

DATE: May 10, 2005
TO: Faculty Members of Education Council
FROM: Frank Cosco, Vice President, VCCFA
SUBJECT: RE: THE 2005 PROPOSAL FOR A PROGRAM REVIEW POLICY

The version that was put before Council at the May meeting is substantially similar to the one that Joan proposed in the fall of 2003.

As some of you might remember from that time, the VCCFA raised a long list of concerns with IRAs, with your caucus, with Joan herself, and before the ad hoc subcommittee that examined the proposal in more depth. That list included process points, the content of the policy itself, and labour relations issues.

The Grievance

The lack of a role for Instructional Associates in program review was a specific contract administration issue that the VCCFA had to grieve. A previous arbitration award by Stephen Kelleher had set out the roles of Instructional Associates as successors to Associate Deans and an important role in program review was clearly listed as one of their duties.

The processing of the grievance has taken almost a year and a half to work through. As Joan mentioned, there is still not final agreement. She has agreed to try Associates as committee chairs and to review their effectiveness. The VCCFA has therefore agreed to put the grievance, which was about to be referred back to arbitration, in abeyance. If the Associates are removed, the grievance will return.

Other Concerns and the Importance of Program Review

The proposed policy before Council is improved over the 2003 draft.

Nevertheless, there remain concerns which were raised then, and about earlier iterations, and which still have not been adequately addressed.

As interested observers of this policy process for about ten years now, Lizz and I feel a responsibility to continue making these points. We do this because program review is important. It is fundamentally faculty work. Faculty creates and delivers programs, and as professionals, they are charged with evaluating their effectiveness and the success of their students. Of course, there is a place for outside input but there again we feel it should be primarily in the form of professional peer input that is then incorporated into the review. There is also a place for administrative input and judgment but it should not be primary.

The points we have been making are set out below in an order that follows the proposed policy:

Purpose

The purpose of the statement is administratively oriented. It does not say anything about program reviews enhancing the work of programs themselves. We submit that a better approach would be language such as,

Program Review assists programs and the College in making programming decisions and changes, which support and improve student learning.

Policy

The five points listed are appropriate. It does seem odd however to have as the first point the separation of program review from instructor evaluation and appraisal. While this is an important point which the VCCFA raised years ago, it would seem that a better place for the statement would be as point 5 and that it be repeated in both Appendix A, Program Exit-Survey Protocol and Core Questions, and in Appendix B, Formal Program Review.

Applies to:

For your information, there is another policy which covers "service" departments. The VCCFA has a representative on review committees under this policy. Currently, the Learning Centre is undergoing a formal review and Barbara Knox is our rep.

Procedures

I

This annual review should not be limited to "implementation concerns." The language would be improved if it read,

...required to address concerns.

II

At the May meeting Brenda effectively raised concerns around the vagueness of this language and that it seemed to imply that the Vice President would solely determine whether something fell within "Education Council's jurisdiction." Joan agreed that everything should come to Council, so the language should perhaps read,

The Vice President will present program review reports and recommendations to Education Council. Council will approve and/or advise on any recommendations or resulting plans of action that fall within its jurisdiction.

By the way, this language is adapted directly from the 2000 policy, points B11 and B13.

III

No comment

A. Ongoing Program Review

While most recent attention has been on Formal Reviews, section B, and the role of Instructional Associates, it is actually section A where there is the greatest difference from the 2000 policy. In that policy two faculty members, Department Heads and Associate Deans, completed ongoing reviews and there was not an administration/faculty dynamic.

In the years since, VCC senior administration has consistently sought to expand the role of administration in the educational work of the college. The long-standing faculty positions of Division Chairs/College Librarian/Associate Deans were eliminated. Six Dean positions and a Library Director have largely replaced them. (It is significant that Langara, Capilano and other colleges have continued to maintain faculty Division Chairs.)

In most cases the administration/faculty dynamic will not matter but it is precisely in those instances when there might be differences that it is important not to have administrative authority trump the opinion of program professionals.

