

CARLETON UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE ON QUALITY ASSURANCE

Cyclical Review of the Graduate Programs in Public Policy and Administration

Executive Summary

This Executive Summary of the cyclical review of Carleton's graduate programs in Public Policy and Administration is provided pursuant to articles 4.2.5-4.2.6 of the provincial Quality Assurance Framework and articles 5.1.9.23-24 and 5.1.9.26-27 of Carleton's Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP).

Carleton University offers a diploma, master's and doctoral program in Public Policy and Administration. These programs are administered by the University's School of Public Policy and Administration (SPPA), an academic unit in the Faculty of Public Affairs (FPA).

As a consequence of the review, the programs were categorised by the Carleton University Committee on Quality Assurance (CUCQA) as being of **good quality with national presence and report** (Carleton's IQAP 5.1.9.12).

The report of the external reviewers (the Review Committee) spoke glowingly of the School's national profile and reputation, the support the School and its programs have received from the senior administration at Carleton, the quality of the programs, the quality of course material, the performance of the faculty, the quality of the Schools' management, and the appreciation of students for the School's programs and its faculty.

Nonetheless, the Review Committee felt that while 'the School will continue to satisfy quality requirements' without considering program enhancements, it would 'run the risk of forfeiting its leadership role in the country, as other programs innovate and improve in response to changing demands, student expectations and new opportunities.'

Accordingly, the Review Committee identified a number of opportunities for program improvement and enhancement: the clarification of learning outcomes; strengthening the professional components of master's offerings; rethinking core offerings in the master's program; re-thinking written exercises to better approximate assignments anticipated in government; involving practitioners more in classroom and extra-curricular activities; expanding co-op opportunities; better synthesizing the disciplines of political science and economics in the core offerings of the doctoral program; acquainting doctoral students with the research tools current among public servants; and clarifying the objectives of the diploma program and its relationship to accreditation as a processional evaluator.

CUCQA was impressed with both the comprehensiveness and detail of SPPA's response to the opportunities for program improvement and enhancement identified by the Review Committee

as evidenced in SPPA's response to the report of the Review Committee and the School's Action Plan.

CUCQA was impressed also by the ambitious character of the Action Plan in terms of initiatives, timelines, and the amount of work that had already been achieved at the time this Final Assessment Report and Executive Summary was drafted.

QUALITY ASSURANCE ACTION PLAN

SCHOOL OF PUBLIC POLICY AND ADMINISTRATION

January 2014

The Quality Assurance review has been of enormous benefit to the School of Public Policy and Administration (SPPA) in undertaking a process of renewal that strengthens each of the programs that were the subject of cyclical review in 2013: the Master of Arts in Public Administration (MAPA), PhD in Public Policy, and Graduate Diploma in Policy and Program Evaluation (DPE). Many of the issues raised by the consultants, and reinforced by the Carleton University Committee on Quality Assurance (CUCQA), were concerns that had been raised internally during the review process, and SPPA has begun steps to act upon the recommendations.

This Action Plan outlines the goals, process, and schedule of how SPPA intends to have a report on curriculum redesign (with the establishment of clear learning outcomes) submitted to CUCQA by June 2014 that addresses its primary recommendations and identifies any resources or changes to governance structures needed to support such change. Each program is addressed separately, as the process is different for each, and the overall timing is summarized in a final table.

Master of Arts in Public Administration

The primary recommendations, paraphrasing the external reviewers' report, are:

1. Identity and better communicate the primary learning outcomes of the program, particularly the balance (or choice) between its theoretical vs. practical orientation, and how this translates into skills and knowledge in its core courses, the name of the degree and its interdisciplinary nature (points 1 & 4);
2. Reassess the length, content and pedagogy of the 'core' courses given the considerable dissatisfaction expressed by students, and address the lack of consistency across sections of the same core courses (points 2 & 3);
3. Address the configuration of the 'streams' or concentrations of electives, particularly whether the current distinction between the 'policy' and 'management' concentrations is meaningful and useful (point 5);
4. Review the pedagogy and opportunities for experiential learning, addressing the desire by students to have more problem-oriented approaches that are relevant to careers in the public sector and the potential for some kind of capstone experience (point 6);
5. Make better use and integration of adjunct faculty who are experienced professionals into core and elective courses (point 7); and

6. Ensure the strength of the coop program is maintained as an important vehicle for recruitment and a means for students to gain professional experience, with a view to reducing reliance on the federal government and seeking placements in other orders of government and in the nonprofit sector (point 8).

