

Teaching and Learning Quality Assurance Manual



Office of Pro Vice-Chancellor Teaching and Learning

Title:	Cyclic Course Reviews
Last Revised:	February 2007
Antecedents:	<p>“Quality Management at the University of Tasmania” May 1992</p> <p>“AVCC Guidelines for Quality Assurance in University Course Development and Review”, Academic Senate March 1993</p> <p><i>Policy and Procedure for Review of Courses and Schools</i>, Academic Senate, 3/1998</p> <p><i>Terms of Reference of Course Reviews</i>, Academic Senate, 1 May 1998</p> <p><i>Section BV Course/Discipline and School Reviews 2000</i> Quality Assurance Manual, Academic Senate, 1 May 1998</p> <p><i>General Checklist for Use by the Course Review Committee</i>, Academic Senate 1 May 1998</p> <p><i>Benchmarking for Teaching and Learning</i>, Academic Senate, 31 Oct 1998</p> <p><i>A proposal for quality audits of University quality assurance processes</i>, Academic Senate 27 Oct 2000, minute 2.1.2</p> <p><i>Mapping Quality Assurance Framework</i>, Academic Senate 27 April 2001, minute 2.1.2</p>
Date Approved:	Academic Senate, 2 March 2007, minute 5.1

Cyclic Course Reviews

All courses will be reviewed at least once every four or five years to ensure their regular renewal and improvement, taking into account evaluation of their continuing suitability in meeting the needs of students, employers and the professions. Such reviews provide information to the University in evaluating its overall performance, in planning its future directions, in demonstrating the quality of its offerings and in the budgetary process. The framework makes provision, however, for an initial internal self-review to determine whether a full-scale review is warranted. The principal emphasis is on targeting courses where strategic and other considerations indicate the need for a review rather than simply meeting a policy requirement for comprehensive review over a particular cycle.

Guidelines and Procedures for Course Reviews

1. Selection of courses for review
 - 1.1 Deans will implement a cycle whereby all courses will be reviewed at least once every four or five years. Deans shall identify the courses that are to be reviewed during the following triennium and will report this to the University Teaching and Learning Committee (UT&LC) annually in November.
 - 1.2 In considering the selection and timing of reviews Deans shall take into account:
 - The schedule for accreditation of their professional courses in coordination with (but not replacing) the review of the cognate School and/or course;
 - Those courses where strategic considerations merit an early review, either based upon an internal self-review within the Faculty, or factors identified by the UT&LC, the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Teaching & Learning), the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) and Provost or the Vice-Chancellor;
 - Those courses, identified by the UT&LC, that have not been reviewed for some time;
 - Those courses that are due for review in keeping with the regular cycle.
 - 1.3 Where there are requirements for professional accreditation of courses, these may act as a substitute for the processes outlined below, provided similar processes, outcomes and reporting are involved. The procedures to be followed when courses or disciplines are reviewed by external (including professional) bodies are set out in the document "Course/Discipline Reviews by external, including professional, bodies". Where professional accreditation involves a more limited process, the internal course review should focus on those aspects not covered in the professional accreditation. Cyclic course reviews and professional accreditation should be complementary and take place in a co-ordinated way.

- 1.4 The UT&LC shall make recommendations to the Academic Senate (at its first meeting in the academic year) on the reviews to be conducted that year and their timing, taking account of any relevant identified strategic issues that have been identified.

Stage I – Internal self-review

- 2.1 The course review will begin with a process of internal self-review, to be carried out under the leadership of the Dean or Dean's nominee. The internal self-review will involve academic staff who are involved in the course under review, as well as representatives from cognate areas within the Faculty/University and the Course/School Advisory Committee, as nominated by the Dean.
- 2.2 Relevant data will be provided to Faculties to assist in reviewing courses. Note: Data on key performance indicators is available on the MIRU website and is updated annually. See <http://miru.utas.edu.au:9001/>. The Manager, Data and Statistics will provide assistance to Faculties with any queries.
- 2.3 The self-review phase will culminate in a report which makes a critical assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the course, as well as suggestions for improvement.
- 2.4 Reports of reviews of courses will include comment on some or all of the following:
 - The role of the course in terms of the Faculty and University strategic priorities;
 - The relationship between the course and other courses within the University;
 - Annual course reports;
 - Evidence of standing of the course, nationally and internationally;
 - Quality of students entering the course;
 - Student enrolment, progress, performance and graduation data;
 - Data from the Course Experience Questionnaire and Graduate Destination Survey;
 - Benchmarking against comparator national and international courses (Academic Senate requires that Faculties pay particular attention to benchmarking Honours programs against comparator institutions);
 - The extent to which the course complies with the Policy on Generic Attributes of Graduates of the University of Tasmania;

