

## ACADEMIC COUNCIL REPORT

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**SESSION:**

Public



**ACTION REQUESTED:**

Decision  
Discussion/Direction  
Information



**TO:** Academic Council

**DATE:** 27 November 2018

**FROM:** Graduate Studies Committee

**SUBJECT:** Final Assessment Report Executive Summary - MA, MEd, and G.Dip Program Review

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**ACADEMIC COUNCIL MANDATE:**

In accordance with Article 1.1 of By-law Number 2, the Academic Council holds "the authority to establish the academic standards and curricular policies and procedures of the University, and to regulate such standards, policies and procedures, including:

b. determining academic quality".

Under Section 3, part e of the Graduate Studies (GSC) Terms of Reference, GSC is to "Receive and review reports, recommendations and action plans arising out of the cyclical review of graduate programs and report to Academic Council on the outcomes of all reviews conducted during the academic year, the implementation of recommendations".

*That Academic Council hereby approves the Final Assessment Report Executive Summary for the Master of Arts, Master of Education, and Graduate Diploma in Digital Technologies Program Review, as presented.*

**BACKGROUND/CONTEXT & RATIONALE:**

In accordance with UOIT's Quality Assurance Framework, the Committee reviewed the report and recommendations for the Master of Arts, Master of Education, and Graduate Diploma in Digital Technologies programs that underwent a joint cyclical review, to ensure that they meet provincial quality assurance requirements and to support their ongoing rigour and coherence.

Each review involves an examination, by both program faculty and staff and external reviewers, of the program's goals and requirements, its curriculum content, structure, modes of delivery, and assessment of student learning, and its use of available resources to support the program. Their work has generated a valuable set of documents that reflect a great deal of care and attention to the ongoing development and refinement of programs that best meet the needs of students and best represents the current state of each particular field of study. The Committee commends all Faculty and staff who contributed to the program review for their important input into the process.

The attached executive summary provides an overview of the outcomes of the recommendations resulting from the program review, identifies particular strengths of the programs as well as opportunities for improvement and enhancements, and outlines the agreed-upon implementation plan.

### **RESOURCES REQUIRED:**

A number of recommendations and the Faculty's plan to address them are outlined in the Final Assessment Report. Information and support will be required from:

- Teaching and Learning Centre
- Office of Planning and Analysis
- School of Graduate and Post-Doctoral Studies
- Registrar's Office

### **CONSULTATION:**

- Work with the Teaching and Learning Centre, Office of Planning and Analysis, School of Graduate and Post-Doctoral Studies, and the Registrar's Office will take place during the implementation and follow-up phase of the review

### **COMPLIANCE WITH POLICY/LEGISLATION:**

The Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance (Quality Council), established by the Council of Ontario Universities in July 2010, is responsible for oversight of the Quality Assurance Framework processes for Ontario Universities. The Council operates at arm's length from both Ontario's publicly assisted universities and Ontario's government. Under the Quality Assurance Framework, academic programs must undergo a cyclical review at least every eight years following their implementation. The purpose of the cyclical program review is to critically examine the components of a program with the assistance of outside reviewers with the goal of continuous improvement. A program review's purpose is not solely to demonstrate the positive aspects of the program, but also to outline opportunities that will lead to improvements for the future.

### **NEXT STEPS:**

- Following the approval of the Executive Summary it will then be presented to the Board of Governors for information and is posted to the University's website
- The Executive Summary will also be presented to the Quality Council

**MOTION FOR CONSIDERATION:**

Pursuant to the recommendation of the GSC, Academic Council hereby approves the Final Assessment Report Executive Summary for the Master of Arts, Master of Education, and Graduate Diploma in Digital Technologies Program Review, as presented.

**SUPPORTING REFERENCE MATERIALS:**

- Master of Arts, Master of Education, and Graduate Diploma in Digital Technologies Program Review Final Assessment Report Executive Summary



## **FINAL ASSESSMENT REPORT**

### **Executive Summary**

**August 2018**

### **Master of Arts, Master of Education, Graduate Diploma in Digital Technologies**

#### **Program Review**

**Dean: Dr. Maurice DiGiuseppe**

Under UOIT's Quality Assurance Framework, all degree programs are subject to a comprehensive review every eight years to ensure that they continue to meet provincial quality assurance requirements and to support their ongoing rigour and coherence.

