPHEC, as part of its Second Cycle of Quality Assurance Monitoring, our Panel offers some observations about STU and the ethos that informs it. These observations attempt to describe the institution as we understand it and to identify some of its distinctive features.

The Self-Study submitted by STU in October 2019 depicts STU as

. . . a small, primarily undergraduate university dedicated to excellence in liberal arts education. The University offers Bachelor of Arts, Applied Arts, Education and Social Work degrees, with each program rooted in St. Thomas' liberal arts core. While maintaining a focus on teaching, the University boasts distinguished scholars and researchers and three Canada Research Centres.

All of this rings true to our Panel: our reading of the documents filed by STU and our interactions with a range of people there during our virtual site visit make plain that the size and limited scope of STU is an important factor in assessing its quality assurance provisions and that liberal education is at the heart of the commitment it makes to its students and faculty and to the government and the tax-payers in New Brunswick.

At the beginning of our two-day site visit with a cross-section of people from STU, we benefited from a presentation from the President, Ms. Dawn Russell. We invited her to provide an overview and some highlights of the organization for which she is the primary leader. In response to this invitation, President Russell offered us a data-rich account of the current state of affairs at the institution.

- Although small, STU has the largest liberal education enrolment in the province, with over 1600 students putting it behind only St. Mary's and Dalhousie;
- STU educates a large percentage of first-generation university students;

- STU boasts, in comparison with ten-year trends for other PSE providers in Atlantic Canada, high rates of first-year retention, persistence to degree, and time-to-degree rates within the Humanities and Social Sciences;
- STU's domestic and international tuition fees are both the 4th lowest in Atlantic Canada;
- Tuition and other fees account for c. 49% of budgeted revenues, whereas the operating grant is c. 47%;
- Administrative costs at STU constitute a very small ratio of operating costs;
- STU has deliberately expanded and enhanced the student services it offers;
- The President is justifiably proud of the Human Rights program, which participates internationally in the Moot Court competition, where it has won awards against universities such as Yale and Harvard; and
- Results from surveys such as the National Survey of Student Engagement cast the undergraduate experience at STU in a very favourable light.

A few other features of STU noted by our Panel during our initial meetings with the President and with Dr. Kim Fenwick, the Vice-President (Academic and Research) include these items:

- The institution operates a range of over 30 programs, many with very small faculty complements;
- Research and scholarly activity has received considerable emphasis at STU, and there is now an Associate Vice-President, Research to oversee and support this activity;
- COVID presented challenges for STU, as it has for all other universities, but STU has managed those challenges effectively; and
- Because of the small size of the institution, there is a high degree of informality there and faculty members are friends with one another and with their students.

This is a selection from the pieces of contextual information our Panel received before and during our virtual site visit. That visit supplanted an actual visit that was scheduled for March of 2020, but had to be cancelled because of the pandemic. We regret that fact, even though we commend STU for its facilitation of the virtual site visit.

Some of the items in this preliminary section receive considerably more attention in subsequent sections of our Report. But we trust they will supply some context for our remarks in what follows.

Indigenous Initiatives at STU

Appropriately, the land acknowledgement of STU pays specific attention to the Province's Indigenous ancestry:

The land on which we gather is the traditional territory of the Wolastoqiyik, Wəlastəkewiyik / Maliseet whose ancestors along with the Mi'kmaq / Mi'kmaw and Passamaquoddy / Peskotomuhkati Tribes / Nations signed Peace and Friendship Treaties with the British Crown in the 1700s.

STU has a long and substantial history of Indigenous programming and services that includes several Schools, Departments, and committees devoted to Indigenous initiatives on and off campus. More than 8% of STU's current student body is Indigenous; STU provides a wide range of services specifically designed to serve and engage with this growing community, including the Wabanaki Student Centre and a new website, **Tetpawtihkene/Ilsu'teka'tiqw** – "A New Path. A Shared Vision. A New Direction," devoted to Indigenous programming and events on campus. There is also an active Senate Committee on Reconciliation, another testament to STU's serious engagement with the Calls for Action in the Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

The current Chancellor of STU, the Honourable Graydon Nicholas, held (1989-91) and holds at present (2015--) the academic Chair in Native Studies at STU, the first of its kind in Canada when it was established in 1984. The Chair is housed within the Native Studies Program, which offers courses in Indigenous languages and history and includes an Honours Program; other important academic programs include the Maliseet Language Program, which offers courses in introductory, intermediate, and full-immersion Maliseet, and the Mi'kmaq Maliseet Bachelor of Social Work Program, an "accredited social work program that provides First Nation individuals with an opportunity to receive social work education within a flexible and culturally relevant framework." STU advises that the Mi'kmaq Maliseet Bachelor of Social Work Program is framed as follows:

- There is recognition that First Nation peoples have been historically disadvantaged in educational and other systems;
- The program design respects that First Nation students are typically employed and have family commitments;
- There is recognition of First Nation systems of knowledge and ways of learning;
- There is a culturally-relevant curriculum that reflects First Nation holistic experiences; and
- The program is overseen by a committee of members from St. Thomas University, First Nations Child and Family Agencies, and student representatives from New Brunswick and Nova Scotia.

As of 2021, STU is developing a Masters in Social Work.

STU also offers the distinctive “First Year at Home Elsipogtog Program.” The program “provides the opportunity for students to develop mentally, physically, emotionally, and spiritually to prepare for the demands of university life. As full-time STU students, participants attend eight months of university preparedness training in Elsipogtog, earn post-secondary credits, and learn the necessary studies and life skills to succeed at university.”

STU’s other professional unit, its School of Education, also offers an extensive curriculum and array of services that engage specifically with Indigenous languages and communities in New Brunswick. Its decision in 2015 to make its “long standing First Nations Education course a compulsory course for all teacher candidates” exemplifies this commitment; and in its 2017 self-study, the School of Education describes in detail its strong commitment to the Calls to Action in the 2015 Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission:

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action provide guidance to educators on the development and implementation of culturally-responsive curriculum and teaching methods. In particular, Calls to Action 10, 62, and 63 speak specifically to K12 teachers and teacher educators by encouraging a commitment to anti-oppressive education that addresses issues of racial injustice toward Aboriginal peoples in Canada; past and present. The STU School of Education fully embraces and accepts this challenge and aims to contribute to the eradication of ignorance and racial injustice through the development of informed teachers. (p. 7)

Another indication of the campus-wide commitment at STU to curricular revisions that focus on Indigenous issues is evident in the 2016 External Reviewers’ Report on the Department of Criminology & Criminal Justice, in which the reviewers recommend that the Department take a “leadership role” in the university-wide initiative to “indigenize the University curriculum” (p. 17); the Department’s endorsement of and action upon this recommendation is included in its February 2021 record of its response to the motion carried in Senate on March 2017: “The Department has added several courses to its curriculum that address issues of central concern in decolonization and reconciliation efforts.” (p. 7)

Further evidence of the serious commitment at STU to engagement with and celebration of Indigenous history is reflected in its roster of distinguished recent recipients of Honorary Doctorates, including well-known figures such as writer Jeanette Armstrong (2000), Mi’kmaq “poet laureate” Rita Joe (2001), Senator Honourable Sandra Lovelace Nicholas (2006), writer Lee Maracle (2009), the Honourable Judge Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond (2017), the first Aboriginal woman appointed to the Provincial Court in Saskatchewan, and, most recently, Alanis Obomsawin (2019), a widely celebrated activist, filmmaker, and singer of Abenaki descent whose work focuses on First Nations and how government policies and everyday actions of others impact Indigenous people.

Response to COVID at STU

The impact of the pandemic on STU is not unlike its impact on other institutions in the province and the country. Two aspects of its impact on STU are noteworthy. The first is that STU has readily exploited in several important ways the advantages of being small, one of which is the deliberate creation of an educational milieu that provides for and promotes personal interactions, the formation of a hospitable and collegial community, and the offering of opportunities for meaningful engagement with fellow students and with members of the academic and administrative staff. The imperative to move courses on-line was a potential threat to the educational environment that is one of STU's hallmarks. The second conspicuous aspect of COVID's impact on STU is that as a small institution it had few personnel already in place to address the pedagogical and other challenges engendered by the radically new circumstances it faced.

The Panel was heartened to learn about STU's response to COVID and to the challenges it imposed on members of STU's community. An important move was to set up a Remote Teaching team led by a Remote Teaching Coordinator from History, who was a former Learning and Teaching Development Officer and a recipient of an institutional Teaching Excellence Award. Her expertise and the respect she commands enable STU to offset to some extent the skepticism and doubts that some faculty members and students felt when contemplating a switch to on-line learning. A second important move was to engage external expertise: an instructional design expert who teaches in the graduate program in Education at UNB joined the team, as did an Educational Technologist who focusses on on-line and hybrid learning strategies for adult learners. The members of the team included the Director of ITS at STU and together the team worked quickly and effectively, as far as our Panel could see, to make the necessary changes to the learning environment.

To mitigate the stress of faculty members unaccustomed to the delivery of remote learning, the team has sponsored town hall meetings, has run training sessions for faculty members, and has assembled resources to assist faculty members with on-line instruction in the courses they teach.

The students with whom we met were understanding of the challenges the instructors experienced in adapting to the on-line environment, and they also commended them for delivering engaging courses, notwithstanding those challenges. The Panel believes that STU will learn from the experience it has been through in the last year and will be able to benefit from its experiences, when there is return to "normal" in post-secondary education.

A last comment: because STU has not in the past attracted a large percentage of its students from the international sphere, its new proficiency in on-line delivery may help it to recruit more students from abroad in the future.

Library Resources at STU and Cooperation with UNB

As a relatively small institution, one of the resource challenges that STU faces perennially is access to library resources housed elsewhere. There is a growing need for a digital and print collection

that accommodates increasing demands from both students and faculty for these resources and the services supporting them.

We are aware that STU access to the UNB Library has been a negotiated arrangement over the years, and that as the needs at STU for library resources grow, while budgetary pressures at both institutions become more acute, these arrangements will continue to evolve. However, we also note that at the Department and Programme level, the ongoing challenge of adequate access to Library resources appears to have been met with a measure of equanimity and with steady progress. Certainly, challenges remain to be worked through; however, the experience on the ground of the five units whose dossiers we studied suggests that these challenges can be successfully mediated. Similarly, the comments on access to the UNB Library from the STU students with whom we met during the site visit were uniformly positive.

