

SERVICE REVIEW SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT

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1 Annual Processes

At the College, there is a well established Service Review (survey process), designed to obtain feedback from users of College services. While this has been the main focus of the Working Group's attention, the Group also obtained information about the following annual and ongoing processes which are used to assess and improve the quality of service provided.

Most services track activity levels and have a set of key measures of service which show trends in use. These are reported and compared on a monthly and annual basis. [See sample reports in Exhibit 1]

Most services prepare annual goals and objectives. Exceptions to this are mainly revenue- generating services, or those subject to external review/audit, or small one or two person departments who believe their goals are implicit given the nature of their service. [See interviews and samples of Goals and Objectives in Exhibit 1]

All services participate in annual, public budget review processes.

Many services have developed ways of obtaining regular internal feedback appropriate to their area. Examples include comment cards (Library), suggestion boxes and questionnaires (Recreation/Sports), help desk (Computer Services), block knocks (Residence), Parent Journals (Day Care), Daily Journal (Security) and feedback from committees (Human Resources, Physical Plant, etc.) All areas reported that they received and act on verbal complaints, comments and suggestions.

Some services use external input where available, e.g. provincial Student Outcomes surveys, audits, inspections, comparisons to professional standards. Most have networks of colleagues and ways of sharing 'best practices' with peer groups.

2 Schedule for Conducting Service Reviews

Annual surveys are conducted; each service is evaluated once every three years. 36 reviews have taken place from 1994-1999. These are listed in Appendix L. The schedule for conducting reviews is contained in Appendix M: *CNC Guidelines for Service Reviews*.

Rationale: A 3-year cycle was chosen because it would be fairly manageable, and provide regular feedback and useful comparative data over a short time-frame. A 2-year cycle was considered (as CNC is a 2-year institution), but not chosen because it was felt that including more services in any given year in the surveys would make them too lengthy and lead to poorer response rates.

3 The Service Review Process

The Service Review Process is described in Appendix M: *CNC Guidelines for Service Reviews*.

Time/Cost: The process is relatively easy to administer and cost-effective (although it does represent a significant commitment on the part of the College). The average annual cost, in printing and support staff time, is approximately \$3,450, taking 1998 as a representative year. In 1998, 1699 surveys were distributed; 515 were returned. Printing costs were \$450; Institutional Research Office staff time for preparation, distribution and data analysis was 147 hours or approximately \$3,000. It should be noted that these figures do not include administrative or departmental time needed to review and update the survey questions or discuss the results. In total, the process can take up to 5 months from start to completion each year (largely determined by staff time available in the Institutional Research Office).

Assessment of the Usefulness of the Process

Interviews were held with each of the service areas to determine the usefulness of the current process. In analyzing the results, the Working Group focused on: (a) Areas of consensus; (b) Perceived gaps/shortcomings in current evaluation processes; and (c) “Best practices” currently in use. These in turn formed the basis for the Group’s recommendations for improvements to the process.

1. Areas of Consensus

In discussing the formalized surveys with educational and general service departments, there appeared to be a consensus that:

- 1 People were generally satisfied with the frequency of surveys done in their area.
- 2 Surveys were reaching the primary user groups of that service area. The Working Group observed that Response Rates (shown in Appendix L) were generally within range or higher than the norm reported in survey literature, and have gone up on “repeated” surveys; likely reflecting improvements that have been made to the survey questions and also general interest on the part of the user groups.
- 3 The format of the survey seemed appropriate.

- 4 There was ample opportunity for input into the development and editing of survey items.
- 5 The results of the survey were generally useful to department members, sometimes helping departments identify the differences between the service they intend to provide and those which user groups perceive they offer.
- 6 Survey results are used in varying degrees in planning services and in preparing budgets.
- 7 The results have been used to improve various aspects of department services.
- 8 The surveys are viewed as a good source for obtaining feedback on client satisfaction; however, equal emphasis was placed on ongoing input received (comments, suggestions, tracking trends in use, etc.)

a) Perceived Gaps/Shortcomings in Current Evaluation Processes

Individual departments highlighted concerns which included the following:

- 1 Some confusion regarding how surveys are distributed.
- 2 Regional campus services might wish to be included in the evaluation process.
- 3 Some Prince George campus service areas are interested in input from the Regions.
- 4 Several user groups are being missed in the current process (e.g. Purchasing - suppliers; Security Services - students; Residence - summer residents). In the case of the Residence, other methods such as comment cards or exit surveys might be used; to be explored with the service area.
- 5 In terms of the survey format, length and anomalies in the rating scales caused some concern. There was also an interest in having items more targeted to user groups and in providing an opportunity to drop off surveys where they are completed (rather than delivering them to another location).
- 6 Difficulty in providing negative feedback to department personnel.
- 7 Some areas believe they receive very little feedback when surveys are completed (particularly those that have less direct contact with users).
- 8 Several service areas which are revenue generators (e.g. Daycare, Residence, Cafeteria, Bookstore) are governed/influenced by expectations other than those covered in surveys.
- 9 Need for follow up review by/with supervisor to assess progress in areas of concern.

b) “Best Practices” Currently in Use

In a number of cases, departments generated ideas which they believe will improve the process of evaluating services as well as methods of effectively using the results of the surveys. Several of these have already been implemented by the departments and include:

- 1 Careful editing and modifying of survey items in order to gather information from a variety of target populations, including the use of exit surveys and mail-outs where appropriate.
- 2 Increased number of survey drop-off locations to encourage returns.
- 3 Consistency in rating scales.
- 4 Involvement of all staff in the area in the formulation of survey questions.
- 5 Extended debriefing opportunities to more effectively use survey results to set goals, objectives and budget priorities.
- 6 Ongoing evaluation mechanisms, such as suggestion boxes, questionnaires, tracking of use measures, etc. (more fully described in Section 1: Annual Processes above)

4 Compliance with SCOEA Criteria for Service Reviews

The Working Group believes that the service review processes, both annual and cyclical, that are currently in use at the College meet most of the criteria outlined by SCOEA in the provincial *Institutional Evaluation Guidelines* (Reference 1)

As noted earlier, all Prince George campus services participate in the 3-year Service Review (survey) process. Most also track use measures (indicators and trends); set goals and objectives; participate in annual, public budget review processes; obtain ongoing internal feedback; and use external feedback where available.

