a place of mind
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To: Deans and Principals
        Heads and Directors of Academic Units

From: Anna Kindler, Vice-Provost and Associate Vice-President Academic

Date: March 1, 2013 - Updated June 12, 2014

Re: **Principles, Procedures and Guidelines for External Academic Unit Reviews**

The purpose of this memorandum is to advise academic units of the updated Principles, Procedures and Guidelines for External Academic Reviews at UBC Vancouver. **All external academic reviews initiated after March 1st, 2013 should conform to these principles, procedures and guidelines.**

Background

The Senate Policy on Reviews of Administrative Units (approved on September 14th, 1977 and amended on May 18th, 1983) and the Board of Governors Policy 22 call for periodic reviews of Faculties and other academic units. In 2007, the Senate Academic Policy Committee investigated the need and desirability of revising the existing Senate Policy. It developed a draft document that outlined guiding principles for conducting reviews and included an Appendix with proposed detailed guidelines for the preparation of documentation for reviews. Upon extensive discussion, the Committee decided that this type of a document would more appropriately be framed as a set of administrative guidelines than as a new policy document and opted not to advance the document to the Senate. The draft was subsequently discussed at a Committee of Deans meeting as an example of "best practice."

In an effort to ensure that academic unit reviews will allow us to effectively track progress on the Place and Promise commitments, respond to the internal and external expectations of rigorous quality assurance, and to document commitment to continuing improvement, the Office of the Provost has recently conducted additional consultations with the Committee of Deans, Senior Advisor to the President on Aboriginal Affairs and Senior Advisor to the Provost on Women Faculty to update and formalize the key principles, procedures and guidelines for conducting academic unit reviews at UBC Vancouver. This document and its appendices are intended to assist academic units in preparing for, implementing and following up on external reviews. It is expected that all academic unit reviews initiated after March 1st, 2013 will conform to these guidelines.

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Introduction

The major goal of an external review of an academic unit (defined below) is to provide the unit with an opportunity to reflect on its programs, operations and performance and obtain external advice to guide continuing improvement of academic and operational quality. External reviews also contribute to the public accountability of the university. External reviews prompt development of reflective self-study documents and engage a process to appraise, as appropriate to the particular academic unit, the scholarly, pedagogical, professional activities, academic programs, and other activities, in order to provide guidance to the academic unit, responsible administrators and the Senate and to communicate the quality of the unit's operations to all interested parties. It allows for assessment of an academic unit's performance relative to peers, and enables effective planning and resource allocation. The process itself offers the academic unit an opportunity for periodic in-depth analysis of its programs and goals and its achievement of objectives and priorities identified in the university and the unit's own strategic plan. Units should be encouraged to view self-assessment as a continuous process, and to source and maintain and review relevant data on an ongoing basis.

Principles, procedures and guidelines listed below will evolve over time to reflect the development of best practice locally, nationally and internationally, as well as changing the needs and circumstances of academic units. It is thus recommended that this document be reviewed and updated every 5 years, or as required. This document describes a set of common expectations and standards. Academic units can supplement these requirements to reflect their specific contexts and needs.

Definition of academic unit

Academic Units include, but are not limited to Faculties, Schools, Departments, Colleges, Institutes, Centres and Research Units[1].

Guiding principles and processes

1. **Applicable units**: Academic units engaged in teaching, professional training and/or scholarly work at the university shall undergo periodic review.

2. **Frequency**: A review may be initiated upon request by the academic staff involved, the Head or other responsible administrator, the responsible Dean, the President, or the Senate. Faculties as a whole may undergo review at the request of the President (or as delegated, by the Provost). While there is no rigid periodicity for reviews, reviews are normally conducted every five years and the time interval between reviews must not exceed ten years. Reviews may be occasioned by other circumstances, which would include, but not be limited to: accreditation requirements established by professional organizations; by anticipation of the completion of the term of office of a Dean, Head or Director; or by considerations to reform curriculum, enter into initiatives with other academic units or redeploy resources.

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[1] Given the diversity of specific mandates and functions of Colleges, Institutes, Centres and Research Units, these academic units may require external review approaches that will depart from some principles, procedures and guidelines described in this document. The Provost, Deans, Directors and Heads to which these units report to will guide these adjustments, as appropriate.

