Generic Terms of Reference for External Consultants

The following Generic Terms of Reference for External Consultants are used by the MPHEC when consulting with experts in the field during the assessment process, who are asked to carry out a site visit as part of the review (see *Policy*). Institutions are encouraged to follow these Terms of Reference when hiring consultants to assess a program prior to submission to the MPHEC. These Terms of Reference are amended as circumstances require; a slightly modified version of the Terms of Reference are used when the AAU-MPHEC Academic Advisory Committee chooses to consult with an *external reader*.

1. The consultant is asked to provide a report.

2. The report is to be based on:

    2.1 A one-to-two day site visit organized by the submitting institution and the consultant. The site visit would normally include consultations with: senior academic staff (e.g., the Vice-President Academic, Dean(s)); the Department Chair; faculty/staff associated with the proposed program; prospective students; librarian/library liaison.

    2.2 The evaluation of the program proposal submitted by the institution, as well as any other pertinent information provided to or procured by the consultant.

    2.3 The consultant's expertise in the field and knowledge of similar programs elsewhere in Canada or the United States.

3. The report normally ranges from five to fifteen pages.

4. Standard elements of the assessment will include:

    4.1 Assessment of program content, structure, and requirements in relation to normally accepted standards of similar programs and graduates, in Canada and elsewhere, as well as in relation to program title and credential awarded. The assessment will include a comment on the appropriateness of the proposed level of study to respond to identified needs, as well as the proposed delivery mode(s).

    4.2 As appropriate, a comparison with other comparable programs.

    4.3 Evaluation of the adequacy of human resources available for program implementation and operation and, as appropriate, for the areas of specialization identified. Specifically, the report should provide answers to:
    - Is there an appropriate distribution of expertise and strengths for the proposed program?
    - Does the faculty complement provide sufficient breadth and depth of research expertise and linkages with both the national (and/ international, as appropriate) research community and practitioners to provide an appropriate intellectual environment for graduate students, given the program area and level?
    - In your view, can the current (or planned) faculty complement successfully operate the proposed graduate program?

    4.4 Evaluation of the adequacy of physical resources (e.g., library holdings, research space) available for program implementation and operation, in light of the projected enrolments. Specifically, are the equipment, services, libraries and other associated facilities adequate for the proposed program?

    4.5 Evaluation of the appropriateness of the organizational environment in providing this program. The report should include comment on whether or not adequate procedures have been put in place for regular review and evaluation of the quality of the graduate program.

    4.6 Comment on the likely stability of the program and the financial resources allocated to it.

4.7 Opportunities presented by current and anticipated labour market trends to graduates of the program, given the proposed focus.

5. The consultant is asked to comment, as appropriate, on the following assessment criteria which the Commission uses in its assessment of program proposals (see the *Policy* for further information on each assessment criterion):

- Program content, structure and delivery modes reflect a coherent program design that allows for the program objectives and anticipated student outcomes to be achieved, while providing sufficient depth and breadth to meet the standards of quality associated with the credential
- Clearly defined and relevant program objectives and anticipated student and graduate outcomes
- Appropriate fit of name, level and content to ensure "truth in advertising" and to facilitate credential recognition
- Adequate resources (human, physical and financial) to implement and sustain the program
- Program need and viability
- An academic environment that supports scholarship such as original research, creativity and the advancement of professional knowledge, as relevant to the program
  [Criterion for graduate-level programs only]
- Clearly defined collaborative agreements
  [Criterion for programs offered by two or more institutions only]

6. The report should conclude with one of the following recommendations, with additional comments as deemed useful by the consultant:

- I recommend approval of the program as presented.
- I recommend approval of the program with the following changes (please specify).
- I recommend that a revised program proposal be drafted, prior to a decision being made, to include (please specify).
- I recommend that the program not be approved.

7. The report can include specific recommendations regarding any of the elements noted above, including resources, opportunities for collaboration, periodic program review, etc. as the consultant would judge important and useful.

8. Any additional comments judged important or useful by the consultant.