On the completion of the program review, the self-study brief together with the reviewers' report and the assessment team's response are reviewed by the appropriate standing committee of Academic Council, and are subsequently reported to Academic Council, the Board of Governors and the Quality Council.

In academic years 2016-2018 a program review was scheduled for Master of Arts, Master of Education, Graduate Diploma in Digital Technologies. This is the first program review for this program and the internal assessment team is to be commended for undertaking this assignment in addition to an already challenging workload and within a very tight timeline. The following pages provide a summary of the outcomes and action plans resulting from the review, identifying the strengths of the program as well as the opportunities for program improvement and enhancement. A report from the program outlining the progress that has been made in implementing the recommendations will also be put forward in eighteen months' time.

**External Reviewers:** Dr. Maria Cantalini-Williams (Thompson Rivers University), Dr. Gloria Ramirez (Nipissing University), and Dr. George Veletsianos (Royal Roads University).

**Site Visit:** May 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2018

#### **Program Overview**

- All of the programs are 100 percent online and use virtual classrooms to employ what the Faculty likes to call face-to-face online learning. Using leading-edge technology and resources, the classes are highly interactive. They feature group discussions, both large and small, through the use of virtual 'breakout rooms'.
- The Master of Education program has two options that students can choose from: course-only or project based. In both programs, students are required to take several core courses, including Principles of Learning and Research Methods in Education.
- The Master of Arts in Education is a thesis option for students who have a strong interest in research and have identified an area of research they would like to pursue. Students who complete this degree can possibly pursue doctoral studies in the future.

- The Graduate Diploma in Digital Technologies is an excellent option for students who want to pursue graduate-level courses without committing to a full Master's degree. The diploma can also be a pathway to the MEd program for non-standard applicants.
- There are two labs at the Faculty that are the sites of many research projects: the Educational Informatics Laboratory (also known as the EI lab) and the STEAM 3D Maker Lab.

### **Significant Strengths of the Program**

- The program requirements and learning outcomes are clear, appropriate, and in alignment with UOIT's statement of Graduate Degree Level Expectations.
- Program Learning Outcomes have been intentionally and carefully aligned with the Ontario Council of Academic Vice Presidents (OCAV) and are reflected in course outlines across the different programs, clearly linking them with specific assignments.
- There is strong evidence of innovation in the content and delivery of the programs. This includes the development of a community of practice in the faculty to share practices and collaboratively engage new ideas and/or address potential problems.
- Descriptions of instructional practice by faculty and students also demonstrated the faculty's commitment to fostering student-centered spaces for teaching and learning that involve co-production of knowledge, collaborative learning, and participatory pedagogies. Furthermore, both research labs represent significant innovations for the faculty, and indeed for the discipline.
- All personnel seem to work collegially and effectively. The recent addition of the academic advisor has specifically enhanced support for graduate education students.
- The use of Blackboard LMS and Adobe Connect for virtual classrooms seem to be functioning well.
- The Library resources seemed to be well organized and the research guide for education was reported to be highly valued by students.

### **Opportunities for Program Improvement and Enhancement**

- A greater stress on research methods and data analysis may be appropriate in a graduate program even for the Graduate Diploma students.
- One area of programmatic growth includes the need to incorporate Indigenous worldviews and ways of knowing across all areas of study.
- Related to consistency, it is evident that courses have variance in the amount of class time that is synchronous versus asynchronous. Some students commented that more asynchronous discussion time would alleviate the three-hour weekly commitment of synchronous classes. This provision may also assist to attract more diverse and international students.
- While it is clear that the EI Lab and Makerspace Labs are used in the context of research, it is unclear whether and how these labs are integrated in instructional activities. There are many opportunities here to consider how the labs can be integrated in existing (or new) coursework.
- Librarians recommended that students should be encouraged to seek more assistance particularly related to research projects. An orientation session for new students and new faculty including a library presentation was suggested.