Terms of reference: Early in the process, the purpose of the external review should be explicitly discussed by the leadership of the academic unit, the relevant Office of the Dean, and where applicable, senior administration of the university, and terms of reference specific to the academic unit should be determined. For units that offer academic programs, terms of reference should always include reviews of undergraduate, graduate, and professional programs; for programs subject to periodic external accreditations, a streamlined approach to the program review can be adopted. Wherever practical, elements from an external accreditation can be incorporated into the Academic Unit Review document; however it is acknowledged that different audiences may be looking at different indicators and/or outcomes. It is further acknowledged that the scope and Terms of Reference will vary depending on whether the unit to be reviewed is a Faculty, Department or Program.

3. **Selection of reviewers**: At least two external reviewers should be involved in each review. They should normally be outstanding academics/academic leaders from peer institutions. The selection of the review team should reflect concern for achieving gender balance and other equity considerations. Professional Faculties/programs may also include a member from the relevant professional community on their review teams. The list of proposed reviewers shall be submitted to the Provost's Office, prior to the reviewers being invited.

   When inviting external reviewers to serve on review panels for UBC's academic unit reviews, units should advise that the review report, including the names of reviewers, may be publicly disclosed in whole or in part if UBC receives such a request, and that some of the reports' contents will be summarized in the annual Report to Senate which will become a publicly-accessible document.

4. **Review process**: The specific review process may vary between academic units, but will adhere to common principles and procedures. Chief among these are the following: involvement of external assessors; the engagement of all appropriate members of the academic unit associated with the activities undergoing review; the assembly of comprehensive documentation and data appropriate to the terms of reference of the review; a site visit by the appointed review team; and the opportunity for all interested faculty, students, postdoctoral fellows, and staff to provide confidential feedback to the review team. The site visit should include meetings with faculty, students, staff, relevant university administrators (including the Provost in the case of Faculty reviews, the Vice Provost Academic in the case of other academic unit reviews, and the Dean of Graduate Studies or a delegate for reviews involving FoGS-administered graduate programs), and other relevant stakeholders.

   Disciplinary Dean will notify the Dean of Graduate Studies when a review is initially planned. The Faculty of Graduate Studies will then work with the unit and provide the data outlined in the Graduate Module section, below, to be included in the self-study document.

5. **Documentation**: It is acknowledged that the elements and organization of review documentation will vary according to the purpose and specific terms of reference of the review of an academic unit. However, it is expected that every self-study document will include material relevant to undergraduate instruction and learning; graduate and post-doctoral studies; research, scholarly and professional activity; service and community

partnerships; Aboriginal engagement; and resources, administration and governance that would allow reviewers to comment on the unit's performance, plans, further opportunities in these areas and the alignment with the university/unit's strategic plan.

Units should use Place and Promise and their own strategic plan as the framework for the development of the self-study documentation. The enclosed Appendix includes guidelines to assist the units in developing their submissions. The Office of the Provost will endeavor to obtain as much data as possible to support this process, including the provision of data that is asked of us by the Province. Appendix 2 summarizes data that will be collected and provided centrally to the units.

Self-study material should be forwarded to the reviewers ahead of their site visit, giving sufficient time for it to be reviewed prior to the reviewer's arrival on campus. A copy of the self-study document should be concurrently submitted to the Provost's Office and the Dean's Office in the Faculty of Graduate Studies for reviews including Faculty of Graduate Studies programs.

6. **Follow-up**: The leadership of the unit under review, the disciplinary and Graduate Studies Deans and the senior administration of the university bear responsibility for responding in ways that lead to consolidation of the strengths and addressing the weaknesses of the academic unit and its programs disclosed by the review process.

7. **In the case of departmental reviews or reviews of other academic units residing within Faculties/College**, once the reviewers' report is received, the unit should respond in writing to the review's recommendations and the Head/Director should discuss the follow-up action plan with the Dean and the Dean of Graduate Studies, where there has been a review of graduate programs. The report, the unit's response and the Dean(s) comments on the report/response/action plan should be appended to an annual report to the Provost Office on all reviews conducted within the faculty over this period of time and will be responded to by the Provost or Vice Provost Academic, as appropriate. The Provost will advise Senate annually of reviews being undertaken and the key follow up actions.