- The extent to which the course complies with relevant Faculty and University policies;
- Perceived strengths and weaknesses of the course;
- Improvements made to the course since the previous review, and the outcomes of those improvements;
- Recommended improvement to be made following the review;
- Other issues considered to be relevant by the Dean.

2.5 Performance Indicators for courses will include:

- Evidence of standing of the course, nationally and internationally;
- Student demand and quality of students entering the course;
- Number of units evaluated through SETL and their response rates;
- SETL scores on each dimension and overall SETL scores;
- Student and staff feedback;
- Course Experience Questionnaire and Graduate Destination Survey data;
- Student retention/progression rates;
- Enrolment trends;
- Assessment outcomes;
- Qualifications of teaching staff;
- Student/staff ratios;
- Innovative teaching.

2.6 The Dean will report to the UT&LC on the outcome of the self-review.

2.7 The UT&LC will recommend to Academic Senate on the need or otherwise for a full external review of the course. The courses will therefore be either:

- recommended for full external review as soon as is practicable,
- not recommended for full external review at all, or
- not recommended for full external review at this time.

Stage II – External review

3.1 Composition of Review Committees

3.1.1 The following characteristics will be considered to ensure an appropriate balanced membership on each committee:

- expertise in the area (or some of the areas) concerned;
- impartiality/objectivity;
- respect for, and confidence in, the members chosen;
- consistency/continuity.

3.2 The Review Committee will be appointed by the Academic Senate upon the recommendation of the UT&LC, after consideration of nominations from the relevant Dean made in consultation with the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) and Provost and the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Teaching and Learning). The Dean's nominations should be accompanied by a brief rationale for their decisions, including details of the present position of each nominee.

3.3 Reviews will be conducted by a Review Committee comprising members external to the course concerned. (That is, not including members of staff involved in the management of the course under review). The Review Committee shall normally comprise:

3.3.1 A senior UTAS academic officer (e.g. a member of the professoriate or another senior academic external to the course concerned, not a Dean);

3.3.2 At least two external senior academics (usually of professorial rank) in the same or a cognate area from other universities;

3.3.3 One or two internal senior academics possibly from a cognate discipline to that under review.

3.3.4 At least one external member of industry, professional association or government organisation. Note: Review Committees for courses providing for TAFE/VET sector articulation should include the membership of a relevant representative from the VET sector.

3.3.5 At least one student representative.

3.3.6 The Chair of the Review Committee will be selected from the membership and nominated by the UT&LC.

3.3.7 A member of the Faculty Administrative Staff will act as Secretary to the Review Panel.

3.4 A single Course Review Panel may be established to review more than one course within the Faculty.

3.5 The Review Committee shall be empowered to consult widely.

3.6 Terms of reference

Terms of reference will be approved by the Academic Senate upon the recommendation of the UT&LC. Terms of reference will be suggested by the relevant Dean, in consultation with the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) and Provost and Pro Vice-Chancellor (Teaching and Learning), who will take particular note of any strategic issues and the outcome of the internal self-review. The generic terms of reference outlined below are intended **as a guide only**. Deletion and/or inclusion of alternative terms of reference, in order to address specific issues, is recommended.

4. Course review process

The review process shall involve several identifiable stages:

4.1 Preparation

4.1.1 This stage involves the assembly of information fundamental to commencement of the review proper. The Dean will provide the main submission to the Review Committee, namely the internal self-review report.