SECTION II: ASSESSMENT OF ST. THOMAS UNIVERSITY'S POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR ASSESSING ACADEMIC PROGRAMS AND UNITS

A. Progress since the 1st cycle

NOTE: In this section of our Report, we flag with an asterisk observations that receive extended treatment in later sections, particularly Section III, "Recommendations for Improvement."

St. Thomas University volunteered to be one of the first two universities to undergo what is now known as the First Cycle of quality assurance monitoring process. This review took place in 2002-2003. The full slate of these reviews took until 2009 to complete, notwithstanding the initial intention to undertake each review every seven years. It is inevitable that since so much time has elapsed since 2003, STU has evolved in ways that were not necessarily foreseen when the First Cycle Review that took place.

We concentrate first, then, on the [2003 Report \(Appendix D\)](#) prepared by the AAU-MPHEC Quality Assurance Monitoring committee, composed of Mr. Marie Mullaly, Dr. Don Wells, Dr. Henry Cowan, and Dr. Ivan Mullaly. We append to our analysis in this section some comments on other significant changes evident in the progress of STU in the 18 years since the First Cycle Report was filed.

The 2003 Report made six main recommendations supplemented by nine additional discussion items. We note that each of the recommendations in 2003 included some pointers on how STU might achieve the recommendations conveyed to it. In this section of our 2021 Report, we quote the 2003 review's Summary of Recommendations (pp. 7-10) and provide our appraisal of how STU has acted upon these recommendations.

RECOMMENDATION 1: Broaden the scope of the quality assurance policy by including research and academic scholarship and all academic programmes [sic]

Possible ways to achieve this include:

- That the review of research in the quality assessment process include a qualitative component examining how a faculty's research plans are linked to teaching and the university as a whole;

- That research and academic scholarship activities be added to the elements reviewed by the review team and addressed in their report;
- That reviews be performed on academic programmes instead of individual departments;
- That programmes reviewed through an external accreditation process meet the institution’s internal quality assurance standards;
- That the review of articulated programmes be included in the self-study;
- That annual internal curriculum be added to the University’s quality assurance policy; and
- That the learning objectives expressed in the document Goals of a Liberal Education at St. Thomas University be incorporated into the University’s quality assurance policy.*

There is no question that the place of research and scholarship in the quality assurance processes at STU has been strengthened since 2003. The culture of STU is now informed by a Strategic Research Plan (2019-2024), for example, written by a newly appointed Associate Vice-President (Research) and approved by Senate following broad consultation across the University community.* Quantitative data about research and scholarship at the programmatic level appears in some but not all of the dossiers we examined, but STU can now boast a robust record of funded research.

Although MPHEC appears to use the terms “program” and “department” interchangeably, programs rather than departments are currently reviewed, according to STU’s Policy Statement, although the effectiveness of doing that is questionable given the very small size of a number of programs at STU.* The current Policy does not refer to the need for *annual* internal curriculum review, as recommended in 2003.*

One of the dossiers we considered came from the School of Education reviewed in 2018 and deemed to be in conformity with the Accord on Teacher Education issued by the Association of Canadian Deans of Education. It is evident that in that case the need to meet external demands about the licensing of teachers in New Brunswick has been harmonized with the QA framework at STU. We cannot comment on the quality assurance process for the Bachelor of Social Work program for which the standards of the Canadian Association for Social Work Education apply, but a QA review, as distinct from an accreditation review, of that program did not occur between 2013 and 2019, and is not scheduled for the 2020-2026 period. Presumably it adheres to the requirement mentioned in STU’s Policy Statement on Department/Programme Reviews that “Professional Departments/Programs subject to mandatory External Review procedures are required to submit a copy of the External Review to Senate for information and archival purposes only.” [See Recommendation #8 of this Report and footnote 3.]*

The articulation of institutional learning outcomes (or learning objectives, as they were termed in 2003) does not appear in the Policy, as recommended. There is however a robust description of institutional goals in the Self-Study and on the web.

RECOMMENDATION 2: Strengthen support to quality teaching

Possible ways to achieve this include:

- That a mentoring programme be established at the University (adopted by St. Thomas University as of September 2002);

- That the role of the Learning and Teaching Development Committee be expanded to formally and systematically provide support to faculty members;
- That the evaluation of teaching practices be added to the elements reviewed by the review team; and
- That a review of teaching practices be performed on an annual basis; perhaps in conjunction with the annual internal curriculum review.

STU is dedicated to high-quality teaching. Both the documents we reviewed and our interviews with students, faculty and administrators vouch for that commitment. Because of its small size informal mentoring as well as a mentoring program occurs there. Programs undergoing external review are asked to describe in their self-studies the “mentoring mechanisms” used.

Data from the National Survey of Student Engagement reveals that in 2020 STU outperformed the Canadian averages on seven indices, including higher order learning, student-faculty interaction, effective teaching and the quality of instruction. Further, the policy on student course ratings and other survey instruments offer insights into the quality of teaching at STU. The students we met were uniformly enthusiastic about the instruction they experienced at STU. In their opening remarks to our Panel, the President and the Vice-President (Academic and Research) took justifiable pride in the excellence of teaching at STU, as measured by various surveys.

The Committee on Learning and Teaching Development continues to have an active role at STU and its work is supplemented by a writing centre, academic advising services, and an experiential and community-based learning office. Given its size and scope, STU demonstrates unequivocally its understanding of the need for a broad range of student services.

RECOMMENDATION 3: Improve the continuity of the decision-making process

Possible ways to achieve this include:

- That the review team’s recommendations be presented to Senate by an objective third party, possibly the Vice-President Academic;
- That the Senate Review Coordinating Committee be modified so that it is comprised of Chairs of the departments whose review has just been completed rather than of the departments scheduled for review in the following year;
- That Department Review Follow-Up Reports be included as standing items at Senate meetings (adopted by St. Thomas University as of September 2002).

The continuity and coherence of decision-making processes are among the areas for improvement discussed later in this Report. We are particularly concerned about the role of Senate as the highest academic decision-making body at the institution.*

That said, we note that the Vice-President (Academic and Research) or a Dean moves motions to accept a review team’s recommendations at Senate. The seminal review committee of Senate, now called the External Review Coordinating Committee (ERCC), has been considerably re-fashioned*: it is now co-chaired by the Deans of Humanities and Social Sciences (positions added

to the administrative complement since 2003) and it includes *ex officio* current or former Chairs or Directors. Chairs of programs to be reviewed in the following year may attend as observers.

Annual follow-up reports on a program's progress in implementing recommendations approved by Senate are, by policy, supposed to be standing items at the spring meeting of Senate. During the site visit, we learned, however, that this expectation has been only sporadically met.*

RECOMMENDATION 4: Modify the composition of the review team

Possible ways to achieve this include:

- That the selection process of the external reviewers be modified so that the two external reviewers are selected from two independent sources;
- That a third reviewer be added to the process who is a faculty member from another department within the University; and
- That the terms of reference of the review team be expanded to include feedback on the review process itself.

Each external review team normally consists of two members drawn from a list of nominees presented by ERCC and approved by Senate. It appears as if the second suggestion above has not found favour and the third appears to be assumed rather than made explicit.*

RECOMMENDATION 5: Review the policy on a regular basis

Possible ways to achieve this include:

- That the policy include a provision to evaluate the University's existing quality assurance policy.

The Policy, originally adopted in 1998, has been reviewed and revised in 2006 and 2011. A provision calls for review every seven years. Another review was mentioned during our site visit, but it would seem that it is in early stages of development and may be awaiting the findings and recommendations from this 2nd Cycle review.

RECOMMENDATION 6: Increase community involvement and awareness

Possible ways to achieve this include:

- That members of the community including students, professional groups and the general public be invited to participate in the review process; and
- That information about the review process be communicated to the general public.

Review teams are advised that they may meet with "appropriate external groups," should the Self-Study identify them. The policy also states that communication with the public about the process may occur. Although STU publishes the Minutes of Special Meetings of Senate, where motions derived from the QA process are recorded, the Panel did not see evidence that STU publishes on line or in other formats the *reports* from or *responses* to the external reviewers.* We are aware, of course, that *this* Report will be accessible online through MPHEC.

Other Significant Changes at STU Since 2003

- STU developed a Strategic Plan (2013-2018): Achieving Excellence in Undergraduate Liberal Arts Education (that Plan will soon be refreshed);
- Building on that Plan, STU invokes in the interim a set of five Strategic Priorities (2019) that are in keeping with its mission:
 - 1 Excellence in Undergraduate Liberal Arts Education;
 - 2 A Meaningful and Memorable Student Experience;
 - 3 A Commitment to Research and Societal Engagement;
 - 4 A Welcoming, Diverse, and Inclusive Community; and
 - 5 Financial Sustainability
- STU has created Faculties of Social Science and Humanities and has appointed Deans to provide leadership in both areas;
- STU has overhauled the committee structure answerable to Senate and the terms of reference of Senate committees;
- Several new departments have been created, in keeping with the provisions in the Academic Planning Committee's guidelines;
- New Centres like the Frank McKenna Centre for Communications and Public Policy that cross disciplinary boundaries have been established;
- Several new interdisciplinary programs have been approved and launched;
- STU has ramped up its fundraising efforts; and
- In its timely response to COVID 19, STU has quickly accelerated the preparation and delivery offering of online programs.

B. Implementation of STU's Policies and Procedures for Assessing Academic Programs and Units

Before addressing the dossiers we examined, we delineate here the principal features of quality assurance at STU. The principal document (on which our Report has touched briefly already) is the academic policy on Department/Program Reviews. This policy specifies the authority for QA at STU (i.e. the Senate) and assigns to the Dean of Social Sciences and the Dean of Humanities responsibility for the "integrity and logistics" of the process. The External Review Coordinating Committee (ERCC), a committee of Senate, coordinates the institutional effort and has a major role to play in shepherding program reviews through the organization. The two deans co-chair ERCC.