8. **In the case of Faculty/College reviews**, once the reviewers' report is received, the Dean/Principal upon consultation with colleagues in the faculty should respond in writing to the review's recommendations and discuss the follow-up action plan with the Provost. The Provost Office will annually prepare a summary of all Faculty/College reviews and the Provost will advise Senate, accordingly.

9. **The Provost reports to the Senate will be archived and made accessible to the public.**

APPENDIX 1: GUIDELINES FOR PREPARATION OF DOCUMENTATION

Introduction:

The elements and organization of review documentation will vary according to the purpose and specific terms of reference of the review of an academic unit. The following is intended to provide guidance to an academic unit in preparing documentation for the review process. The metrics indicated in italics here and summarized in Appendix 2 will be provided by PAIR and/or the Faculty of Graduate Studies.

Overview:

The guidelines are provided in a modular format, so that appropriate modules may be selected in accordance with the objectives/terms of reference of the review using the strategic goals of Place and Promise as a framework. However, the guidelines are "generic" and may be adapted by the particular academic unit to be more relevant and appropriate to their needs.

All units that offer academic programs are expected to include the modules related to undergraduate, graduate and professional programs, as appropriate, that can be further customized to the unit's needs. Programs that are subject to periodic external accreditation may be exempt from the full review. In such cases, the self-study document should include a summary of the most recent program accreditation report, and any supplemental information to meet the requirements of the periodic review. It is also expected that all units will include in the self-study information relevant to the previous review as well as the Head's summary statement.

For each module, it is expected that the documentation will focus on self-assessment and critical analysis of the relevant issues. This could include, but would not be limited to discussions of strengths, areas for improvement, opportunities and threats, benchmarks used to assess the program/activities, comparison with appropriate peer academic units, reflections from the academic unit on the progress achieved since the last review, current priorities, best practices, plans for the future., and ways in which unit's attainment of their goals and objectives will be assessed.

The format of the self-study does not have to follow the modular structure format described below. For example, units may select to organize the document around the university/unit's strategic plan. However, it is expected that all areas captured in the modules (undergraduate instruction and learning; graduate and post-doctoral studies; research, scholarly and professional activity; service and community partnerships; Aboriginal engagement; and resources, administration and governance), as relevant to the unit, will receive due depth of consideration. All self-study should always include the Executive Summary.

Self-study material should be forwarded to the reviewers ahead of their site visit, giving sufficient time for it to be reviewed prior to the reviewer's arrival on campus. A copy of self-study document should be forwarded to the Provost's Office, and for units with programs administered through Faculty of Graduate Studies program, the Dean of Graduate Studies office.

1. Executive Summary

Provide a brief, critical, high-level overview of the unit, summarizing strengths, challenges and opportunities related to the delivery of the academic programs, research and service activities for which the unit is responsible and their alignment with the university strategic plan.

2. Overview of the Unit

Provide a short history of the unit including a summary of academic programs, organizational and governance structure, relationships internal and external to UBC, and a discussion of the strategic plan and priorities of the unit.

3. Undergraduate instruction and learning module

Undergraduate programs in academic units participating in accreditation processes may possess extensive documentation prepared for the accreditation review. Accordingly, these units may choose to adapt appropriate accreditation documentation for the purposes of this review.

3.1 Overview:

Provide a brief description of program(s) offered by the unit, highlighting changes since the last review and alignment with the strategic plan

3.2 Enrolment and recruitment statistics:

Provide enrolment and recruitment statistics for undergraduate programs, courses, sections, etc., including past trends and projections and the following information as appropriate:

- Recruitment programs, selection procedures
- Enrollment pre-requisites
- Undergraduate enrolments: by type of program, year, gender, nationality
- Recruitment of Aboriginal students
- Number of discrete Aboriginal Students enrolled in classes in a unit
- Recruitment of international students
- Retention rates

3.3 Curriculum review:

It is expected that there will be a critical evaluation of the academic unit's curriculum, to include aspects such as academic unit-specific factors influencing curriculum development, curricular reform activities, the attributes of graduates, learning outcomes, interdisciplinarity, interprofessionalism, internationalization, diverse pedagogies, curriculum integration, benchmarks or outcome indicators, service- and work-based learning, engagement of diverse student populations, etc.