In taking seriously the consultants' recommendation that, while the program is of high quality, the MAPA requires 'attention beyond tinkering,' a process that promotes genuine innovation has already begun. This process is led by the SPPA Review Committee (RC), but is a participatory process engaging faculty at all stages of the process and students at 'critical moments' of reflection.

The phases of the strategy are to: 1) identify the essential skills and knowledge that graduates of the program need; 2) frame these as learning outcomes; 3) translate into overall curriculum design and pedagogy; 4) develop specific curriculum content; and 5) review and enhance pedagogy and consistency of delivery. The intent is to do this a way that is student-centred, rather than being based on the existing curriculum: that is, to undertake a creative process that enables 'more than tinkering.' This strategy will be implemented in five phases:

1) Identify essential skills and knowledge for graduates (November – December 2013):

- Debrief with student representatives (by the Director and at an SPPA Management Committee) to ensure their concerns presented to the consultants were accurately reflected in the report and understood by the RC. This was done in November 2013, and it confirmed the concerns about the content and pedagogy of the core, the need to reconsider concentrations, and the desire for more experiential learning and problem-solving content.
- Compare ourselves with 'aspirational' programs internationally, drawing on the research by Chancellor's Professor Leslie Pal for his SSHRC grant on international public management and public policy curricula. Faculty were asked to review and discuss the features of other programs they felt could be particularly relevant to the MAPA. See <http://portal.publicpolicy.utoronto.ca/en/MPPMPAPrograms/Pages/default.aspx>.
- Reflect upon the knowledge and skills for future leaders in the public sector as identified by alumni who have made particularly successful careers in the public sector. Assessments from six such alumni have been shared with faculty and students. In addition, a number of recent reports on public sector reform in Canada and internationally have been shared with faculty and students and used as an input into subsequent discussions.
- 'Crowdsource' ideas about learning outcomes and curriculum reform. A discussion board has been established on CULearn in which all faculty and student representatives have been 'enrolled,' with encouragement to be creative.
- Identify and prioritize essential skills and knowledge. A half-day discussion with faculty (facilitated by Professor Emeritus Ann Clark-Okah and Andrea Thompson from CUCQA) was held on November 29, 2013. A list of essential skills/knowledge was developed and the top priorities were 'voted' on. A summary of this discussion prepared by the facilitators was circulated to faculty.

2) Develop and Review Program Learning Outcomes (January – mid February 2014)

A creative approach to articulating program learning outcomes entails working from the essential knowledge and skills, rather than from the existing program, in several steps:

- Identify Program Learning Outcomes. A full-day faculty retreat (again facilitated by Clark-Okah and Thompson) was held on January 10, 2014 at which: 1) consensus was reached on the priority skills and knowledge identified at the November session; 2) draft program outcomes were written (after a lesson on writing learning outcomes); and 3) implications for curriculum design discussed.
- Refine and write learning outcomes: A follow up session on January 24 will continue the discussion about curriculum redesign, leading to refined draft learning outcomes; the RC will circulate a draft; feedback from students will be incorporated.

3) Translate Program Learning Outcomes into Curriculum Design (February – mid March 2014)

Some of the implications of the re-formulated learning outcomes have already become apparent and these will be articulated and agreed upon by faculty and tested with students by mid March, as led by the RC. By mid March, it is expected that parameters for the core of the program, configuration of concentrations and potential for experiential learning will be identified. A mandate for more detailed work by sub-committees will be provided.

4) Develop Specific Curriculum Content (March – May 2014)

This step involves identification of specific courses and their learning outcomes led by sub-committees of faculty with subject area expertise. This will occur in two stages:

- Content and pedagogy for the core of the MAPA, from March to mid-April
- Review and revision of elective courses, with identification of their primary learning outcomes, from late March to late April, with precise timing depending on progress of the first stage. A facilitated discussion in late April should reach agreement on these; formal agreement by the SPPA Management Committee would follow.
- On this basis, the final report (prepared by the RC and reviewed by MC) would be ready in mid May, be reviewed again, to go forward to CUCQA by the end of May.
- With knowledge of the revised, curriculum, the School can identify and recruit Contract Instructors, Adjunct Professors and 'Senior Fellows.' Plans for the launch of a 'fellows' program that would recruit 3-4 high profile professionals who will take an active part in the life of the School/Faculty will be developed during this period, including discussions with the Dean of FPA as to coordination with other units and any possible resourcing implications (as part of the SPPA 2014-15 budget proposal).
- The future of the coop program, with a view to diversifying it, will be discussed with the Deans of FPA and FGPA, and potentially then senior administration and/or the Coop Office.