STU has articulated a detailed set of procedures governing the recruitment of Review Teams, a Department's or program's role as creator of a Self-Study, the framing of responses to the Self-Study and the manner in which the ensuing motions are brought to Senate. After consideration at Senate, the motions derived from the external review (except for those pertaining to financial matters, which are beyond Senate's purview), are destined to inform an Action Plan, one element of which is an annual progress report to Senate on the implementation of the recommendations approved at Senate for a program that has been the focus of a review.

Quite properly, the policy statement on Department or Program reviews sets out the components to be considered in the Self-Study and provides guidance to external review teams on the nature of the site visit they conduct. A comprehensive list of documents to be considered by the review team is part of the Policy. Timelines and sample itineraries are presented in appendices to the Policy.

Our Panel believes that successive revisions to the Policy at STU have strengthened it. We do observe, however, that in some instances, the Policy is not applied as its authors envisioned. Several examples are relevant:

- Not all departments have undergone external review and at least two of these are “rogue” departments that have refused to participate in the process, apparently without good and sufficient cause and apparently without sanctions or consequences;
- The Policy requires annual reports on the implementation of motions approved at Senate, but evidently that requirement has been more honoured in the breach than the observance in many cases; and
- The Policy states that motions are to be presented to Senate “as clear resolutions . . . in the form of a ‘yes’ or ‘no’ vote”. An unintended consequence of this directive is that Senate, the paramount academic decision-making body at STU, spends virtually no time in debate on the QA matters stemming from external reviews. It appears as if Senate in the wrong sense of the phrase is merely “going through the motions” without substantive engagement with them at the Special Meetings convened for the purpose.

We will have recommendations to make later on these and other elements of the Policy at STU. Some of our recommendations are prompted by consideration of the dossiers that enable us to see whether STU is implementing its Policy conscientiously. We turn next to a general description of the dossiers we read, before indicating some main findings and a few challenges that each dossier presented to us as reviewers.

One vital component of the material provided by STU to the panelists as we prepared for the audit of STU’s QA processes is four dossiers, each representing in generous and substantive detail the work performed by STU in reviewing its programs. As is customary, the panelists selected the four dossiers to be studied by considering several factors. We wanted to read dossiers representing the range and diversity of STU’s offerings so as to capture as clear a sense as possible of programs of different sizes and scope from different areas of STU and from different periods of its recent history. With these criteria in mind, we selected the following dossiers:

1. Communications and Public Policy (2019)
2. School of Education (2017-2019)
3. Criminology (2016-2017)
4. Political Science (2014-2015)
5. Journalism and Communication (2012-13)

The dossiers from COPP and Journalism and Communications represent a case study of a single program that had given birth recently to two separate units. Considering these dossiers presented us with the opportunity to follow the process through which a program is divided into two new units, separate but still related. Studying the dossier of the School of Education gave us insight into the relations between a professional body and an academic unit that is responsible to that body's norms and criteria, as well as to STU's internal standards. Political Science and Criminology, provided us with examples of two substantial programs from the Social Science side of the ledger. We are satisfied that the study of these dossiers resulted in a clear and largely positive representation of this key part of the QA process at STU, and of how this process has evolved in highly positive ways since 2003.

We are grateful to STU for providing these dossiers to us well ahead of the two-day site visit, allowing us ample time to study them carefully and to follow their adherence to the internal policies articulated and revised by STU for program review since the first Cycle Report of 2003. Considerable change has taken place at STU during the last 18 years; the appointment of two Deans (of Social Science and Humanities) and the establishing of the External Review Coordinating Committee (ERCC), for example, are critical changes in governance and committee structure that have significantly advanced the work of QA at STU. These dossiers and the policies that govern the significant work of assembling them – work done by external reviewers, students, faculty, Chairs and Coordinators, Deans, the Vice President Academic and Research, and key committees such as ERCC and its reports to Senate – stand at a central juncture in the Quality Assurance process. We found the dossiers to be exemplars of the many emergent strengths of QA at STU, as well as of several challenges to this process that remain and that should be addressed.

Each of the dossiers we examined contained the following elements: a) a Self-Study, written by the members of the program or its Chair; b) a report from the external reviewers contracted by STU to assist it in its QA work; c) a list of the recommendations presented as motions to Senate; d) a report filed in February of this year saying how the program has responded so far to the recommendations accepted by the program and approved by Senate. Appendices on various salient topics usually accompanied the Self-Studies, but they have not been standardized.

1. Communications and Public Policy (2019)

This dossier, we find, is representative in the excellence of its substantial self-study and its excellently articulated external review. Both of these documents are models of their kind. They provide, among other salient analyses and information, the key markers outlined below.

a) Self-Study, External Review Report and the recent Progress Report:

These documents include the record of the following facets of the program among their findings:

- A helpfully detailed record of how this autonomous program evolved from its place as part of Journalism and Communication;

- The history of the hiring of this program’s first coordinator, including the details of his extensive teaching, productive scholarship, and excellent service record;
- The role of the Frank McKenna Centre in supporting COPP and enriching the connections between COPP and the community;
- The evolution of the curricular structure of COPP;
- Vitality, a statistical record of the program students’ highly positive evaluations of the COPP curriculum, both during their programs and after graduation; and
- In the follow-up report submitted by COPP in February 2021, a specific description of the steps taken to address the motions passed by Senate.

b) **Challenges** (to be addressed later in our Report when we discuss our Recommendations for Improvement):

- The potential difficulty with choosing an External Reviewer who was also one of two External Reviewers for another program;
- The lack of information about the professional qualifications of the External Reviewers;
- The significant problem, carefully documented in both the Self-Study and the External Review of this program’s work being performed largely by one full time faculty member, and the serious potential short and longer term effects of this strain on faculty and on the program and its students;
- The sparse record of Departmental or Unit engagement with or response to the External Review recommendations;
- The perfunctory record of the motions made to Senate, emanating from the review; and
- The sparse mention of Senate’s discussion of or response to the motions presented.

2. School of Education (2017 – 2019)

As mentioned briefly above, we selected the dossier of the School of Education to better understand how this professional School (the other at STU is Social Work) integrated both within the academic community and with the professional bodies it is responsible to in fulfilling provincial and national standards.

This professional program is responsible to a provincial regulatory body: The Certification Branch of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD). This body requires the School’s students to complete an undergraduate degree of 120 credit hours; a B. Ed. Program suite of courses of 45 credit hours; and a 15-week teaching practicum.

As is the case with the two dossiers commented on above, the parallel documents of The School of Education -- its Self-Study (2017) and its Report of the External Reviewers (2018) – provide cogent and substantial information on the School. The School of Education also provides a

thoughtful response to the External Review in a separate document. We find this document very helpful.

a) **Self-Study, External Review Report and the recent Progress Report:**

Included in these reports are the following salient indicators:

- Extensive and helpful commentary on pedagogical issues, ranging from material on flipped classrooms to constructivist pedagogies to flipped classrooms;
- Commentary on the School's particular emphasis on ESL and FSL training, given the scarcity of teachers in both fields;
- Attention to the School's focus on training teachers of STEM subjects;
- Attention to the School's response to the demand to teach "digital citizenship";
- A focus on providing instruction that "fully embraces and accepts the challenge to the Calls to Action in the Truth and Reconciliation document, particularly # 10, 62, and 63;
- Similarly, a wide range and detailed series of initiatives undertaken to meet the recommendation of the previous External Review (2010) to engage with the Indigenous communities in the Province;
- Commentary on the School's successful engagement with the issue of Library access for its students and faculty;
- The challenge posed by two impending retirements from a tenured complement of 6;
- The serious issue raised by the teaching of 51% of the School's courses by part-time faculty;
- At 45 pages out of the Self Study's 69, a fulsome description of the highly impressive research records, service records, and research plans of the Established faculty;
- As might be expected, a highly detailed account of students' experience in the School (including one sombre note about a recent decline in first year enrolment from 90 to 75);
- Similarly, an attentive and comprehensive discussion of curriculum, design, and challenges; and
- To complement the helpful February, 2021 follow up report, the document mentioned above: a separate response from the School to the External Review.

b) **Challenges:**

Save for the welcome addition from this unit of a full response to the External Review, which does mitigate some of the challenges outlined above in relation to the first three units' dossiers, similar issues remain in the rather sparse nature of the documents reporting on the conveyance of motions to Senate and their reception there.

3. Criminology and Criminal Justice (2016-2017)

This dossier contains information about the application of STU's quality assurance Policy to one of the major Departments in the Social Sciences. In 2016, it produced a Self-Study of 422 pp., including 8 appendices. The Self-Study is very well organized and clearly written and serves as a solid foundation for subsequent activities warranted by the Policy.

a) **Self-Study, External Review Report and the recent Progress Report:** these documents include the record of the following facets of the program among their findings:

- In 2016-2017, Criminology and Criminal Justice offered a Major, a Minor and an Honours degree in the subject, and it has an Endowed Chair;
- It also offers, in conjunction with New Brunswick Community College at Miramichi a Certificate and a 2+2 Applied Arts degree;
- The External Reviewers recommended in 2017 cancellation of the seriously undersubscribed Certificate Program and raised a question about the viability of the applied degree program as well;
- The Self-Study is uncommonly assertive about resource issues and notes that the department graduates 19% of STU major with less than 10% of its Full-time faculty; it states that Criminology is "punching above its weight" because of "chronic," inequitable distribution of resources at STU, specifically a shortfall in the "established" positions assigned to it;
- The External Reviewers concurred and remark that an onerous workload is taking its toll on a "frayed" workforce;
- An Appendix to the Self-Study provides a very useful synopsis of Senate-approved curriculum changes, 2009-2016;
- The Department contributes substantially to public policy discourse;
- The Department's faculty are heavily involved in University administration and service; and
- The Department provided a thoughtful response to the External Reviews' Report and its 19 recommendations.

b) **Challenges** (to be addressed later in our Report when we discuss our Recommendations for Improvement):

- The *criteria* for modifying changes to the on-going faculty complement (i.e. establishment positions) appear to be obscure, notwithstanding clarity in the Collective Agreement about the process itself;
- The expectations of and regulations governing Honours programs at STU appear to be unregulated by University-level policy so that departments are left to their own devices when improvements are sought;
- The perfunctory record of the motions emanating from the review that were presented to Senate;

- The sparse mention of Senate’s discussion of or response to the motions presented
- The neglect of the contributions of the New Brunswick Community College to the Applied Degree program, which was to be the subject of a “widespread review;”
- The need for institutional definitions and standards of what constitutes research and scholarship and how best to publicize significant achievements; and
- Re-consideration during the next round of Collective Bargaining of possible constraints on quality imposed by the Agreement.