4.1.2 The Chair of the Review Committee will also invite/seek submissions and input from other internal and external stakeholders (including students, staff, relevant industry, community and professional associations). Groups and individuals making submissions will be informed that the submissions will be made accessible within the University when the review report is finalised, unless there is a clear indication from the Dean that the submission is to be kept confidential to the Review Committee. (See also http://www.utas.edu.au/tlqam/docs/School_Reviews_MediaGuidelines_Jan07.pdf)

4.2 The Review

4.2.1 The review will involve an intensive program of interviews, discussions and deliberations within the Review Committee and will provide the opportunity for input from and consultation with all interested parties, including all staff involved in teaching the course and student representatives. Reviews of courses with cross-campus responsibilities will provide the opportunity for the Review Committee to visit all campuses and talk to staff and students face-to-face. The Review Committee will have the opportunity to visit all appropriate University facilities and invite comment from other University staff including the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Teaching and Learning) and external stakeholders.

4.2.2 There will be a briefing session with the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) and Provost (or nominee) at the beginning and the end of the review proper.

5. Preparation of the Report

5.1. The Review Committee panel will provide a brief written report which will include a commentary on the internal review report and the discussions held and will make recommendations (a maximum of 15-20) for consideration by the Faculty. The report will include an Executive Summary comprising a summary of the Review Committee's recommendations.

5.2 The Chair of the Review Committee shall normally be responsible for writing the report.

5.3 The Chair shall be responsible for ensuring that all committee members agree with the contents of the report, or have the opportunity to register a minority view.

6. Timing

6.1 Reviews shall be conducted expeditiously in keeping with the following general guidelines:

- Delivery of review submission to the Review Committee: one month prior to convening of the Review Committee;
- The review: Up to 3 - 4 working days on campus;
- Submission of final report: one month (maximum) following visit of review committee.

7. Submission and Finalisation of the Report:

7.1 The report and recommendations will be provided to the Chair of the UT&LC who will invite the relevant Dean and Course Co-ordinator to prepare an implementation plan responding to the findings of the review.

7.2. The Review Panel report and the Faculty implementation plan will be considered initially by the Course Review sub-group (comprising the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Teaching and Learning), Director CALT and ad hoc representation from the UT&LC), which will raise any issues requiring clarification directly with the Dean.

7.3 The report and the implementation plan will be considered by the UT&LC and referred to Academic Senate. Resource implications of the report will be considered by the Planning and Resources Committee.

7.4 If there is media interest in the review and its outcomes, the "Media Guidelines – Course and School Reviews" will be used to guide the process of releasing information.

(See http://www.utas.edu.au/tlqam/docs/School_Reviews_MediaGuidelines_Jan07.pdf)

8. Implementation of Review Outcomes

8.1 Implementation shall be the responsibility of the relevant Dean. The UT&LC will oversee the implementation of the outcomes of the review report.

9. Follow-up Procedures - the three principal follow-up activities that should take place after a course review are:

9.1 The Dean shall provide a progress report on the implementation of recommendations to the UT&LC within six months of finalisation of the review report. The UT&LC shall report progress to the Academic Senate.

9.2 The Dean shall forward a final report to the UT&LC within one year of finalisation of the review report, outlining progress made towards implementation

of the actions designed to address the findings of the review, or the timetable for such implementation. The UT&LC shall report progress to the Academic Senate.

9.3 The UT&LC will maintain a register of course reviews (completed and planned) that will also be used to monitor progress on the implementation of recommendations.

10. Evaluation of the Review Process

10.1 The procedures outlined in this document shall be reviewed by the UT&LC on a regular basis.

Terms of Reference for Cyclical Course Reviews

Individual terms of reference for each course review will be approved by the Academic Senate upon the recommendation of the UT&LC. Terms of reference will be suggested by the relevant Dean taking particular note of any strategic issues and the outcome of the internal self-review. The generic terms of reference outlined below are intended *as a guide only*. Deletion/inclusion of alternative terms of reference, to address specific issues, is recommended.

The terms of reference for course reviews should be consistent with the University's mission, goals and objectives.

The review process involves a self- and peer-analysis of the structure and content and overall quality of the course in question in relation to the needs of students and external stakeholders, and by reference to national and international standards. While the primary focus will be on the content and quality of the course, such reviews will by their very nature co-incidentally consider the quality of the individual disciplines included in the course and the School(s) offering the course, thus encompassing the quality of the teaching, organisation and administration and the resources (both human and physical) to support the course in such a manner as to fulfil its goals and objectives and hence those of the Faculty and the University.

