



Report to Senate on External Reviews

2020 – 2021

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External reviews are undertaken pursuant of [UBC's Senate policy](#) and the [Principles, Procedures and Guidelines for Unit External Reviews](#), which are currently under evaluation with an overarching goal to emphasize transparency and commitment to the entire process, including follow-up reporting on recommendations made by the reviewers.

The Office of the Provost and Vice-President Academic maintains an [online schedule](#) of reviews and offers resources and support to conduct them. The results from the first QAPA review (Quality Assurance Process Audit) of UBC Okanagan (November 2021) can also be found [online](#).

External reviews were conducted on the following academic units at UBC Okanagan between September 1, 2020 and August 31, 2021. Highlights and recommendations made by the reviewer teams are summarized on the following pages and comprise the remainder of this report.

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School of Engineering

Faculty of Applied Science

November, 2020

Reviewers:

- Jean Zu, Stevens Institute of Technology
- Ali Dolatabadi, Concordia University
- Paul Chernikhowsky, FortisBC
- Mike Chiasson, UBC Okanagan

Highlights:

- The school has experienced an extraordinary level growth and is now a nationally and internationally well-recognized engineering school for both top-notch education and research.
- The faculty, staff and students overall have a very strong sense of pride and belonging to an agile, progressive, and world-class organization.

Summary of Recommendations and Response from the Unit:

The reviewers identified a set of findings, challenges and opportunities under twelve categories. Unit responses were categorized into four themes/challenges, including:

- Severe space restrictions and lack of proper space and equipment: Faculty hiring and student enrolment growth is being closely monitored and re-strategized at the senior administrative level to be more commensurate with the existing infrastructure and human resources. Online teaching could also potentially be incorporated into the educational experience (select courses), beyond the pandemic.
- Mentorship for junior faculty members: The School's newly established Faculty Mentoring Committee, co-chaired by two senior faculty, will act as a central training committee responsible for developing seminars and workshops to address common themes highlighted by annual surveys of new faculty.
- Challenges around funding and administrative support for graduate students: The School is taking several steps toward addressing guaranteed funding and overall role and responsibility clarification to all incoming graduate students. These initiatives will clarify expectations for domestic and international graduate students along with their supervisors.
- Difficult interaction and cohesion among the two campuses: Building in-roads and connections to the Vancouver campus continues to be an important focus as it relates to funding and research collaborations. A successful bi-campus MMRI institute has been launched as well as the Manufacturing Engineering program on both campuses.



Department of Economics, Philosophy, and Political Sciences (EPP)

Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

April 2021

Reviewers:

- Matthew Bedke, Philosophy, UBC Vancouver
- Juliet Johnson, Political Science, McGill University
- G. Cornelis van Kooten, Economics, University of Victoria

Highlights:

- The combination of three disciplines provides a fertile ground for building interdisciplinary programs as well as for promoting faculty research that intersects EPP issues.
- Undergraduate offerings are by-and-large well designed and executed, and enrolments have been steadily increasing.
- The Department seems very responsive to student inquiries and complaints, and it should be congratulated for that.

Summary of Recommendations and Response from the Unit:

Thirteen recommendations were made by the reviewers, including:

- Invest in faculty and staff hiring: A strategic vision and hiring plan will be developed with a focus on diversity among faculty. A new staff member has been hired.
- Develop disciplinary graduate programs, re-brand the undergraduate program into an honours program, and re-examine curriculum: Discussions are underway to identify the best option for graduate programs and a committee will be formed to review courses in the undergraduate program and transform it into an honours program. A curriculum mapping exercise will also be undertaken.
- Increase research and scholarly activity and community engagement: Teaching and research balance needs to be discussed and addressed.
- Strategic planning: Strategy discussions will be ongoing and will consider academic programs, research centres, and working with the university to build collective strengths.



Department of History and Sociology

Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

April 2021

Reviewers:

- Professor James Carson, Queens University
- Professor George Colpitts, University of Calgary

Highlights:

- The reviewers found a general enthusiasm in the current work and prospects of the Department.
- There is good evidence that the Department has begun to grow organically into a more cohesive organization of two distinct disciplines, since 2012 when the Department was created.
- Courses have been co-taught by sociologists and historians, with obvious benefits for both the students as well as the instructors.

Summary of Recommendations and Response from the Unit:

Thirty-three recommendations were made by the reviewers, including:

- Undertake a curriculum mapping exercise to review and reconsider program and course learning outcomes, using UBC Vancouver courses to fill gaps, and consider a Sociology Honours program: The Sociology program will continue working on curriculum appraisal and the History program will evaluate curriculum and implement changes.
- Advocate at the faculty and university levels for a comprehensive and transformative approach to building employability through community engagement across all four years of the undergraduate curriculum: The Department will encourage students to explore co-op experiences and will discuss furthering current community engagement.
- Institute a mentorship program for new hires to provide guidance to university systems, processes and culture and to the tenure process: For 2021-22, new and recent hires have the opportunity for formal mentoring through arrangements made by the Dean's Office.
- Creation of a departmental strategic plan for 5 years: The Department will work on a strategic plan and will consider the Faculty's strategic plan and departmental vision, research, teaching and student experience.