While it might be possible, it would probably be difficult to have Instructional Associates assigned to ongoing program review. They probably would not have enough time and they have not been assigned to program groups. It is unlikely that VCC would appoint more Instructional Associates or that it would appoint program review facilitators as Camosun has done.

Nevertheless, there are ways to ensure that faculty has more space and more involvement than the proposed section A would grant them. Some recommended language follows. In this language, the Department Head would have the primary responsibility for writing up a report. If the Dean wanted to add anything, it would be added at the end, so the VP would end up with input from both the Department Head and the Dean.

A.1

*Each year (in the spring or as negotiated with the Dean) the Department Head will conduct an ongoing review of the program by: ...
i, ii, iii, iv, v*

A.2

The Department Head will review the information with department members and with the Dean to identify and act on strengths and areas for improvement.

A.3

*The Department Head will provide a one or two page report to the Dean and to the Department outlining:
i, ii*

A.4

The Dean will forward the report to the Vice-President. Should the Dean wish to augment the contents of the report those points will be added to the report and also shared with the Department.

B Formal Program Review

Comments, not recommendations

In B1 and B2, the significant change from the 2000 policy is that the schedule of Formal Reviews, both within and outside of rotation, will be brought to Education Council for information, not for consultation. Perhaps Council would want to maintain its consultative role, at least for those programs being suggested for review outside of rotation.

B3 sets out the composition of the committee and it is significant, not because the Associates' role has been maintained, but because the real change from the 2000 policy is that a Dean will be on the committee. Again, this could be taken as an indication of the expansion of administration in educational work. On the other hand, this type of role is common for educational administrators and will be seen as reasonable by many.

The VCCFA is satisfied that under B4 it will have an opportunity for input in cases where that was deemed necessary and that committee itself could decide to ask for a union representative if that was considered helpful.

Recommendations

While the process in B5 through B9 is much improved over what had been proposed in 2003, there still is an important point of concern. Exactly what is the role of the committee vis a vis the final report?

In B5 a draft report is prepared in "consultation" with the committee; however, that is the last mention of the committee. Is that what was intended?

B5 would not have to be changed but thereafter a possible improvement might be,

B6

The FPRC chair will forward a copy of the draft to department faculty for their input and clarification

B7

The FPRC chair will forward a copy of the draft to the Dean of the program and to Program Advisory Committee members and invite their comments.

B8

The FPRC chair will consult with the department head and together review all available data and the responses to the draft report.

B9

The FPRC chair will compile a final draft of the report and present it along with supporting material to the FPRC. The FPRC will approve a final report of its findings and recommendations to the Dean of the program and to the Vice-President.

B10

Upon review, The Vice-President will either approve the report and forward it to Education Council or request an Additional Review.

[comment: the "further information" at the end of B8 is too vague to merit inclusion]

B11 Additional Review

- i ...*
- ii ...the FPRC will submit a revised report....*

Next Steps

We acknowledge that this policy has been hovering around Council for a long time.

We submit that the fundamental reason for that delay is that administration has taken a proprietary view of program review and been extremely reluctant to allow other viewpoints or interests to engage with it.

There has been an approved policy since 2000. We often said that it could have been used and gone through revisions long before now, it would have been a simple thing to change the words Associate Dean to Instructional Associate where necessary. It has been the College administration which has chosen not to use the policy because of their insistence on inserting Deans into key roles and on keeping Instructional Associates out of key roles.

It may be a difficult process, but at VCC the only effective forum for engaging on any of these points is Education Council. Council could again choose to put the detailed work of further revisions over to a special committee.

We reiterate that for faculty professionalism and control of their work as well as the products of their work is vital. Program Review is a vital part of that work which should remain to the greatest extent possible in the realm of faculty.

We hope that these suggestions are helpful. Thank you for your time and attention.

cc Lizz Lindsay

FC/av:cope15

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