### **The External Review**

The site visit took place on May 1 and 2, 2018. Drs. Cantalini-Williams, Ramirez, and Veletsianos met with members of the Faculty as well as key stakeholders at the University, including Dean - Dr. Maurice Di Giuseppe, Associate Dean - Dr. Aziz Douai, Dr. Allyson Eamer (Director and Review Chair), Associate

Dean, Quality Assurance - Dr. Glenn Harvel and members of the internal assessment team and a number of faculty, staff, and students.

The Faculty was grateful for the thoughtful and thorough review provided. The external reviewers recognized the high quality of the faculty, the rigorousness of the program, and the innovation in the content and delivery of the programs.

The reviewers identified five recommendations, some of which have multiple components. The Faculty values the recommendations and have been very thoughtful in their responses.

### **Summary of Reviewer Recommendations and Faculty Responses**

#### ***Recommendation 1***

*In the absence of institutional course evaluation processes for graduate programs, we recommend that the faculty develop ways to receive ongoing feedback on course quality.*

#### ***Response***

Graduate course feedback has historically been an issue with the university as a whole as small class sizes and constraints provided by the collective agreement make traditional course evaluations impossible. Previous attempts to solicit course feedback have been made, however were unable to be continued due to collective agreement requirements which state that a graduate program director cannot collect information in which the performance of his/her colleagues (peers) is being discussed. The faculty will investigate how other faculties are handling this challenge and discuss possibilities at a graduate program meeting in the fall.

#### ***Recommendation 2***

*The university engage the expansive expertise of the Faculty of Education in innovating and developing online and blended learning more broadly, especially given the focus on "Education for the 21st Century" in the institution's strategic research plan.*

#### ***Response***

The Faculty agrees that they do have much to offer the wider university in term of their expertise in administering fully online graduate and undergraduate programs, and their experience in pedagogy. They will reach out to the Teaching and Learning Centre and/or the Student Learning Centre to offer workshops and pursue research opportunities.

#### ***Recommendation 3***

*The creation of several learning outcomes that respond to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action and that Indigenous worldviews and ways of knowing are meaningfully integrated across areas of study.*

#### ***Response***

This is a matter that is central to the value system of the Faculty of Education. The creation of the Indigenous Education Advisory Group consisting of faculty, students, sessional instructors, and Indigenous staff and guests was initiated by the Faculty in 2017. The purpose of this group is to consider new course offerings with Indigenous themes, such as The Pedagogy of the Land, and to provide input to ensure that any new courses are developed with an accurate Indigenous perspective. The Faculty will

continue to pursue opportunities to add a special topics course that can be incorporated into regular offerings.

**Recommendation 4**

*Reconsideration of the curriculum cluster and addition of a cluster reflecting Social Justice issues and Indigenous worldviews in a digital context.*

**Response**

A new cluster, incorporating both social justice issues in general and Indigenous worldviews will be discussed in the Fall. This may involve collapsing or repurposing the curriculum cluster so that it consists of curriculum aimed at engaging social conscience and Indigenous ways of knowing.

**Recommendation 5**

*Exploration of ways to provide greater flexibility in course design and structure. For instance, faculty may consider reducing time in synchronous sessions and offering more opportunities for asynchronous participation. Students would also benefit from more regular and consistent delivery of foundation courses.*

**Response**

The synchronous class format has been what has set this program apart from other online graduate degrees. Any consideration of reducing real-time interaction and increasing asynchronous participation must be met with caution.

Professors have been given considerable freedom to organize their courses using a balance of synchronous/asynchronous activities that works best for them and for their students.

The matter of more regular and consistent delivery of foundation courses is a complicated one. Course offerings are impacted by the need to ensure sufficient offerings of foundation and cluster courses as well as electives.

Due to the small size of the Faculty, it is a challenge to deliver a variety of courses with a high degree of frequency while still ensuring that students are able to take all their required courses in order to graduate. This matter will be discussed at a graduate program meeting in the fall.