Reviews are conducted on a regular, cyclical basis. The terms of reference should provide the Review Committee with the opportunity to comment on development since the last review and to consider the Faculty's plans and strategies for future development. The task of the Review Committee is to provide an objective commentary on such plans and, as appropriate, recommend changes or enhancements.

Guidelines for drafting terms of reference

State the following upfront:

- Strategic issues identified in the internal self-review as affecting the course;
- The outcome of the initial internal self-review and consequent rationale for the external review.

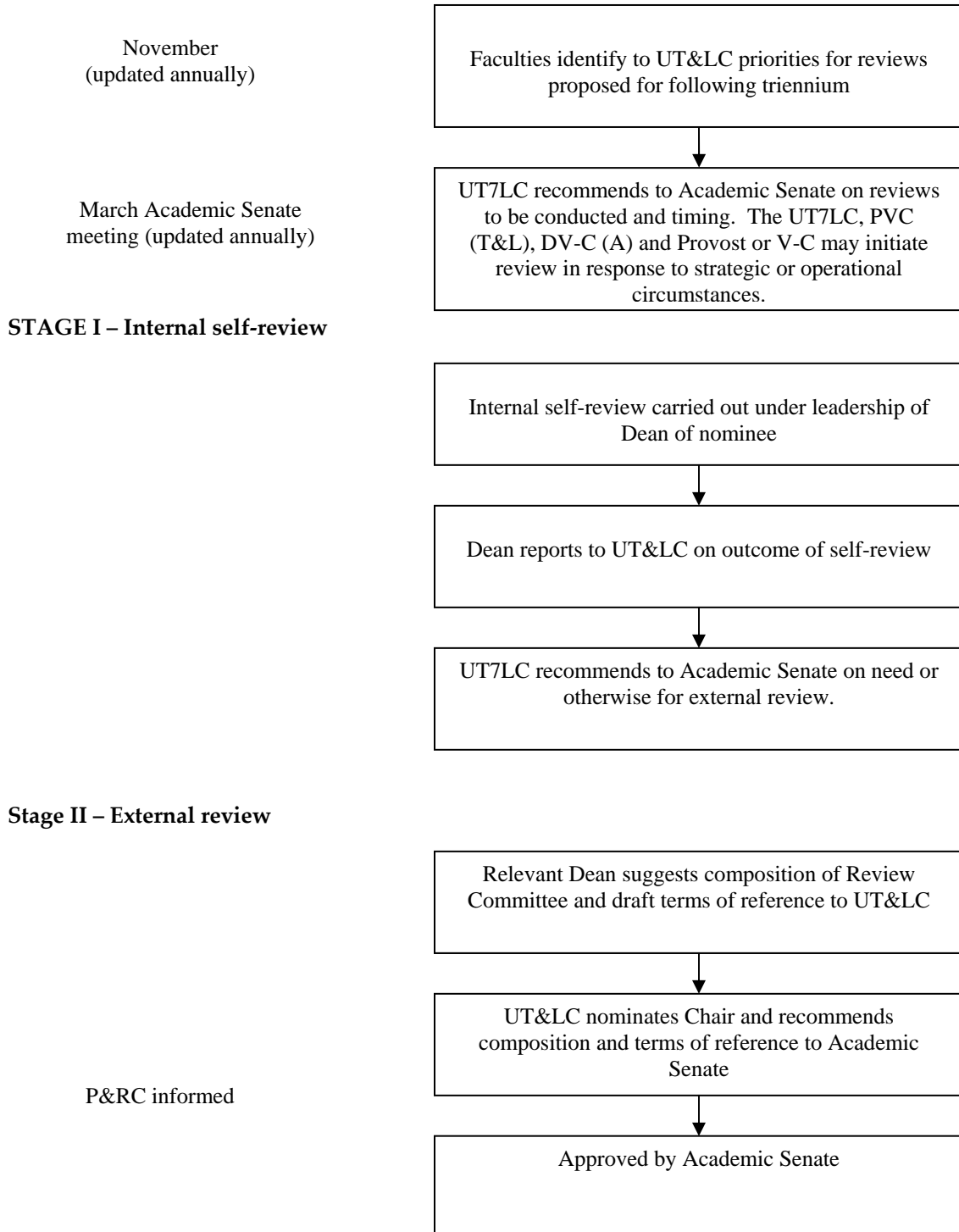
Note: The above issues should also be integrated into the following suggested topics:

1. The purpose and objectives of the course and the extent to which the stated objectives contribute to the Faculty and University objectives as set out in their respective strategic plans;
2. the structure, content and methods of delivery of the course with reference to the extent to which they meet the objectives of the course, result in the development of appropriate knowledge and skill bases, and provide appropriate preparation for employment or further study;

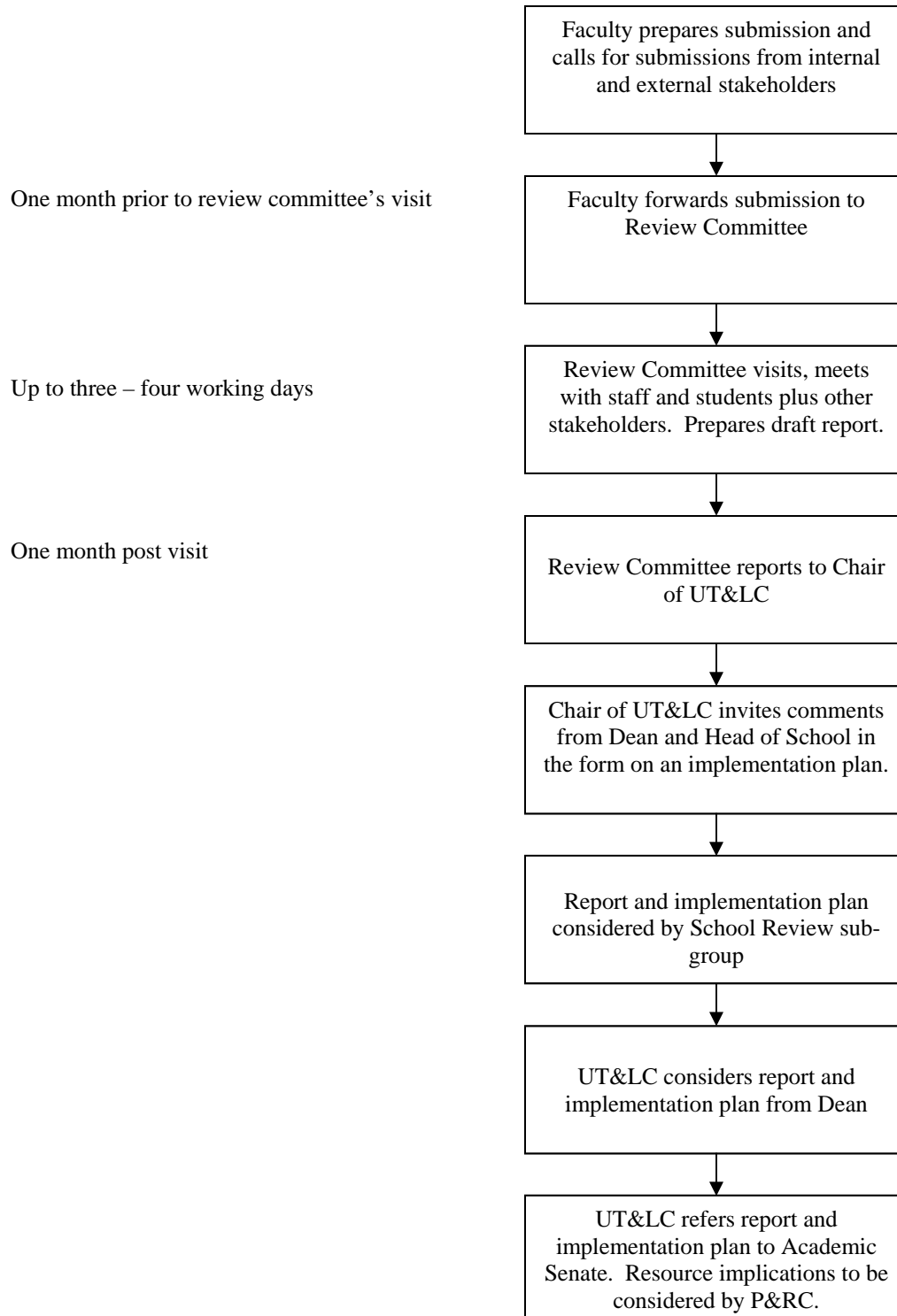
3. the quality of the course, and disciplines included in the course, in relation to the perceptions of peers in the Australian and international scholarly communities;
4. the appropriateness of teaching and learning processes including methods of assessment within the course in relation to the course objectives;
5. the quality of students entering and completing the course;
6. the implementation of current policy for monitoring and evaluating quality and the adequacy of the current methods;
7. student demand;
8. collaborative arrangements between the course and teaching within other Schools/Faculties, other educational institutions and relevant business, industry and professions
9. the number and qualifications of academic staff teaching the course;
10. the general infrastructure and resources required for the course including the buildings, teaching and laboratory equipment, computing facilities, Faculty and other support services, and the library;
11. where appropriate, the honours program and its relationship to the undergraduate program;
12. where appropriate, coursework graduate programs and their relationship to the undergraduate program;
13. the Faculty's plans and procedures for improving the course;
14. any other issues.

