



June 21, 2021

Professor Pamela Couture
Director
Toronto School of Theology

Dear Professor Couture,

I have received the report of the March 2021 External Review of the programs offered conjointly by the Toronto School of Theology and the University of Toronto. The following programs were reviewed: Master of Arts in Ministry & Spirituality; Master of Divinity; Master of Pastoral Studies, including the Category 2 Certificate in Spiritual Care and Psychotherapy; Master of Religious Education; Master of Sacred Music; Master of Theological Studies; Certificate in Theological Studies; Master of Theology; Master of Arts in Theological Studies; Doctor of Ministry; Doctor of Philosophy in Theological Studies.

As indicated in our Statement of Institutional Purpose, the University of Toronto is committed “to being an internationally significant research university, with undergraduate, graduate and professional programs of excellent quality.” This quality is assessed through the periodic appraisal of programs and units, which considers how our research scholarship and programs compare to those of our international peer institutions and assesses the alignment of our programs with established degree-level expectations. The University views the reports and recommendations made by external reviewers as opportunities to celebrate successes and identify areas for quality improvement.

The reviewers praised the TST consortium, commenting that the high quality of the conjoint programs is “evident and unimpeachable.” They remarked that TST “sets a standard for quality in theological education in Canada, and is one of very few institutions that can aspire to this same profile internationally.” They commended the high level of faculty and student engagement in all programs, and noted that “students value small courses, extensive access to engaged faculty, and a vital combination of intellectual enquiry and professional experience.” Finally, they praised the quality and the spirit of cooperation demonstrated by TST personnel, observing that despite its complexity, TST “continues to function well as a result of the good will and talent of a large number of people.”

I am writing at this time:

1. to request your administrative response to this report, including a plan for implementing recommendations;
2. to request your feedback on the review summary component of the draft *Final Assessment Report and Implementation Plan*; and
3. to outline the next steps in the process.

1. Request for Administrative Response and Implementation Plan:

In your **Administrative Response**, please address the following areas raised by the reviewers and their impact on academic programs, *along with any additional areas you would like to prioritize*.

For each area you address, please provide an **Implementation Plan** that identifies actions to be accomplished in the immediate (six months), medium (one to two years) and longer (three to five years) terms, and who (TST Director, heads of member institutions, program directors) will take the lead in each area. If appropriate, please identify any necessary changes in organization, policy or governance; and any resources, financial and otherwise, that will be provided, and who will provide them.

- The reviewers recommended implementing more rigorous entrance criteria for the conjoint programs, noting that the relatively low minimum admission standards may impact the programs' reputation for academic excellence.
- The reviewers commented on the large number of programs offered, and noted less than ideal communication regarding differentiation between these programs; they recommended that the number of degree programs be reduced, with increased development of sub-specializations (e.g., streams) within programs as a way of offering a wider variety of foci.
- The reviewers acknowledged that revisions to the D.Min. are currently in progress, but noted that the D.Min. may not be the "optimal choice for the advanced professional degree."
- The reviewers urged TST and the member colleges to make student financial aid a major goal, noting that current funding levels limit the graduate programs' ability to attract top-quality students and students from more diverse backgrounds; they also recommended providing consistent levels of financial support within each program, across the member colleges.
- The reviewers recommended a number of strategies for supporting faculty research productivity, including adjustments to course load expectations and alignment of the sabbatical policy with peer institutions; they also suggested exploring options for leveraging University resources to support TST faculty research activity.
- The reviewers recommended clearer communication regarding the graduate faculty appointment process, and suggested ways to improve the process itself.
- The reviewers strongly recommended a proactive approach to increasing diversity, of all forms, within the TST community; they acknowledged constraints imposed by some ecclesiastical and theological traditions but nonetheless encouraged TST to prioritize diversity in their recruitment and support of students, faculty, and staff.
- The reviewers recommended strengthening the position of TST Director, and working to fund an independent budget for TST's central administration.
- The reviewers recommended development of a long-range plan, including a plan for faculty complement renewal, and offered a number of suggestions to inform future planning at TST.
- The reviewers made a number of comments and suggestions regarding the academic and financial relationship between TST and the University of Toronto; acknowledging the complexities of TST's consortium model and the constraints of the University budget model, they suggested ways to strengthen the relationship between the two institutions that may inform the Memorandum of Agreement renewal process.

Please prepare this response in consultation with the programs under review and reflect this consultation in your response.

Finally, please note that the next Provostial review will be no later than eight years from 2020-21; in your response please describe your plans for **monitoring the implementation of recommendations** until then. I will ask you to provide a brief report to me in 2024.

2. Draft of Final Assessment Report (including Review Summary)

In July 2021, my office will provide a draft version of the *Final Assessment Report and Implementation Plan* (FAR/IP), which will include a summary of the review of the programs offered conjointly by the Toronto School of Theology and the University of Toronto. At that time we will request your feedback regarding tone or accuracy of the summary component, and your response to any information that is requested in the comments. This document becomes part of the governance record.

3. Next Steps

Reviews of academic programs and units are presented to University governance as a matter of University policy. Under the University of Toronto Quality Assurance Process (UTQAP), the Vice-Provost, Academic Programs prepares a report on all program and unit reviews and submits these periodically to the Committee on Academic Policy and Programs (AP&P).

The review of the programs offered conjointly by the Toronto School of Theology and the University of Toronto will be considered by AP&P at its meeting on **October 26, 2021. Please plan to attend this meeting.** The Dean's presence is important and will allow you to respond to any questions the committee may have regarding the report, and the administrative response and implementation plan. An overview of what happens at AP&P is [available on our website](#).

I would appreciate receiving your completed administrative response and plan for implementing recommendations, and any comments on the summary by **September 15, 2021**. This will allow my office sufficient time to prepare materials for the AP&P meeting.

The summary and administrative response and implementation plan are the two key components of the Final Assessment Report and Implementation Plan, which will be finalized after the AP&P meeting and distributed to you, the unit/program leads, and the Governing Council secretariat, and posted on our [website](#), as required by the UTQAP.

Please feel free to contact me or David Lock, Coordinator, Academic Planning and Reviews, should you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Schmuckler', written in a cursive style.

Mark Schmuckler
Acting Vice-Provost, Academic Programs

cc.

Daniella Mallinick, Director, Academic Programs, Planning & Quality Assurance

David Lock, Coordinator, Academic Planning & Reviews

Emma del Junco, Assistant Coordinator, Academic Planning & Reviews