**Recommendation 6**

*The course route include an opportunity for consolidation of learning through the inclusion of a strategy to allow for application and synthesis of new understandings.*

**Response**

The Faculty notes a past portfolio requirement for the course-only route that was met with mixed reviews. The process was also complicated by the need to run a 'portfolio course' and the need to then have faculty members serve as portfolio readers to review the students' work. The Faculty will conduct thorough research to see what kinds of capstone requirements are being implemented in other course-only MEd programs, and re-visit this issue at a graduate program meeting.

**Recommendation 7**

*The expectations of the 'project' route become more clear. The term 'project' connotes a practical component and should possibly be renamed in case further graduate work is considered.*

**Response**

The projects have been recently re-constructed as an alternative to original research in the form of, for example, an exhaustive literature review. The Faculty will consider whether renaming it (e.g., Major Research Paper) would make its purpose more clear.

**Recommendation 8**

*The School of Graduate and Post-Doctoral Studies (SGPS) support the graduate Master students with a variety of online services such as professional development workshops and grant writing activities. These supports are usually provided face-to-face and thus, many education students do not participate. There is a need for these services to be provided online.*

**Response**

Recently, there has been a concerted effort by SGPS to support students through offering online workshops. The Faculty will continue to work together with SGPS to ensure that students take advantage of these opportunities. The Faculty notes the time constraints of their students, many of whom are employed full-time during the day, may make taking these courses difficult. The Faculty will consider providing these same sorts of workshops for their students online during the evening hours.

**Recommendation 9**

*The faculty capitalize on the expertise and resources provided by the library. The librarians have worthwhile suggestions to consider (e.g., inclusion of library guest lectures and research skills in related courses) that may be beneficial to students.*

**Response**

Core faculty are well aware of the expertise and resources provided by the library and routinely encourage our students (especially those we are supervising) to capitalize on the expertise available to them. Many courses have hosted librarians as guest lecturers in our courses, but the Faculty will continue to ensure that all faculty, and especially sessional instructors, are aware of this tremendous resource, by routinely including it on the agenda, and in the GPD monthly report.

**Recommendation 10**

*A mechanism (e.g., course credit or course release) be created to recognize faculty supervising students in the graduate programs in order that the burden of supervision is equitably shared and students have greater selection.*

**Response**

This is something that has been discussed in the past however, multiple administration changes have resulted in the matter never fully being explored at length by any one Dean. We will pursue the matter through discussion.

**Recommendation 11**

*An admissions system be implemented that would ensure more efficient and equitable distribution of labour across all faculty members.*

**Response**

The burden of application reviewing (three times per year) has fallen on the shoulders of the GPD and the handful of faculty who agree to make themselves available to help in any given term. Multiple ideas have been put forward including providing an honorarium to a core group who undertakes this task for a



given academic year, and bringing in a different group of faculty each term for a full day of focused application review, with lunch provided. This is a top priority given that the next round of applications will need reviewing in October.

***Recommendation 12***

*A focus be placed on key partnerships that add value to the Education Graduate Programs, are sustainable in the long term, and where both institutions research and infrastructure strengths can be strategically combined. At the international level, the partnership for a doctoral program with the Technological University of Dublin seems a worthy endeavour. Partnerships with other UOIT faculties may also be feasible and sustainable.*

***Response***

The faculty is in a time of transition, with considerations being given to a closer alliance with the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities. Possibilities here for an inter-disciplinary graduate course offering could prove very marketable. The Faculty continues to engage in a number of research initiatives with Technological University of Dublin and has begun to consider submitting an individual doctoral program proposal rather than pursuing a joint one with Dublin.

## Plan of Action

The table below presents a timeline of the actions planned to address the recommendations from the external report.