4. Department of Political Science (2014-2015)

This dossier contains a valuable overview about Political Science and its evolution as a small department within a small university. The documents presented are concise, measured and on the whole informative about the department’s aspirations, growth and commitment to improvement. Data from student surveys of various kinds are used to good effect.

- a) **Self-Study, External Review Report and the recent Progress Report:** these documents include a record of the following facets of the program among their findings:
- The Department of Political Science, relying on a complement of four Full-Time faculty members and several part-timers, aims to provide a rigorous education in four subfields of the discipline: Political Philosophy, Canadian Political Science, Comparative Politics and International Relations;
 - The curriculum is structured to enable students to engage with courses in each of these areas for which a single faculty member is primarily responsible;
 - A goal of the Department and a distinctive feature of its activity is its emphasis on preparing students to become thoughtful democratic citizens and its aim to model good citizenship through its own service activities;
 - Though limited by the resources available, a point of pride in the Department is the model UN course that enables a team of students to participate in annual events at Harvard and to host the John Peter Humphrey Model United Nations each year for c. 100 high school students throughout the Maritimes and beyond;
 - The Department has succeeded in launching a second Major in International Relations; it was approved as a “cost-neutral program deploying existing resources” and is heavily dependent on just one faculty member, a phenomenon on which we comment below;
 - Political Science houses strong teachers and active researchers and scholars, as demonstrated in its own documents and as recognized by the External Reviewers; two new faculty members hired recently as replacements promise to continue in this tradition; and
 - In comments on library resources (which are quite extensive), the Self-Study observes that it is convenient to tap into materials found at UNB’s law school, but

that its share of the Department's share of STU's library budget has been gradually declining. The following statement epitomizes its view: "the Department's ability to control what is being purchased on its behalf has diminished over the years in parallel to declines in the library budget allocations specifically to the Department."

b) **Challenges** (to be addressed later in our Report when we discuss our Recommendations for Improvement):

- The External Reviewers concurred with the Department that additional resources are required to sustain the International Relations Major;
- The departmental response to the External Reviewers' Report and its recommendations in 2015 was extremely parsimonious and serves as an inadequate record of that part of the QA Policy's process;
- At the Senate meeting that considered these recommendations, there appears to have been no discussion at all, given the extraordinarily brief time devoted to this agenda item;
- Relying heavily on just one faculty member, however accomplished, is clearly a challenge;
- Repeating a recommendation made by external reviews in 2001 and 2007, a recommendation in 2015 that the Department "examine ways to form more useful and durable links with the UNB and UNBSJ Political Science Departments" has apparently fallen, without explanation, on barren ground;
- Since 2015, the Department, already stretched, has become the administrative home to a newly minted interdisciplinary program in Law, Politics and Society; and
- Some restrictions imposed by the Collective Agreement deprive the Department of the ability to appoint Limited Term replacements for sabbaticants.

5. Journalism and Communications (2012-2013)

This dossier predates that of COPP by six years. Again, this dossier is to be commended for the specificity and range both of its Self Study and the Report of the External Reviewers. (This was the first External Review of this program since its establishment in 2001.) The Dossier provides key information of the kind represented in the list below:

a) **Self-Study, External Review Report and the recent Progress Report:**

- The process through which what became COPP, a separate unit, was designed in 2012, approved by MPHEC in 2013, and began functioning autonomously in that year;
- The ways in which close and ongoing relations are maintained between Journalism and Communications and COPP, as well as the ways that close relations function between both units and others at STU – a signal dimension of these related units,

and representative of the frequent collaboration, often more widely interdisciplinary, that characterizes teaching at STU;

- A relevant explanation of the Program’s aspirations to Departmental status, and of the status of its Director, which is equivalent to that of a Department Chair;
- A detailed explanation of this program’s important partnership with CBC – again, representative of STU’s wider success at forging links with relevant organizations and communities beyond its own walls;
- Its role in establishing important assets such as the \$1,000,000 Dalton Camp Endowment and the Irving Family endowment of \$1,000,000, both of which fund significant scholarships and bring nationally and internationally recognized speakers to STU;
- Its unique position as the only University program in New Brunswick to offer both a program in English and in French;
- Its successful engagement with the issue of providing access to adequate Library resources, so that there has been significant progress from four or five years ago, when the collection at that time was “small in numbers and outdated”;
- Its successful management – vital for any contemporary Journalism program – of the challenges of constant and rapid technological change;
- Its careful attention to curricular review, particularly as the Program strives to provide fuller experiential opportunities to its students;
- Its elaboration of the records of relevant work experience and impressive scholarship of its two tenured faculty members and its term appointments – again, vital information about the excellent teaching and research profiles of faculty who are often less traditional members of the academy;
- As is the case with the COPP dossier, excellent information about its students, their assessments of the program and their expectations, and their graduation rates; and
- In its February 2021 follow up report, the Program’s actions on the motions conveyed to and passed by Senate.

b) **Challenges** (as with the COPP dossier, addressed earlier in our Report, when we discuss our Recommendations for Improvement):

- We find, again, a marked contrast between the virtues of the excellent self study, the External Reviewers’ Report, and the Program’s follow-up Report, on one hand; and on the other, the relatively sparse records of the Program’s engagement with the External Reviewer’s Report; of the process or debate through which motions were articulated and conveyed to Senate; or of the actual debate (or lack thereof) on the Senate floor as these motions were passed or defeated. Later in this Report, we will comment further on these challenges and suggest possible remediation for STU to consider.

C. Alignment of STU’s QA policies, procedures and practices with the MPHEC’s 2016 Guidelines for Maritime Universities’ Quality Assurance Frameworks:

An appended Table exhibits the alignment of STU’s QA policies and procedures with MPHEC’s 2016 *Guidelines*. This Table reveals that on the whole the comments entered on the Table by officials of STU accord with the perceptions formed by the Panel. Even though we are pleased to affirm the degree of alignment apparent to us, we have compiled a list of recommendations as a result of the review we have conducted. These recommendations, if implemented, pave the way for strengthening of the QA processes at STU and their congruence with the published MPHEC *Guidelines*.

SECTION III: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

There is much to applaud about the way in which STU as a small institution has harnessed its resources in the service of quality assurance and quality improvement. The Policy is comprehensive and robust, notwithstanding some shortcomings identified below; implementation of the policy, as affirmed by our consideration of several dossiers, is taken seriously at the department and program level; the ancillary academic support services aimed at aiding the programs at STU and strengthening students’ experiences there have been marshalled in effective ways.

The following recommendations and suggestions, then, build on a firm foundation for quality assurance at STU. These recommendations come from the three parts of Section II of this Report, are meant to be read in light of those earlier observations, and are designed to help STU prepare the Follow-Up Action Plan required of it by MPHEC.

Governance

We recommend that:

1. As STU develops its next academic plan, the Strategic Research Plan (2019-2024) be integrated with it.
2. In light of Senate’s role as the ultimate academic decision-making body in the bicameral system, steps be taken to fortify the process through which departmental motions are articulated and conveyed to Senate.²
3. Pursuant to recommendation 2, STU devise ways to re-animate the debate about quality assurance motions on the floor of Senate (e.g. modify the order of business taken up at Senate.)

² STU ought to re-consider the need for and the timing of “Special” Senate meetings on motions stemming from external reviews and, in their place, institute regular meetings in which this agenda item would be prominent.

4. At the Spring meeting of Senate, a standing agenda item early in the meeting be designated to receive and discuss fully Departments' annual implementation reports.
5. The role of STU's Deans in quality assurance be significantly expanded, so as to include not only the job of co-chairing the External Review Coordinating Committee and contacting the external referees, but responsibilities for reviewing course evaluation surveys and a hand in performance appraisals of faculty.
6. Chairs and Directors receive the results of course evaluation surveys and be entitled to discuss them with their colleagues as a way to promote formative rather than summative opportunities for improvement of teaching.
7. The creation of new academic programs, including those relying on STU's commitment to interdisciplinarity, 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.
8. STU's administrators consider the potentially harmful short- and long-term effects of relying too heavily on a single full-time faculty member for the mounting and continuation of an academic program.
9. The provisions in the Collective Agreement for making changes to allocation of "established" positions to departments be supplemented by public articulation of the criteria to be used when modifications are encouraged by the external review or other processes.
10. During the next round of collective bargaining with FAUST, STU address the perception that the Collective Agreement may inadvertently constrain the pursuit of quality.
11. STU review and if necessary revise its formal arrangements with UNB, UNBSJ, and NBCC

Policy

We recommend that:

12. The learning objectives expressed in the document "Goals of the Liberal Arts" at St. Thomas University be incorporated into the University's quality assurance Policy Statement on Department/Programme Reviews.
13. The Policy refer to the need for *annual* internal curriculum review (as recommended in 2003; this panel considers these annual reviews to be an integral component of continuous quality improvement).

14. The Policy require that External Reviews include an STU faculty member who belongs to another Department than the one under review.
15. The Policy make explicit that external reviewers are expected to comment on the review process itself.
16. The Policy stipulate that the external reviewers' reports and responses to them be published online.
17. The Policy ensure that the professional qualifications of the external reviewers form part of the record.
18. STU re-consider the sufficiency of asking professional departments and programs to submit a copy of the external accrediting review report to Senate only for information and archival purposes.³
19. The Policy require an Appendix to the Self-Study providing a synopsis of Senate-approved curriculum changes since the last external review.
20. The Policy enunciate explicitly the sanctions available, if and when a department refuses, without good and sufficient reason, to participate in the external review process.⁴

Support Units

We recommend that:

21. STU continue to seek an appropriate pathway to facilitate its ongoing access to the UNB Library in a way acceptable to constituencies at both institutions.
22. STU formulate a method for the regular formal review of non-academic units.