An issue that may need to be addressed, depending on the specifics of curriculum redesign, is the adequacy of teaching resources for management-related (or other) courses. There is no expectation that net new teaching resources are needed, but a strategic hiring plan for faculty replacements should be prepared, and curriculum redesign may affect the recruitment of specific Contract Instructors.

5) Review and Enhancement of Pedagogy and Consistency of Delivery (May – July 2014)

The final stage is a more informal, ongoing process that involves coordination among faculty who teach multiple sections of the core courses, refinement of course content and pedagogy, and intersections with the other SPPA programs. This Committees of the core instructors will review specific content and syllabi beginning in May and this process needs to be undertaken on an ongoing basis, but particularly during the preparation of course syllabi in summer (for fall term) and late fall (for the winter term). The idea of creating a teaching improvement committee to encourage sharing of teaching innovations among faculty has been discussed as well.

This schedule would enable all of the points raised in the QA review to be addressed, produce curriculum redesign of the Master's program, including the establishment of clear learning outcomes, to report by the deadline of June 1, 2014 that has been established by CUCQA.

PhD in Public Policy

The QA review recommendations for the PhD are not as extensive as for the MAPA. The specific recommendations are that:

1. A more coherent interdisciplinary experience needs to be created, that may involve more integration of core courses and genuine team teaching and that address compelling problems of policy and administration. The remedy for this is partly curriculum redesign, but also lies in pedagogy and how the culture of the School is communicated; and
2. Inclusion of a course (or other means) to provide students with suitable research tools.

On the creation of a more satisfying interdisciplinary experience, which is the much broader recommendation, there is much that can be learned from the Masters redesign which will have addressed similar issues by the end of February. A PhD subcommittee of the RC (including faculty and students) was formed during the QA process to take the lead on some of the changes we had already recognized needed to be made. By late January this subcommittee will be expanded to better address the first recommendation. Most of its work will occur after the bulk of the Masters review so as to draw on what is learned through that process.

The plan is:

- Late March: The PhD Subcommittee circulates a draft proposal that articulates the program learning outcomes for the PhD, including proposals for creating a more coherent, interdisciplinary approach.
- Early April: The proposal is discussed by faculty and PhD students at a session following Management Committee.
- Late April: The Subcommittee presents to Management Committee a revised proposal with learning outcomes; courses (including research methods/tools); and pedagogy.

- May: The proposal is revised, as needed, with final review by Management Committee in late May and submission by to CUCQA by the deadline.

Graduate Diploma in Policy and Program Evaluation

The DPE curriculum and pedagogy have undergone annual (informal) review and adjustments for several years, and we believe is currently working quite well. No major curriculum review or overhaul was recommended by the external reviewers. Their recommendations for the DPE are one very specific recommendation, which can be readily accomplished, and a comment on future development which does not directly pertain to quality improvement of the program.

The reviewers noted that the relationship between the program and certification as a professional evaluator (which is the responsibility of the Canadian Evaluation Society) is unclear to students. Clearer information on the website, in materials provided to students and in the orientation for new students should eliminate this confusion. The website and other relevant materials can be updated before June 2014.

The second point pertains to the future of the DPE, which is to continue with the in-class delivery format primarily aimed at domestic students (as it currently operates) and to develop an online format for delivery primary to an international audience, building on the success of IPDET. This is not an improvement to the current program but an extension of it to a different audience with a different delivery mode using the same overall curriculum but with revision to content. It is likely that SPPA could develop an online format in 2015-16, prefaced by market research, but this would take additional instructional and course development resources and requires substantial time. Given all the other major initiatives currently being undertaken by SPPA, a detailed implementation plan cannot be prepared before June 2014, but its potential will be explored over the next year.