- A review of degree programs and course offerings, justification of how these courses/programs are relevant and provide suitable depth and breadth for undergraduate education

- Consideration of program requirements, course pre-requisites, co-requisites and range of electives
- Curriculum-embedded enrichment opportunities for students, including but not limited to undergraduate research participation (including data on amount and type of student and faculty participation and how it is incorporated into the curriculum); co-op programs; community-service learning, etc.
- Reflection of how the curriculum reflects Place and Promise Student Learning Commitments and other priorities identified in the university and the unit's own strategic plans, as appropriate (e.g., Aboriginal, sustainability, intercultural understanding, etc.)
- Sample course syllabi can be made available to the reviewers during their visit

3.4 Instructional models, assessment of learning:

Information should be provided on the types and diversity of pedagogies employed, such as case- or problem-based learning, community-based and field experiences, seminar, lecture, laboratories, technology-facilitated learning(including blended and on-line learning), self-directed research, peer teaching, student conferences, workshops; use of learning technology in face to face learning, etc. This section should also include a discussion of how student learning is assessed through examinations, reports, assignments, portfolios, presentations, peer and self-assessment, etc.

- Sample examinations, assignments, grading rubrics etc. can be made available to the reviewers during their visit

3.5 Teaching and learning evaluation and effectiveness:

- Discussion of how teaching is evaluated
- Data on the quality and effectiveness of teaching and learning, e.g., Student Evaluation of Teaching data, implementation of Peer Reviews, grades distribution, course/program failure rates, program completion time, NSSE data, etc., as applicable
- Program evaluation strategies
- Discussion of how evaluation data are used for teaching and learning improvement
- List faculty teaching awards and participation in relevant professional development programs

3.6 Student advising and development:

- Explanation of the student advising system in the academic unit
- Other non-course work contributions to the educational experience of the students. These might include student clubs and activities, special lectures, social/mentoring events etc.

4. Graduate and postdoctoral studies module

4.1 Graduate programs:

Some graduate programs in academic units participating in accreditation processes may possess extensive documentation prepared for the accreditation review. Accordingly, these units may choose to adapt appropriate accreditation documentation for the purposes of this review, supplemented by material as needed to meet the requirements of the periodic review. A summary of the accreditation report should be provided to the reviewers.

The unit should provide the appropriate evidence that demonstrates the extent and quality of graduate education in the academic unit. To assist academic units, the Faculty of Graduate Studies will provide the data indicated below for inclusion in the self-study document.

4.1a   Overview:

Provide a brief description of the graduate programs offered highlighting program history, changes since the last review, recent program innovations and future plans to improve the programs.

4.1b   Recruitment, Enrolment, and completion:

Please include the following in your report:

- Number and percentage of faculty who supervise graduate students
- Average number of students per supervisor
- Recruitment strategies (national, international, Aboriginal)
- Recruitment and success of Aboriginal students
- Admission processes

Please include the following data, provided by FoGS:

- Number of student applications and offers (if applicable to the unit's practices), and acceptances in each program over previous 10 years, with breakdown by gender, resident and Aboriginal status.
- Number of students registered in each program over previous 10 years, by gender, resident and Aboriginal status.
- Number of students graduating per year for each program.
- Outcome (graduated, transferred, withdrew) rates and times of students starting between 5-10 years previously.

4.1c   Structure, Curriculum/Pedagogy and Assessment:

Summarize the academic requirements in each graduate program being reviewed. Include reflections on how the graduate curriculum reflects the Student Learning Commitments in Place and Promise and other priorities identified in the strategic plans of the university and the unit (e.g., Aboriginal initiatives, sustainability, intercultural understanding).

Please provide:
- A link to or a copy of the documentation provided to students of the program's regulations
- An outline of the required curricula

- A list of credit courses taught by the unit and the frequency with which they are offered
- A list of the major credit courses taught outside the unit and taken by students in the program
- A list of courses offered in the unit to serve students in other programs
- A critical evaluation of the curriculum, including aspects such as pedagogy and learning outcomes, engagement of diverse student populations
- Student evaluation of teaching
- Faculty awards for excellence in teaching and mentoring
- Comprehensive examination format and regulations (for doctoral programs)
- Description of practicums, off-campus placements, etc. (if applicable) and mechanisms of assessment
- Thesis guidelines and graduation requirements (including graduating seminar and departmental oral examination, if applicable)

Sample course syllabi, thesis, dissertations can be made available to the reviewers during their visit.

