



Signature Areas Development Panel Terms of Reference

Updated: November 16, 2016

For the Public Good, the 2016 University of Alberta strategic plan, sets out the objective to:

“Build a portfolio of signature research and teaching areas where the University of Alberta is or will be recognized as a global leader.”

We are in a position to pursue this objective because of the University of Alberta’s fundamental commitment to cultivating and maintaining a broad foundation of excellence.

The university has chosen to develop and identify signature areas in order to: more effectively address the interdisciplinary complexity of the global community’s biggest questions and challenges; maximize our capacity to lead change by nurturing dynamic, innovative, creative multi- and inter-disciplinary teams able to take multi-faceted approaches to problems; attract talented undergraduate and graduate students, post-doctoral fellows, research staff and new faculty who want to be part of these areas; partner with other leading institutions and teams across Canada and the world; and be in a stronger position to apply for and create major new funding opportunities.

As described in *For the Public Good*, the university community will identify and support established and emerging areas of research and teaching distinction and distinctiveness, using the following criteria:

- **National and international stature for excellence, relevance, and impact**
- **Critical mass—opportunity for broad, interdisciplinary engagement**
- **Grassroots leadership, participation, and support from within our university community**
- **Stakeholder partnerships**
- **Research partners (international, community, government, industry)**
- **Capacity to shape and align with federal and provincial research funding priorities**
- **Student demand**
- **Physical and operational capacity**
- **Geographic or situational relevance**

Purpose and Reporting

The Signature Areas Development Panel will be an advisory, cross-disciplinary working group which will recommend a small number of potential signature areas as well as emerging areas that the university might begin to nurture for the future. In order to make its recommendations, the panel will analyze, synthesize and connect potential signature areas proposed by the university community. Nomination of possible signature and emerging areas will be based on the criteria outlined above. The panel will report its findings to Deans' Council, which will be responsible for ongoing development of the signature areas and design of any appropriate structures to support each one.

The will be overseen by the Signature Areas Steering Committee, comprised of the President and Vice-Chancellor, the Provost and Vice-President (Academic), and the Vice-President (Research). The steering committee will be responsible for process oversight, project management and related internal and external communications.

The Signature Areas Development Panel will provide advice to the Steering Committee, the President's Executive Committee-Strategic, and Deans' Council on a proposed review cycle and process for the ongoing development and identification of signature areas.

Work Plan

The work of the Signature Areas Development Panel will occur in two distinct phases. In the first phase, the panel will review submissions of potential signature areas from across the university community and consider their alignment to the signature areas criteria. The panel will also evaluate the potential for combining proposed areas in order to expand their multi- and inter-disciplinarity, reach and potential impact. The first phase will culminate in the creation of a long-list of potential signature areas to be provided to Deans' Council for their review, input and approval.

In the second phase, the Signature Areas Development Panel will engage in a process to develop a short list of signature and emerging areas from the long-list. This process will include activities such as:

- Soliciting campus community feedback on the long list through an online portal
- Arranging focus groups for each area in the long list
- Engaging with targeted stakeholders

In both phases one and two, the Signature Areas Development Panel will determine what due diligence is required to verify the information presented about the strength and feasibility of proposed areas. This may require accessing additional internal and external sources.

Upon completion of the second phase, the will provide its final list of signature and emerging area recommendations to Deans' Council for their review and input, along with an analysis of the possible leadership and administrative structures appropriate to each proposed signature area.

The identification of signature areas and emerging areas is expected to be an ongoing and iterative process. Based on their experiences in this first cycle of analysis, synthesis, connection and development, the panel will recommend a process for the ongoing identification of additional signature and emerging areas.

Composition

Members

Provost and Vice-President (Academic) (Co-Chair)

Vice-President (Research) (Co-Chair)

Members of Deans' Council (7)

Members of Chairs' Council (2)

Professors (6)

Undergraduate Student Representative (1)

Graduate Student Representative (1)

Timeline

The Signature Areas Development Panel will begin meeting in November 2016 and continue through to spring 2017. The panel membership and periods of service will be reviewed following the announcement of the first Signature Area(s).