In terms of consultation and accountability to stakeholders, there is ample opportunity on survey forms to add comments and suggestions. Results of the surveys are made publicly available (see Exhibit 2: respondents are made aware, on the survey itself and in later posted notices, of the availability of these results). Some services also make the results of other feedback publicly available (e.g. posted responses to Library comment cards).

There are several points raised in the SCOEA criteria that are not addressed in the current process:

Summary of Findings and Recommendations

Most services currently hold informal meetings within the department and with the supervisor of the area to discuss the results of the review. No formal report is usually requested (although some departments do produce these; e.g. Library, Exhibit 1: and some reports on findings in monthly reports after results are available). The Working Group has recommended a more formal reporting process.

Institutional Strategic Plan

While CNC does not have a single Strategic Plan document, service reviews are consistent with Mission and Goals statements. Results of the reviews are used within the service area for planning purposes (to set goals and objectives and budget priorities, or improve a particular aspect of the service based on comments or trends noted in the reviews). However, most people who were interviewed did not make a direct connection between this level of planning and College-wide or Ministry plans. Since the institution does not have a “Strategic Plan” *per se*, it might be more useful to examine this question during the next Institutional Evaluation, after the College has decided on a suitable approach to questions relating to strategic planning.

5 Use of the Findings and Recommendations of Service Reviews

There is good evidence that service reviews have been used in planning and improving services. Some of the examples that were given during interviews include:

- Bookstore introduced staff tags and improved signage.
- Counselling, in response to concerns about waiting periods for appointments and limited service available for part-time students, instituted “drop in” appointments to reduce waiting time and added evening hours for part-timers.
- Daycare installed camera monitoring at the Daycare entrance.
- Disability services increased materials access and drop in times, and also used the results to justify the need for a test room.
- Instructional Media Services increased the number of student and faculty workshops.
- Library introduced comment cards and placed a new emphasis on “quality service” and staff training, based on comparative feedback from the first and second survey and related Student Outcomes data.
- Public Relations obtained good feedback on its publications (and made appropriate changes to them) and also adjusted its marketing strategy based on student responses.
- Security increased the visibility of security staff; put in emergency phones; and

developed procedures for continuously checking on people who were working late at night.

In addition to survey results, other measures (outline in Section 1: Annual Processes above) are used extensively to determine trends, justify budget changes, and make ongoing improvements.

6 Summary of Recommendations

The Working Group acknowledges and commends the efforts of service departments in soliciting evaluative feedback from their constituents and in using the information to improve the quality of service offered. The following recommendations merely seek to enhance existing practices.

Recommendation 4.1: Greater attention to orienting departments to the purpose, methods and uses of the survey.

Recommendation 4.2: Inclusion of staff, faculty and administration in a department in the formulation of survey questions and selection of target groups.

Recommendation 4.3: Provision of opportunity to fully review the significance of survey results, to use the information constructively to set goals and objectives, to influence direction, and to establish priorities.

Recommendation 4.4: Formal reporting of results and recommendations and follow-up action.

Recommendation 4.5: Developing of alternative, functional ways of achieving ongoing evaluative feedback concerning the quality of services offered.

Recommendation 4.6: Revision of the process to address specific concerns raised by departments: student input for Security, supplier input for Purchasing, Regional input, consistent rating scales, more drop-off locations, more flexibility in distribution methods, and concerns about negative comments.

Implementation strategy: The recommendations listed above have been incorporated into the *CNC Guidelines for Service Reviews* in Appendix M (revisions underlined), for consideration by the CNC Institutional Evaluation Steering Committee.

7 Methodology used by the Working Group

Based on the provincial *Institutional Evaluation Guidelines* relating to services reviews (Reference 1), and information about the current CNC Service Review process (Appendix L-M), the Working Group developed a set of questions and conducted interviews with representatives of

each of the 23 Prince George campus service areas. Responses were then compiled (Exhibit 1) and analyzed, to identify areas of consensus, perceived gaps/shortcomings in current evaluation processes, and “best practices” currently in use. These in turn formed the basis for the Group’s recommendations for improvements in the service review process.

In total, this was a 3-month process from February 16 - May 20, 1999. During this time period, the Working Group held 7 meetings; individual members conducted 23 interviews and compiled results of these; and two members worked on preparing drafts of the report, for review by the service areas involved in the study, relevant administrators, and the Steering Committee.

8 List of References/Supporting Material

Appendix L *CNC List of Service Reviews, 1994-1999*

Appendix M *CNC Guidelines for Service Reviews, revised draft, May 1999*

Exhibit 1 *Detailed Interview Responses (binder). May 1999*

Exhibit 2 *CNC Support Services Survey Results, 1994-1999. (Binder; Library Archives)*

Reference 1 *Institutional Evaluation (binder), prepared by BC Standing Committee on Evaluation and Accountability (SCOEA). Draft Feb. 1999. The Committee focused its attention on Section V. Detailed Guidelines for Cyclical Evaluation. Appendix II. Institutional Self-Study Check Lists. 2.2 Programs and Services Reviews, pp. 23-26.*