4.1d   Research mentoring (for programs with significant research component):

Please describe:

- How students are informed about their research conditions, their roles and responsibilities, and the roles and responsibilities of their supervisor
- How student progress is monitored (provide a sample progress report form) and how problems with progress are addressed
- The composition and meeting frequency of supervisory committees
- How the quality of supervision is monitored and how problems with supervision are addressed

4.1e   Environment Resources:

Please describe:

- Work and social space for students
- Access to common research resources
- Computer access
- Program administrative personnel (FTE)
- Ongoing unit-wide activities involving graduate students
- Student involvement in unit administration

4.1f   Student finances:

Please summarize:

- Funding sources for students in the program including policies on minimum funding levels, if any
- Allocation strategy for TA appointments
- Conference travel or other relevant funding

Include the following data provided by FoGS:

- Total and per capita amount, types and sources of student funding in previous year, for funds administered by UBC Financial Services: internal and external scholarships, TAships, RAships, other campus employment, and bursaries
- Disciplinary and university-wide comparisons
- Distribution of funding by amount, % students

4.1g   Graduate student research productivity:

- Student success rates in Tri-council scholarship competitions (data provided by FoGS)
- Publication and conference presentation records of graduating students

4.1h   Post-graduation outcomes:

- Please List all known career positions for graduates of previous 5 years

4.1i   Graduate Student Report:

Graduate students in each of the graduate degree programs housed in the academic unit should be invited to prepare a brief independent report of about 2-3 pages addressing the strengths and weaknesses of their graduate program. They should consider the quality of the research and teaching environment, supervision, financial support, etc. Units with an elected graduate student association should ask this association to produce the report and submit it to the responsible disciplinary Associate Dean or Dean. In addition, students in all graduate programs within a unit should be made aware that they can submit independent reports to the responsible disciplinary Associate Dean or Dean. Provision should be made for interested graduate students to meet with the review team during its site visit.

4.2   Post-doctoral fellows:

Provide an overview of the current number of postdoctoral fellows, demographics, sources of funding, scholarly activity, and general support and oversight of their development.

5.   Research, scholarly and professional activity module

The unit should provide the appropriate evidence that demonstrates both the extent and quality of scholarly and professional activity in the academic unit.

5.1   Faculty awards and distinctions:

Units should design metrics appropriate for the discipline that could be fairly used to assess the collective scholarly reputations of its faculty members relative to appropriate peer units. These might include fellowships, awards, Chairs, Professorships, editorships of journals etc.

5.2   Research intensiveness and dissemination:

Units should review and evaluate the quality strength, range, interdisciplinarity and balance of scholarly activity. The assessment should include a brief description of existing and emerging areas of excellence. Units should identify metrics appropriate for the discipline that could be used to assess the unit's research intensiveness relative to peer comparator units. For example, research funding, action research, dissemination, knowledge translation, contributions to the profession, research infrastructure, numbers of research trainees, postdoctoral fellows, research associates are metrics that might be appropriate.

- Funding support for scholarly activity received by the academic unit in appropriate categories (e.g. tri-council, non-profit, contracts)
- Dissemination and contributions to research and professional activity, including, but not limited to, refereed publications, presentations, proceedings, creative performance/works/exhibitions, patents, invention disclosures
- Involvement in collaborative/interdisciplinary inquiry or external research teams

6.   Service and community partnerships

Units should provide examples of activities undertaken by the academic unit that serve the wider community, such as public lectures, community service learning programs, involvement in community health, social and learning initiatives. Units should provide an assessment of their community engagement activities by providing examples of outreach initiatives, including alumni engagement, industry partnerships, and where applicable, an overview of cultural venues.

7.   Aboriginal Engagement

Units discuss and provide examples of the attainment of the Aboriginal Strategic Plan. Discuss educational opportunities for Aboriginal people and opportunities for all students to learn about Aboriginal issues. Provide examples of courses and community service learning and research opportunities that have an Aboriginal component.