Recommendation	Proposed Follow-Up	Responsibility for Leading Follow Up*	Timeline	Resources/Support Needed
<i>Develop ways to receive ongoing feedback on course quality.</i>	Explore course evaluation options for graduate courses.	GPD and Program Committee	This will be raised at a program meeting and a GSC meeting in the fall, with the aim to have a plan in place for the spring19 term.	Information from the School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (SGPS)
<i>The university engage the expansive expertise of the Faculty of Education in innovating and developing online and blended learning more broadly.</i>	Remind the Teaching and Learning Centre of the kinds of expertise available to the wider University via the Faculty of Education professors.	GPD; Dean Maurice DiGiuseppe	Commencing in 2018-19 and ongoing from there.	Support and buy-in from the Teaching and Learning Centre
<i>Integrate several learning outcomes that respond to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action across all areas of study.</i>	Expand on Indigenous themes in the curriculum, including the addition of a special topics course in this area.	GPD; Dean Maurice DiGiuseppe; Program Committee	This work has already begun and will continue through monthly Indigenous Advisory Committee meetings.	Information and support from the Indigenous Advisory Committee
<i>Reconsideration of the curriculum cluster and addition of a cluster reflecting Social Justice issues and Indigenous worldviews in a digital context.</i>	Creation of a new cluster, incorporating both social justice issues in general and Indigenous worldviews.	GPD, Program Committee; Faculty Council and Grad Studies	Discussions on possible cluster changes will begin at a fall Program Committee meeting with the aim to roll out any changes for Fall20	Support from SGPS
<i>Exploration of ways to provide greater flexibility in course design and structure.</i>	Addition of increased flexibility in course design and structure.	GPD; Program Committee; BPO; Faculty Council	This recommendation is directly impacted by any cluster changes that are implemented and will be considered simultaneously.	Support from the Scheduling Office

Recommendation	Proposed Follow-Up	Responsibility for Leading Follow Up*	Timeline	Resources/Support Needed
<i>The course route include an opportunity for consolidation of learning through the inclusion of a strategy to allow for application and synthesis of new understandings.</i>	Explore the option of adding a capstone project for the course-only program.	GPD; Program Committee; Faculty Council	This matter will be raised at a fall program meeting, with the aim to have any changes ready for Fall 20	
<i>The expectations of the 'project' route become more clear.</i>	Rename the "project" component of the program.	GPD; Program Committee; Faculty Council	This matter will be raised at a fall program meeting, with the aim to have this change in place by Fall19.	
<i>Professional development workshops and grant writing activities provided by SGPS should be provided online.</i>	Enable online access to workshops through SGPS.	GPD; Program Committee	This will be raised at a program meeting and a GSC meeting in the fall, with ongoing discussions occurring each term.	Support from SGPS
<i>The faculty capitalize on the expertise and resources provided by the library.</i>	Ensure faculty awareness and capitalization of library resources.	GPD; Communications Assistant; Program Committee	Faculty will be reminded of the expertise available through the library staff, at the beginning of each new term.	Support from the Library
<i>A mechanism be created to recognize faculty supervising students in the graduate programs in order that the burden of supervision is equitably shared and students have greater selection.</i>	Formalize the recognition of supervision of graduate students.	GPD; Dean Maurice DiGiuseppe, Program Committee; BPO; Faculty Council	GPD will be having discussions on this matter with the Dean in August, with the aim to have any changes in place by Fall20.	
<i>An admissions system be implemented that would ensure more efficient and equitable distribution of labour across all faculty members.</i>	Review the current application assessment and review process.	GPD; Dean Maurice DiGiuseppe, Program Committee	GPD will begin discussions on this matter with the Dean in August. A new strategy will be in place in time for the Oct18 review process.	

Recommendation	Proposed Follow-Up	Responsibility for Leading Follow Up*	Timeline	Resources/Support Needed
<p><i>A focus be placed on key partnerships that add value to the Education Graduate Programs, are sustainable in the long term, and where both institutions research and infrastructure strengths can be strategically combined.</i></p>	<p>Broaden partnerships with other institutions.</p>	<p>GPD; Dean Maurice DiGiuseppe, Program Committee, BPO</p>	<p>Discussions have been underway with universities in South Africa, UAE and Ireland for several months now and will continue in the coming academic year.</p>	<p>Support from the Registrar's Office and the AVP Planning and Analysis</p>

\*The Dean of the Faculty, in consultation with the Program Review Chair shall be responsible for monitoring the Implementation Plan. The details of progress made will be presented to Academic Council and the Board of Governors and filed in the Office of the Provost and Vice-President (Academic).

**Due Date for 18-Month Follow-up on Plan of Action: December 2019**

**Date of Next Cyclical Review: 2024-2026**