³ The review panel recognizes the importance of the accreditation body's evaluation of professional programs at STU. However, it is our view that the accrediting body's evaluation should not replace or stand in for STU's internal policies and practices related to quality assurance. Our recommendation is that both processes be considered; duplication and repetition should of course be avoided, but practices can be articulated that enable accreditation and internal quality assurance practices to be integrated, to the benefit of the professional schools

⁴ Clear timelines should be specified for compliance with the Policy. Sanctions for non-compliant departments should be explicit as to the administration of the sanctions and the remedial steps to be taken by departments.

Appendices

- A. Follow-up action plan submitted by St. Thomas University
- B. Table outlining alignment of the St. Thomas University's Policies and Procedures for Assessing Academic Programs and Units with the MPHEC's 2016 Guidelines (including comments from Review Panel)
- C. Site Visit Agenda
- D. [A copy of the assessment report from the "1st cycle"](#)
- E. [Second Cycle of the Monitoring of Maritime Universities' Quality Assurance Frameworks: Overview of the Process](#)

St. Thomas University

Response to

Second Cycle of the MPHEC's Quality Assurance Monitoring Process
Assessment of St. Thomas University's Quality Assurance Policies and Procedures

September 2021 (Revised November 3, 2021)



Thank you for the opportunity to review the recommendations outlined in *Second Cycle of the MPHEC's Quality Assurance Monitoring Process: Assessment of St. Thomas University's Quality Assurance Policies and Procedure, Final Report*. While we regret that we were not able to host an in-person site visit due to COVID-19 concerns, we were pleased to meet virtually with the members of the Review Panel, Dr. Neil Besner and Dr. Ron Bond, and appreciate their thoughtful questions and insightful observations. We share the Review Panel's belief that "liberal education is at the heart of the commitment [St. Thomas University] makes to its students and faculty and to the government and the tax-payers in New Brunswick," and we appreciate their recognition of St. Thomas University's progress in quality assurance and quality improvement since the previous QA review.

Our responses to each of the specific recommendations are provided below.

Concerning the recommendation that St. Thomas integrate its Strategic Research Plan with its next academic plan (Recommendation 1), we agree with the reviewers that it would be helpful to reinforce the relationship between STU's Strategic Research Plan and the overall Strategic Plan of the University. Developing and supporting faculty research has been and will continue to be a central pillar of St. Thomas University's overall strategic planning. However, developing a separate Strategic Research Plan is a requirement for Tri-Council and CRC funding, whereas the St. Thomas University Strategic Plan is a broad-reaching document extending beyond the purely academic component of the University. Consequently, rather than fully integrating the Strategic Research Plan and overall Strategic Plan, we intend to maintain the Strategic Research Plan as a separate document which will be appended to and referenced within St. Thomas University's next Strategic Plan.

Recommendations 2, 3 and 4 concern the role of Senate in the departmental review process. As noted during the QA site visit, St. Thomas is currently revising its policy on Department/Programme Reviews. Several of the planned revisions address the reviewers' recommendations and focus on re-animating debate on quality assurance motions at Senate. Specifically:

- reports on departmental reviews will be integrated with regular Senate meetings as a standing agenda item rather than being addressed in a special meeting;
- discussion of reviews will also be scheduled earlier in the meeting;
- as per policy, the External Review Coordinating Committee (ERCC) will report annually to Senate on action plans developed by departments to implement recommendations stemming from external reviews;
- the ERCC will modify the existing External Review Policy to require Departments to submit a written rationale to justify their response to the recommendations made by external reviewers;
- the Deans will provide the written rationale to Senators along with the external reviewers' report in advance of Senate meetings at which the review will be discussed; and
- the Deans, as co-chairs of the ERCC, will present the external reviews and lead discussions prior to voting on recommendations at Senate.

The revision of the Departmental Review Policy described above will be led by the Dean of Social Sciences and the Dean of Humanities as co-chairs of the ERCC, which reflects the enhanced role of the deans in STU's quality assurance process, as suggested in Recommendation 5.

Recommendations 5 and 6 also suggest that deans, chairs, and directors be involved in the course evaluation process. The University notes that the existing Policy on Student Course Ratings allows the Vice-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. Similarly, the reviewers' recommendation that the role of the deans be further expanded to include involvement in faculty performance appraisals is already addressed by Article 21 of the Full-time Faculty Collective agreement, which 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.

Recommendation 7 suggests that the creation of new academic programs should follow the Academic Planning Committee's criteria for the creation of new departments, including the requirement that the unit have teaching resources equivalent to three full-time academic appointments. The University notes that the creation of new academic programs is already guided by the Academic Planning Committee's (APC) criteria, which parallel MPHEC criteria. The criterion of three full-time academic appointments is maintained for programs when financial resources allow. Furthermore, although some interdisciplinary programs, when created, may have fewer than three dedicated full-time faculty appointments, they often draw on full-time faculty from multiple disciplines. Nonetheless, the University acknowledges the Review Panel's caution, outlined in Recommendations 7 and 8, that programs must be sufficiently staffed, and will endeavor to expand academic staffing when feasible. The revised ERCC policy will require outcomes of external review recommendations with financial or budget implications to be reported at Senate, including the criteria for assessing changes to allocations of established positions recommended by an external review (as referenced in Recommendation 9).

We read with interest the report's recommendations concerning the Policy on Departmental/Programme Reviews (Recommendations 12-20) and plan to incorporate them into the revised policy. Specifically:

- the ERCC will consider including the learning objectives identified in the University's "Goals of the Liberal Arts" document in the revised policy (Recommendation 12);
- the ERCC policy revision will include a mechanism for an annual internal curriculum review of each department (Recommendation 13);
- the revised policy will recommend that a STU faculty member belonging to a department other than the one under review meet with external reviewers (Recommendation 14), although the faculty member would not be directly involved in other aspects the departmental review (such as preparing the self-study and the written response to the external reviewers' report);
- the policy will establish clearer guidelines for external reviewers, including the explicit expectation that external reviewers comment on the review process itself (Recommendation 15), ensure that the professional qualifications of external reviewers are included in final reports (Recommendation 17), and ensure that external reviewers' reports and responses to them are published online (Recommendation 16); and
- the revised policy will require an Appendix to the Self-Study providing a synopsis of Senate-approved curriculum changes since the last external review (Recommendation 19).

Concerning the suggestion that accreditation processes for professional departments and programs not be allowed to replace or stand in for STU's internal policies and practices related to quality assurance (Recommendation 18), the University notes that the School of Education does currently undergo reviews through the ERCC review process. The School of Social Work has been allowed to substitute the Canadian Association for Social Work Education (CASWE) accreditation process for the standard departmental review based on the MPHEC 2016 Guidelines, which state that as "appropriate, the results of accreditation may be included, and/or substituted" for the external review component. Nonetheless, the University will consider revising its practice to require the School of Social Work to provide a rationale to the ERCC to explain why it should be exempted from the standard review and provide details of the CASWE review to be presented to Senate by the ERCC. If adopted, this revised practice would be incorporated in the revised Policy on Departmental/Programme Reviews.

The report's recommendation that the revised policy enunciate explicit sanctions to be levelled against departments refusing to participate in the external review process (Recommendation 20) is challenging to accommodate. After consulting with other universities in the region, we have confirmed that no other university in this jurisdiction has such sanctions. Consequently, St. Thomas would prefer to approach the problem of incomplete departmental reviews by identifying and addressing barriers and revising the policy on reviews to articulate the responsibility of the chair in the development of the departmental self-study. We would also note that since the QA site visit, both programs that had not participated in the review process have begun work on their departmental self-studies.

In addition to the planned changes to the Policy on Departmental/Programme Reviews outlined above, the University will also endeavor to consider the pursuit of quality when developing or reviewing formal agreements, as recommended in Recommendations 10 and 11. This includes the collective bargaining process and our formal arrangements with the University of New Brunswick. We note, however, that we do not have formal over-arching arrangements with UNBSJ or the New Brunswick Community College, although we do have agreements with NBCC concerning individual articulated programs.

Concerning the report's final recommendation – that STU formulate a method for the regular formal review of non-academic units (Recommendation 21) – the University contends that its current method of assessing units providing direct or indirect support to academic programs is in keeping with the MPHEC's goal of ensuring a quality student-centered approach to education.

As noted in our Quality Assurance Process Progress Report, every non-academic unit at St. Thomas University conducts regular self-evaluations and engages in a unit-level strategic planning process 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 regularly monitors student satisfaction with units and services through satisfaction surveys such as the annual Graduate Follow-Up Survey. The follow-up survey forms the basis of longitudinal student satisfaction scores and utilization metrics, which are maintained by the Office of Institutional Research and disseminated annually to each unit director and the relevant members of senior management. On an individual level, non-academic staff members also undergo an annual performance review.

Externally funded services have more specific review criteria and reporting requirements as determined by the funding agency, and are required to provide detailed annual reports, including metrics, to their funding agencies.

Again, we thank the Review Panel for its comprehensive assessment of St. Thomas University's Quality Assurance Policies and Procedures. As noted above, the review is timely, coinciding with the current internal review and revision of our Policy on Departmental/Programme Reviews. The recommendations provided in the Panel's report will inform our continuing focus on improving the quality assurance process in research, teaching, and the learning experience at St. Thomas University.