Flowchart of Review of Courses

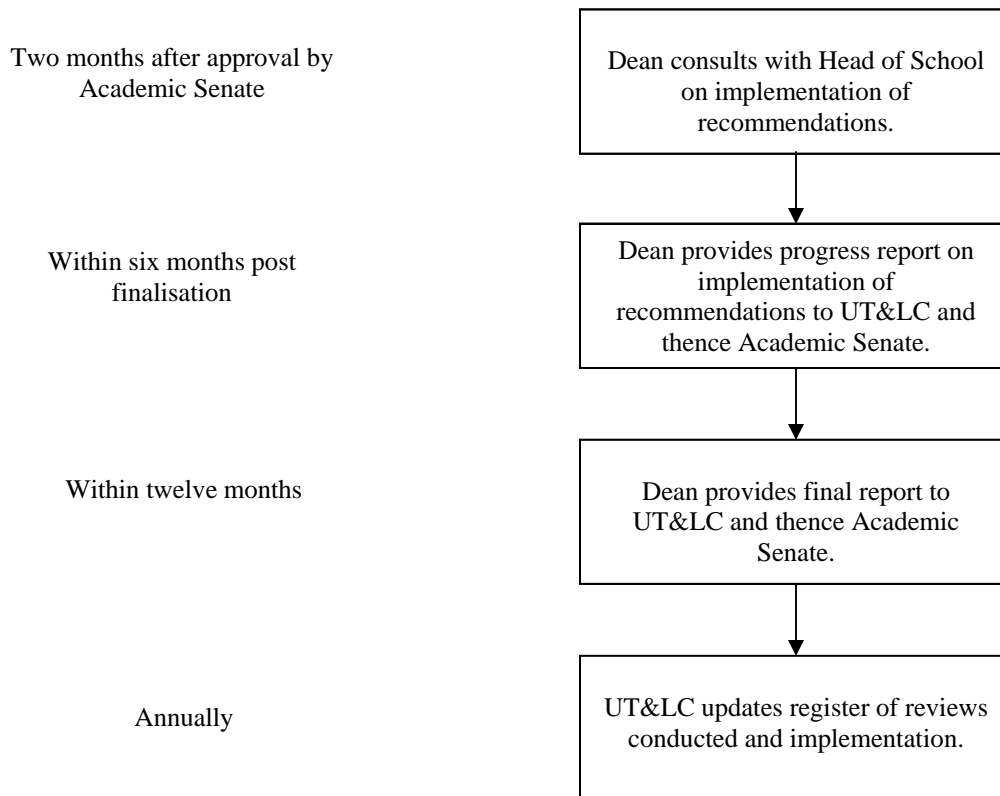
Setting up of reviews



Stage III: The Review



Stage IV: Implementation/follow up



Notes: UT&LC = University Teaching and Learning Committee
P&RC = Planning and Resources Committee