8.   People and Outstanding Work Environment

Assess the working and educational environment, morale and institutional culture of the unit as reflected in the experiences and perceptions of faculty members, staff and students. Units should evaluate the reputation of the faculty nationally and internationally. Provide brief descriptions of any practices, policies and programs that support advancement and working environment, including: mentoring programs, annual reviews, merit reviews, distribution of workloads, the distribution of resources, awards, and leadership development. Report on methods for communicating these to the appropriate groups through websites or other resources. Report new hires since last review, according to gender and equity groups self-identification and tenure and promotion cases in the last 10 years, reported by gender.

9. Resources, administration and governance module

Please provide a description, including critical analysis, of the organizational structure, leadership, governance and administration of the academic unit.

Provide data on human resources, including head counts and FTE, diversity and turnover in the following categories, as appropriate: support and administrative staff (M&P, CUPE, research staff) tenure-track faculty in professorial and professor of teaching streams, lecturers, sessional instructors, clinical/adjunct faculty, teaching assistants. Include data relevant to gender, and Aboriginal and other equity groups self-identification and unit leadership positions.

Provide a description of the budget, including fundraising, showing linkages to the strategic plan of the unit and Place and Promise. Also required is an assessment of the financial and operational sustainability of undergraduate, graduate and professional programs. Provide a description of learning resources and equipment, library, space and any external resources in terms of adequacy in pursuing the educational/professional/scholarly/service mandates of the academic unit.

Provide an assessment of the physical infrastructure of the unit addressing the adequacy of teaching, research, administrative space, computing facilities and the availability and quality of undergraduate and graduate student informal learning space.

10. Response/follow-up on previous review

Outline key recommendations of the previous review and how they have been responded to/ followed up on. Include any existing plans for the future follow up.

10.1 Head's summary:

Include Head's summary articulating unit's key strengths, weaknesses and challenges. Comment on the unit's progress on its own strategic plan and its contribution to the university's fulfilling its Place and Promise commitments. Discuss goals/plans for the future.

APPENDIX 2 - METRICS

The Office of the Provost is committed to providing units with as much data as possible to support the development of the self-study documentation and other strategic planning initiatives. What follows is a list of metrics that are identified in the Guidelines for Preparation of Documents (indicated in italics) that will be available from PAIR and/or the Faculty of Graduate Studies. This is in addition to other metrics that PAIR may be able to provide for units, as requested. We will work with Faculties and units to expand this list based on their needs.

Metrics available from the Office of Planning and Institutional Research (PAIR)

Enrolment and recruitment statistics:
- Undergraduate enrolments: by type of program, year, gender, nationality
- Recruitment of Aboriginal students
- Number of discrete Aboriginal Students enrolled in classes in a unit
- Recruitment of international students
- Retention rates

Teaching and learning evaluation and effectiveness:
- Student Evaluation of Teaching data, implementation of Peer Reviews,
- grades distribution,
- course/program failure rates
- program completion time
- NSSE data

Research intensiveness and dissemination:
- Research funding
  Numbers of research trainees, postdoctoral fellows, research associates Funding support for scholarly activity received by the academic unit in appropriate categories (e.g. tri-council, non-profit, contracts)
- refereed publications
- invention disclosures

Resources, administration and governance module:
- # of administrative and technical staff (M&P, CUPE)
- # of tenure-track faculty in professorial and professor of teaching streams, lecturers, sessional instructors, clinical/adjunct faculty, teaching assistants. Include data relevant to gender and Aboriginal self-identification.
- New hires since last review, reported according to gender and equity group self-identification
- Tenure and promotion cases in last 10 years, reported by gender

Metrics available from the Faculty of Graduate Studies (FOGS)
(All data include disciplinary and university-wide comparisons)

Recruitment, Enrolment, and completion:
- Number of student applications, offers and acceptances in each program over previous 10 years, with breakdown by gender, resident and Aboriginal status.
- Number of students registered in each program over previous 10 years, by gender, resident and Aboriginal status.

- Number of students graduating per year for each program.
- Outcome (graduated, transferred, withdrew) rates and times of students starting between 5-10 years previously.

Student financial aid:
- Total and per capita amount, types and sources of student funding in previous year, for funds administered by UBC Financial Services: internal and external scholarships, TAships, RAships, other campus employment, and bursaries
- Distribution of funding by amount, % students

Graduate student research productivity:
- Student success rates in Tri-council scholarship competitions