MPHEC 2016 Guidelines	Guideline met by institution?		Comments (From Institution)	Comments (From Panel)
	Policy (Yes/No/Somewhat)	Practice (Yes/No/Somewhat)		
1. PURPOSE OF THE GUIDELINES				
These guidelines aim to assist institutions in establishing or improving their quality assurance frameworks (and related policies and processes) and to support the Commission when assessing the frameworks in place.			N/A	

MPHEC 2016 Guidelines	Guideline met by institution?		Comments (From Institution)	Comments (From Panel)
	In policy (Yes/No/Somewhat)	In practice (Yes/No/Somewhat)		
2. GUIDING PRINCIPLES				
A successful university quality assurance framework¹ is guided by:				
2.1 The pursuit of continuous improvement;	Yes	Yes	A focus on continuous improvement at the department and program level is imbedded in the department/program review process, which includes a requirement for departments to report to Senate on progress with the implementation of recommendations made by external reviewers. In addition, academic staff provide annual reports on their pedagogical and scholarly activities and non-academic support staff complete annual performance reviews in which areas for improvement and self-development are noted.	The Panel agrees with STU's comments, with the proviso that annual reports to Senate become routine.
2.2 A focus on learning;	Yes	Yes	Student learning is central to the department review process, which specifically requires the input of current and former students to assess how well the curriculum and instruction meet the expectations of students and the extent to which students meet the stated objectives of the department or program.	Agreed. Ample evidence of student input is included in the dossiers examined by the Panel.
2.3 The necessity of encompassing all functions and units of an institution;	Yes	Yes	The University is guided by its strategic plan, which serves as the basis for the operational plans of individual support units.	Agreed.
2.4 Accountability and transparency; and	Yes	Yes	The University demonstrates accountability and transparency in its published financial audits, policies, and Senate-approved documents, and in its compliance with Tri-council policies concerning research and the requirements of various professional accrediting bodies. We also demonstrate accountability to the MPHEC in the program approval process and data reporting requirements. Furthermore, the University is subject to Right to Information requests under provincial legislation.	Agreed.

MPHEC 2016 Guidelines	Guideline met by institution?		Comments (From Institution)	Comments (From Panel)
	In policy (Yes/No/Somewhat)	In practice (Yes/No/Somewhat)		
2.5 The documentation and implementation of policies, guidelines and procedures.	Yes	Yes	The University makes many of its policies, collective agreements, and procedures available online. Most university-wide policies are approved by Senate, whose minutes are made public, are reviewed and revised on a regular basis to reflect changing needs and facilitate implementation.	Agreed.
1. This document refers to an institutional quality assurance framework, which may encompass multiple policies and procedures covering an institution's work in this area (e.g., faculty specific policies that reflect various realities, or separate policies for academic units and other types of units).				

MPHEC 2016 Guidelines	Guideline met by institution?		Comments (From Institution)	Comments (From Panel)
	Policy (Yes/No/Somewhat)	Practice (Yes/No/Somewhat)		
3. SCOPE OF A UNIVERSITY'S QUALITY ASSURANCE FRAMEWORK				
A university's quality assurance framework:				
3.1 Reflects its mission and values;	Yes	Yes	As part of its stated mission, St. Thomas University aims to create an academic, cultural, and social environment in which each student can achieve the goals of liberal education (<i>St. Thomas University Strategic Plan 2013-18</i>). The University publishes a "Statement of Mutual Expectations," which outlines how those values are embedded in the learning and teaching process. The policy governing department/program self studies explicitly states that the study "shall be developed in light of the University's Mission Statement and Strategic Plan" (<i>Policy on Department/Programme Reviews</i> , section 4).	Agreed.
3.2 Accounts for the full range of its offerings and activities;	Yes	Yes	While academic offerings and activities are governed by Senate and the departmental review process, non-academic units are guided by the University's Strategic Plan and follow an accountability structure based on a reporting hierarchy ultimately accountable to the Board of Governors.	Agreed.
3.3 Links to the institution's strategic and other plans;	Yes	Yes	See above.	(n/a)

MPHEC 2016 Guidelines	Guideline met by institution?		Comments (From Institution)	Comments (From Panel)
	Policy (Yes/No/Somewhat)	Practice (Yes/No/Somewhat)		
3.4 Includes provisions to cover all of the functions and units of the institution (research, administration, community service, etc.) and applies to the full spectrum of a student's university experience; and	Yes	Yes	Department and program reviews assess faculty research, administration, and service. While non-academic units are encouraged to conduct regular self-evaluations, formal reviews (involving, for example, formal reports from external reviewers) are rarely conducted, and the University does not have a standard for non-academic unit reviews as it does for academic departments. Some individual units conduct internal, informal reviews on an ad hoc basis due to changes in personnel, organizational structure, or budget. The University also regularly monitors student satisfaction with units and services through satisfaction surveys such as the annual Graduate Follow-Up Survey. Finally, non-academic units provide quarterly reports to senior management, which in turn inform reports to the Board of Governors.	The Panel recommends that a more formal process be introduced whereby all non-academic units undergo regularly scheduled reviews that follow a common procedure.
3.5 Is forwarded to the MPHEC.	N/A			

MPHEC 2016 Guidelines	Guideline met by institution?		Comments (From Institution)	Comments (From Panel)
	Policy (Yes/No/Somewhat)	Practice (Yes/No/Somewhat)		
4. OBJECTIVES OF THE UNIVERSITY'S QUALITY ASSURANCE FRAMEWORK				
The objectives of a university quality assurance framework are, at a minimum, to assure the quality of programs and to ensure that stated student outcomes can be realized.				
The purpose of each institution-led assessment is to answer the following two questions:				
first, "How well is the unit or the program achieving what it set out to accomplish?" and	Yes	Yes	The University's Policy on Department/Programme Reviews specifies that departments or programs must assess the extent to which they meet their stated objectives and the extent to which students are meeting the objectives established by the department or program.	Agreed; but see the Panel's Recommendations for Improvement.
second, "Is it doing what it should be doing?"	Yes	Yes	As part of the department self-study, departments must describe how their objectives are "responsive to new developments in the disciplines and advances in knowledge" and to what extent they are consistent with the University's Mission Statement and Strategic Plan.	Agreed
In answering the above questions, the university examines:				

MPHEC 2016 Guidelines	Guideline met by institution?		Comments (From Institution)	Comments (From Panel)
	Policy (Yes/No/Somewhat)	Practice (Yes/No/Somewhat)		
4.1 Inputs; and	Yes	Yes	As part of the department self-study, departments must assess whether they have sufficient resources -- including faculty, support staff, equipment, space, and library holdings – to achieve their stated objectives	Agreed
4.2 Outputs.	Yes	Yes	Departments are also required to report enrolment and attrition rates, including the number of students obtaining minors, majors, and honours. The student surveys conducted as part of the study typically include a consideration of educational and labour market outcomes, as well as the extent to which curriculum and instruction met the expectations of the students and the extent to which the students met the stated objectives of the Department.	Agreed

MPHEC 2016 Guidelines	Guideline met by institution?		Comments (From Institution)	Comments (From Panel)
	Policy (Yes/No/Somewhat)	Practice (Yes/No/Somewhat)		
5. STANDARD² FOR THE ASSESSMENT OF ACADEMIC PROGRAMS/UNITS				
5.1 Central Components				
To assess academic programs/units³, an institutional quality assurance framework would, at a minimum:				
5.1.1 Identify the coordinating or administrative unit responsible for the overall management of the quality assurance process. This unit is located at a higher echelon (e.g. vice-president) of the institution's administrative structure, and	Yes	Yes	The Vice-President (Academic and Research) is ultimately responsible for the implementation of the Quality Assurance Framework.	Agreed
is accountable to the institution's decision-making bodies.	Yes	Yes	The Vice-President (Academic and Research) is accountable to the Board of Governors.	
5.1.2 Assign and distribute responsibility for the various components of the quality assurance framework (deans, department heads, program managers, committees, etc.).	Yes	Yes	While the Vice-President (Academic and Research) is ultimately responsible for the QA Framework, responsibility for monitoring or supporting various elements is distributed. For example, the external review process is guided by the External Review Coordinating Committee and the Office of the Dean of Social Sciences and Dean of Humanities is responsible for the integrity and logistics of the review process. The Deans are also responsible for reporting on the external review process to Senate.	Agreed, but see Recommendations for Improvement, particularly with reference to expanding the roles of Deans
5.1.3 Define the assessment criteria	N/A (see section 5.2 below).			

MPHEC 2016 Guidelines	Guideline met by institution?		Comments (From Institution)	Comments (From Panel)
	Policy (Yes/No/Somewhat)	Practice (Yes/No/Somewhat)		
5.1.4 Require a self-study,				
involving faculty and students participating in the program or unit.	Yes	Yes		Agreed
The self-study is student-centred as it would aim, in most cases, to assess the student experience and, in the case of academic programs, to assess the quality of learning and teaching.	Yes	Yes	The department/program review process specifically requires the input of current and former students through surveys, including an assessment of how well the curriculum and instruction meet the expectations of students and the extent to which students meet the stated objectives of the department	Agreed
The self-study is structured according to the defined assessment criteria, and is both descriptive and analytical.	Yes	Yes	<i>See Policy on Department/Programme Reviews.</i>	Agreed
When and where appropriate, the results of accreditation processes may be included, and/or substituted for this component, or a portion thereof. ⁴	No	Yes	The Social Work Program substitutes the results of its accreditation process with the Canadian Association of Social Work Education (CASWE) for the University's review process.	See the Panel's footnoted comment on the uses of accreditation processes in the section on Recommendations for Improvement

MPHEC 2016 Guidelines	Guideline met by institution?		Comments (From Institution)	Comments (From Panel)
	Policy (Yes/No/Somewhat)	Practice (Yes/No/Somewhat)		
5.1.5 Require an external review component	Yes	Yes		
with a sufficiently comprehensive site visit and written report,	Yes	Yes	External reviewers spend two days on campus interviewing faculty, students and staff, assessing resources and reviewing curricular matters. External reviewers are provided with the necessary instructions, policies and templates to produce a thorough report.	Agreed
carried out by at least two experts external to the institution, with at least one coming from outside Atlantic Canada.	Somewhat	Somewhat	The policy on external reviews does not explicitly require that at least one reviewer must be from outside Atlantic Canada. In practice, however, an external reviewer from outside Atlantic Canada is involved approximately 90% of the time.	Agreed: currently this should be taken as "somewhat". But see our Recommendations for Improvement
The external reviewers' team should also include a senior faculty member from the institution to assist the external reviewers in the process and provide clarifications on the institution's context.	Somewhat	Somewhat	A senior faculty member or academic administrator serves to assist the review team, but not as a member of the team. The Office of the Dean of Social Sciences and Dean of Humanities is responsible for the integrity and logistics of the process.	See the Recommendations for Improvement related to this issue