Changes in Organization, Policy or Governance

No major changes to the organization or governance of the programs or the School are needed to implement these recommendations. The proposals for reform are being developed in a participatory manner with guidance from the Review Committee and receive formal approval by the SPPA Management Committee, as is the School's longstanding practice. Each program has a Graduate Supervisor who will manage and monitor implementation, reporting to the SPPA Director. The current director's term will end on June 30th 2014, so for purposes of continuity, it will be helpful to have the plan for curriculum redesign completed by then, with implementation the responsibility of the incoming director. In the transition process, any recommendations for improved governance will be discussed between outgoing and incoming directors, so that changes may be introduced later in 2014.

Better marketing: The need for much better marketing is noted in the QA recommendations and fully recognized by the School. Small improvements to marketing – those that can be achieved with no additional financial resources – are already underway with the assistance of FGPA. This includes social media ads and a video featuring alumni as part of the celebration of SPPA's 60th anniversary in March 2014. The consultants suggest that the school be provided with one-time funds to better market its

degrees and to align its messaging with the new university plan. This would be a welcome injection, particularly if major curriculum redesign is to be announced, and will be discussed with both Deans.

Summary of the Timeline

Program / Timing	Vehicle/ Responsibility	Objective / Deliverable
Masters		
November - December 2013	<i>Identify essential skills and knowledge</i>	
Early November	Debrief / feedback from student representatives	Briefing to MC on extent to which the views shared with consultants are widespread
December 1	Feedback from alumni on essential knowledge	Assessment shared with faculty and students
Available	Notes by Professor Pal on 'aspirational' programs	'Atlas' used to inform discussion and ongoing resource
Ongoing	Crowdsourcing ideas (online forum)	Innovative list of ideas and options
November 29	Half day facilitated discussion	List and identify of priority skills and knowledge; faculty agreement on priorities
January – Mid February 2014	<i>Develop and Review Program Learning Outcomes</i>	
January 10	Full day, facilitated faculty retreat (with lesson on writing outcomes)	Concept for program learning outcomes; initial ideas for curriculum redesign
January 24	Half day faculty discussion	Continued discussion of concept for curriculum
Early February	Review Committee	Draft plan for curriculum design
Mid February	Review Committee Test ideas with students	Feedback incorporated
March	<i>Translate Program Learning Outcomes into Curriculum Design</i>	
Early March	Review Committee	Draft of curriculum design with a focus on the core, incorporating student feedback; Mandate for subcommittees
March - May	<i>Develop Specific Curriculum Content</i>	
Mid April	RC Subcommittees	Proposal for core courses with draft learning outcomes
Late April	Review Committee	Proposal for concentrations (drawing on earlier discussions)
Late April	Faculty discussion, testing with students	Agreement on proposal for curriculum redesign and primary pedagogy
Late April	Management Committee	Agreement on proposal for curriculum redesign
Mid May	Review Committee	Adjustments as required; package ready for CUCQA, review with faculty and students
May	Director with input from faculty	Develop and recruit Senior Fellows
May	Director with Graduate	Discussions with Deans (and Coop Office) regarding

	Supervisor	Coop
May 30	Review Committee	Submission of plan to CUCQA
May - July	<i>Review and Enhancement of Pedagogy and Consistency of Delivery</i>	
June - ongoing	Individual faculty/instructors	Coordinate consistency across core courses; enhance pedagogical approaches; refine course content
May - Ongoing	<i>Better Marketing</i>	
PhD		
Late January	PhD Subcommittee	Current PhD subcommittee of RC expanded, and follows the Masters process in regard to interdisciplinarity and pedagogy
Early March	PhD Subcommittee	Draft proposal with learning outcomes and core curriculum design
Mid April	Faculty and student discussion	Feedback to Subcommittee; proposal revised as needed
Late April	Management Committee	Agreement on proposal
Mid May	PhD Subcommittee	Proposal revised, as needed; curriculum content and learning outcomes proposed; final agreement
May 30	Review Committee	Submission of report to CUCQA
DPE		
February - March	DPE Supervisor	Revisions to website and other materials to clarify certification responsibilities
April - June	DPE Supervisor	Review and adjustment to DPE curriculum (no major changes planned that require CUCQA report)
June - December	Director/DPE Supervisor	Potential for online delivery assessed