MPHEC 2016 Guidelines	Guideline met by institution?		Comments (From Institution)	Comments (From Panel)
	Policy (Yes/No/Somewhat)	Practice (Yes/No/Somewhat)		
As appropriate, the results of accreditation may be included, and/or substituted for this component, or a portion thereof. ⁴	No	Yes	The external review conducted as part of the Social Work Program's accreditation process with the Canadian Association of Social Work Education (CASWE) is substituted for the University's external review process.	See the Panel's footnote on the accreditation issue.
5.1.6 Ensure the participation of students through:				
membership on committees dealing with program review and quality assurance;	Yes	No	Currently, the policy specifies that "at least one student must be involved in the preparation of the Self Study." Due to practical reasons, however, such as the need for continuity over the period of the study and the need for full and frank discussion, students do not typically sit at the committee table. Consequently, this aspect of the policy is currently under review.	Understood. However, we recommend that continuing efforts be made to ensure student contributions to the Self-Study.
participation in surveys designed to collect data on a number of student and graduate outcomes;	Yes	Yes	The policy specifies that departments must report on student satisfaction with curriculum and instruction as well as on outcomes such as credentials granted and attrition rate. This input is typically gathered through surveys of current students and graduates.	Agreed.
and mandatory student course evaluations.	Yes	Yes	The <i>Policy on Student Course Ratings</i> states that each course taught at St. Thomas University will be evaluated.	Agreed. Please note Panel's comments on the uses and distribution of student evaluations
5.1.7 Incorporate the participation of faculty not directly involved in the reviewed program (or discipline or unit).	Yes	Yes	The results of departmental reviews, including actions taken, are reported to the University Senate.	Agreed, but see the Panel's Recommendations related to Senate
5.1.8 Enable the participation of the wider network of stakeholders, such as employers, graduates, professional associations, the local community, etc.	Somewhat	Somewhat	Graduates are encouraged to participate in the review process through the self-study survey. Professional programs, such as Social Work and Education, may consult with professional associations and employers, but most departments do not involve employers or the local community in the review process.	Agreed
5.1.9 Define the follow-up mechanisms, which include				
the procedures	Yes	Yes	Detailed procedures for both the review process and its follow-up are specified in the <i>Policy on Department/Programme Reviews</i> .	Agreed
areas of responsibility	Yes	Yes	The policy clearly outlines the authority and areas of responsibility of Senate, the Office of the Dean of Social Sciences and the Dean of Humanities, the External Review Coordinating Committee, the Department or Program, and the Review Team.	Agreed. See Recommendations for Improvement of these processes.
expected timelines,	Yes	Somewhat	Although the Policy provides a model timeline for the self study, external review, department response, and implementation of recommendations, in practice the time required to respond to the report and implement its recommendations often exceeds the model.	Agreed. Practice and Policy are sometimes at variance.

MPHEC 2016 Guidelines	Guideline met by institution?		Comments (From Institution)	Comments (From Panel)
	Policy (Yes/No/Somewhat)	Practice (Yes/No/Somewhat)		
along with provisions for follow-up monitoring of progress (usually involving the Senate).	Yes	Somewhat	Although the policy specifies that the department or program must update Senate on the implementation of recommendations, in practice the follow up is not always timely or comprehensive.	Agreed. See our Recommendation for strengthening this requirement.
5.1.10 Establish the assessment cycle and related schedule which normally does not exceed seven years (with no programs exceeding, in practice, 10 years between reviews), ⁵	Yes	Somewhat	The policy specifies that external reviews are to be carried out every five to seven years, but due to scheduling and resource limitations (particularly in small departments with a few full-time faculty) this is not always realized. The University, through the External Review Coordinating Committee, is working to rectify this issue.	Noted and Agreed.

MPHEC 2016 Guidelines	Guideline met by institution?		Comments (From Institution)	Comments (From Panel)
	Policy (Yes/No/Somewhat)	Practice (Yes/No/Somewhat)		
5.1.11 Assess newly established programs or units after the first cohort has graduated.	Yes	Somewhat		Agreed
5.1.12 Document the standard timeline for individual reviews, from the preparation of the self-study through to Senate approval of recommendations, normally 12 to 18 months.	Yes	Somewhat	In practice, the process through to Senate approval of recommendations takes 24 months, or 18 months from the site visit.	Agreed
5.1.13 Include a communication strategy to inform the university community (students, faculty, staff, etc.) and the general public about a university's quality assurance framework as well as significant changes brought about by quality assurance activities.	Yes	Yes	The Senate and the Board of Governors are informed about the University's quality assurance framework. The general public is not directly informed, although Senate minutes and documents are available to the public online (https://www.stu.ca/about/faculty--staff/senate/senate-minutes-and-documents/).	Agreed, but see our Recommendations for Improvement on this matter.
The communication strategy should include activities to inform faculty, staff and heads of units about the framework, its objectives, assessment criteria, and follow-up processes.	Somewhat	Somewhat	See above.	(n/a)
5.1.14 Define the provisions to assess the framework periodically, normally at the end of each assessment cycle	Yes	Yes	The <i>Policy on Department/Programme Reviews</i> is reassessed every seven years.	Agreed
and table the resulting report with decision-making bodies within the institution (e.g., Senate, Board of Governors).	Yes	Yes		Agreed

MPHEC 2016 Guidelines	Guideline met by institution?		Comments (From Institution)	Comments (From Panel)
	Policy (Yes/No/Somewhat)	Practice (Yes/No/Somewhat)		
<p>2. The Commission uses the term Standard as 'A document established by consensus and approved by a recognized body that provides for common and repeated use, rules, guidelines or characteristics for activities or their results, aimed at the achievement of the optimum degree of order in a given context'. ISO/IEC Guide 2:1996, definition 3.2</p> <p>3. For the purpose of this section of the Guidelines, an academic unit is understood as a department or a unit whose mission is preponderantly teaching and whose nature reflects the existence of a demonstrably coherent field of knowledge, normally defined by close cognate disciplines. An academic unit may offer more than one program, but in the context of quality assurance, each program is to be assessed, including curriculum, outcomes, resources, etc.</p> <p>4. However, the quality assurance framework addresses gaps in accreditation processes (if any) to ensure the same standards are applied across all programs (e.g., reporting back to higher echelons of the institution).</p> <p>5. In exceptional circumstances, review cycles may be interrupted to accommodate other institutional priorities; in these cases, the MPHEC should be contacted and informed of the length/extent of the anticipated interruption (no program should exceed 10 years between reviews).</p>				

MPHEC 2016 Guidelines	Guideline met by institution?		Comments (From Institution)	Comments (From Panel)
	Policy (Yes/No/Somewhat)	Practice (Yes/No/Somewhat)		
5.2 Assessment Criteria				
Each university establishes assessment criteria for reviewing the quality of its programs/units. The assessment criteria are				
comprehensive in their range and in their use across programs and units;	Somewhat	Somewhat	Detailed assessment criteria are provided in the <i>Policy on Department/Programme Reviews</i> . However, while every non-academic unit is encouraged to conduct regular self-evaluations, formal reviews (involving, for example, formal reports from external reviewers) are not typically conducted, and the University does not have a standard for non-academic unit reviews as it does for academic departments.	The Panel has recommended instituting a formal process for reviewing non-academic units. See comment in 3.4 above.
they have a strong focus on students and	Yes	Yes	The department/program review process specifically requires the input of current and former students, including an assessment of how well the curriculum and instruction meet the expectations of students and the extent to which students meet the stated objectives of the department or program.	Agreed
reflect the institutional mission and values.	Yes	Yes	The policy governing department/program self studies explicitly states that the study "shall be developed in light of the University's Mission Statement and Strategic Plan" (<i>Policy on Department/Programme Reviews</i> , section 4).	Agreed
They are published and include at a minimum the following:				
5.2.1 The continuing appropriateness of the program's structure, method of delivery and curriculum for the program's learning outcomes and the degree level expectations;	Yes	Yes	Departments are required to assess the extent to which the curriculum, including organizing principles, is consisted with the stated objectives of the department.	Agreed

MPHEC 2016 Guidelines	Guideline met by institution?		Comments (From Institution)	Comments (From Panel)
	Policy (Yes/No/Somewhat)	Practice (Yes/No/Somewhat)		
5.2.2 The achievement by students and graduates of the learning outcomes in light of				
the program's stated goals,	Yes	Yes		Agreed
the degree level expectations, and,	Yes	Yes		Degree-level expectations are not always articulated.
where relevant, the standards of any relevant regulatory, accrediting or professional body;	Yes	Yes		Agreed
5.2.3 The continuing appropriateness and effectiveness of the methods used for the evaluation of student progress and achievement in light of the degree level expectations;	Yes	Yes	Under the policy, departments are required to comment on the department's strengths and weaknesses regarding teaching practices and describe plans for improvements in this area, if any.	Agreed
5.2.4 The capacity of the faculty and staff to deliver the program and the quality of education necessary for the students to achieve:				
the stated learning outcomes, and	Yes	Yes		
to meet the needs of the existing and anticipated student enrolments;	Yes	Yes	As part of the self-study, departments or programs must track enrolments and assess whether objectives can be achieved with available resources, including faculty, support staff, equipment, space, and library holdings.	Agreed
5.2.5 The continuing performance of the faculty, including				
the quality of teaching and supervision, and	Yes	Yes	Faculty members must submit an annual report on their pedagogical activities. Department self-studies include assessments of the strengths and weaknesses regarding teaching practices and plans for improvements in this area, if any. Departments also describe mentoring mechanisms among faculty members within the department or program with respect to teaching practices. See <i>Policy on Student Course Ratings</i> concerning the use of mandatory course evaluations. Faculty members are required to provide course outlines for courses taught each semester. The collective agreement between the University and full-time faculty includes a Statement of Standards outlining the expectations for teaching for the assessment for promotion and tenure.	Agreed
their continuing progress and achievement in research, scholarship or creative activity, and	Yes	Yes	Faculty submit an annual report to the Vice-President (Academic and Research) outlining research, publications. The Statement of Standards in the collective agreement between the University and full-time faculty specifies the expectations for scholarly contributions in the assessment for tenure and promotion. The research records of full-time department or program members are also reviewed as part of the department self-study.	Agreed
professional activity in light of the program under review;	Yes	Yes	The collective agreement between the University and full-time faculty includes a Statement of Standards outlining the expectations for service in the assessment for promotion and tenure. Service to the University and service of a professional nature to the profession or to the larger community is assessed in the department/program self-study process.	Agreed

MPHEC 2016 Guidelines	Guideline met by institution?		Comments (From Institution)	Comments (From Panel)
	Policy (Yes/No/Somewhat)	Practice		
5.2.6 The appropriateness of the support provided to the learning environment, including but not limited to library and learning resources (e.g., human, physical and financial resources; academic advising; student services; graduate studies office; registrar services; technological services; centres for teaching and learning, etc.), unless such supports are assessed through other means;	Yes	Yes		We note that there is no comment from STU on this matter. But we do observe that STU has developed an appropriate array of academic support units of the kind expected by MPHEC. We also note that the range of student support services has been considerably broadened since the 1st Cycle Review in 2003. Our session during the virtual site visit with representatives of most of these academic support units reinforced the Panel's conviction that STU handles very well these modes of enabling student success See the Panel's extended commentary on the Library in the Report

MPHEC 2016 Guidelines	Guideline met by institution?		Comments (From Institution)	Comments (From Panel)
	Policy (Yes/No/Somewhat)	Practice		
5.2.7*** The effectiveness and appropriateness of the use made of				
the existing human resources	Yes	Yes	The <i>Policy on Department/Programme Reviews</i> includes an assessment of the ability of the department or program to meet its objectives with the available faculty and support staff.	Agreed
the existing physical resource	Yes	Yes	The <i>Policy on Department/Programme Reviews</i> includes an assessment of the ability of the department or program to meet its objectives with the available space resources.	Agreed
the existing technological resources	Yes	Yes	The <i>Policy on Department/Programme Reviews</i> includes an assessment of the ability of the department or program to meet its objectives with the available "equipment."	Agreed
the existing financial resources; and	Yes	Yes	The financial implications of recommendations emerging from department/program reviews are assessed by senior management and reported by the President to Senate as part of the Department/Program review process.	n/a
5.2.8 The continuing appropriateness of				
the academic policies (including admission, promotion and graduation requirements; requests for transfer credit and advanced standing; and appeals) and	Yes	Somewhat	All formal policies, including academic policies, have a review date.	Agreed
of the governing and decision making structures of the academic unit; and	Yes	Yes	The department review process requires departments to provide a clear plan of the administration of the department or program. The plan must address academic governance, policy and decision-making procedures, as well as communication within the department or program and the management of resources.	Agreed

MPHEC 2016 Guidelines	Guideline met by institution?		Comments (From Institution)	Comments (From Panel)
	Policy (Yes/No/Somewhat)	Practice (Yes/No/Somewhat)		
5.2.9 The definition of indicators that provide evidence of quality,				
including enrolments, graduation rates, time-to completion rates, student satisfaction level	Yes	Yes	The department review process includes quantitative and qualitative metrics such as student attrition at the program level, enrolments, student satisfaction, and the number of majors, minors, or honours graduates.	Agreed. An Associate Registrar is responsible for Institutional Research, a unit that produces metrics of this sort.
and, as appropriate, relevant measures of graduate outcomes (e.g., graduate employment rates, employment in field of study, employer satisfaction level, further study, etc.).	Somewhat	Somewhat	The University monitors graduate employment and educational pathways chiefly through post-graduation surveys and personal follow-up at the department level. Employer satisfaction is not typically assessed except in professional programs.	Agreed

MPHEC 2016 Guidelines	Guideline met by institution?		Comments (From Institution)	Comments (From Panel)
	Policy (Yes/No/Somewhat)	Practice (Yes/No/Somewhat)		
6. STANDARD FOR THE ASSESSMENT OF OTHER UNITS				
<p>A university's quality assurance framework ought to assess all functions and units of the institution. This includes the university's units whose missions are not driven by teaching, and in particular academic support units. The diversity of these units makes the development of general guidelines universally applicable across units and across universities challenging. It is up to the institution to determine whether each unit is assessed more effectively on its own or in conjunction with academic units (see 5.2.6, above).</p> <p><i>The Commission will gather information from, and generate discussion with, universities on best practices in the assessment of other units.</i> In the interim, universities are still expected to review these units and, at this stage, the Commission proposes the following four assessment criteria:</p> <p>Note: Given the change of approach to addressing the assessment of other units, now named Academic Support Units, institutions are asked to complete Sections 6.1 to 6.4 (below) based on its policies/practices for assessing Academic Support Units directly related to academic programs/student learning (as applicable)</p>				
6.1 The continuing appropriateness and effectiveness of the service or support provided to the academic programs, students and faculty;	Somewhat	Yes	While every non-academic unit is encouraged to conduct regular self-evaluations, formal reviews (involving, for example, formal reports from external reviewers) are not typically conducted, and the University does not have a standard for non-academic unit reviews as it does for academic departments. Some individual units conduct internal, informal reviews on an ad hoc basis in response to changes in personnel, organizational structure, or budget. The University also regularly monitors student satisfaction with units and services through satisfaction surveys such as the annual Graduate Follow-Up Survey. Further, non-academic units provide quarterly reports to senior management, which in turn inform reports to the Board of Governors.	See Recommendation above at 3.4
6.2 The capacity of the unit or program to deliver the service or support which its mandate defines;				

MPHEC 2016 Guidelines	Guideline met by institution?		Comments (From Institution)	Comments (From Panel)
	Policy (Yes/No/Somewhat)	Practice (Yes/No/Somewhat)		
the existing human resources	Somewhat	Yes	Assessed as part of the University's strategic planning and budgeting processes.	Agreed
the existing physical resource	Somewhat	Yes	Assessed as part of the University's strategic planning and budgeting processes.	Agreed
the existing technological resources	Somewhat	Yes	Assessed as part of the University's strategic planning and budgeting processes.	Agreed
the existing financial resources; and	Somewhat	Yes	Assessed as part of the University's strategic planning and budgeting processes.	Agreed
6.4 The contribution of the unit or program to other of the institution's mission and to the student experience.	Somewhat	Yes	The University regularly monitors student satisfaction with units and services through satisfaction surveys such as the annual Graduate Follow-Up Survey. Further, non-academic units provide quarterly reports to senior management, which in turn inform reports to the Board of Governors.	Agreed

MPHEC 2016 Guidelines	Guideline met by institution?		Comments (From Institution)	Comments (From Panel)
	Policy (Yes/No/Somewhat)	Practice (Yes/No/Somewhat)		
7. KEY DOCUMENTS ASSOCIATED WITH A UNIVERSITY'S QUALITY ASSURANCE FRAMEWORK				
Standardization and documentation of processes and procedures support two goals: a common and transparent process and shorter timelines. To this end, institutions should establish the following policy(ies), templates and standards:				
FORMAL, APPROVED QUALITY ASSURANCE RELATED POLICY(IES)	Yes	Yes		There are no comments from STU on any of the items in section 7 of this template. But we concur with STU 's positive assessment of its alignment with MPHEC's expectations in this and the following sections.
GUIDELINES FOR THE PREPARATION OF THE SELF-STUDY				
to include templates/data /source(s) for indicators/measures of quality (e.g., enrolments, graduation rates, time-to-completion rates, student/employer satisfaction level, graduate employment rates, employment in field of study, further study, etc.).	Yes	Yes		Agreed
GENERIC TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR EXTERNAL REVIEWERS	Yes	Yes		Agreed

MPHEC 2016 Guidelines	Guideline met by institution?		Comments (From Institution)	Comments (From Panel)
	Policy (Yes/No/Somewhat)	Practice (Yes/No/Somewhat)		
COMMON STUDENT COURSE EVALUATION FORM	Yes	Yes		Agreed
TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR RELEVANT COMMITTEE(S)	Yes	Yes		Agreed
GUIDELINES FOR THE REVIEW OF PROGRAMS THAT ARE ALSO SUBJECT TO ACCREDITATION	Yes	Yes		Agreed

Virtual Site visit to St. Thomas University	
April 8, 2021	
11:30-12:50	Dawn Russell, President Kim Fenwick, Vice President Academic and Research
1:00-1:15	Health Break
1:15-2:15	Susan Machum, Dean of Social Sciences André Loiselle, Dean of Humanities
2:15-3:00	Lunch Break
3:15-4:15	External Review Coordinating Committee: Michael Boudreau (2022) Linda Caissie (2021) Cecilia Francis (2022) Colm Kelly (2022) André Loiselle, (Co-Chair, ex officio) Susan Machum, (Co-Chair, ex officio)
4:30-5:30	Academic Support Units that contribute to the quality of academic programs: Karen Preston, Registrar Brock Richardson and Ryan Sullivan, Student Support Services Peter Toner, Associate Vice-President (Research) Garry Hansen, Director of Institutional Research and Associate Registrar
April 9, 2021	
11:20-12:30	Chairs/Coordinators of recently reviewed programs: Criminology – Karla O’Regan Education – Marcea Ingersoll Journalism and Communications – Philip Lee, Jamie Gillies Political Science – Tom Bateman
12:40 -1:00	Health Break
1:00-1:40	Faculty of recently reviewed programs: Criminology – Susan Reid, Michael Boudreau Education – Lisa Mitchell, Léo-James Levesque Journalism and Communications – Jamie Gillies, Philip Lee, Michael Camp Political Science – Shaun Narine, Laura Rabinowitz
1:50-2:30	Senate Panel: Gül Çalışkan Sandra Thomson Christina Szurlej Karen Robert
2:30-3:00	Lunch Break
3:15-4:15	Student Panel: Criminology – Grace Baker, Brianna Hill, Simon Wassef Education – Lindsey Gallant Journalism & Communications – Alishya Weiland, Fiona Steele Political Science – Julia Evans President of Students’ Union – Sarah Kohut
4:30- 5:15	Panel only – Debrief
5:15- 6:00	Closing Session: Dawn Russell, President Kim Fenwick, Vice President (Academic and Research) Susan Machum, Dean of Social Sciences André Loiselle, Dean of Humanities Garry Hansen, Director of Institutional Research and Associate Registrar