ACADEMIC COUNCIL REPORT

ACTION REQUESTED:

Recommendation	☐
Decision	☒
Discussion/Direction	☐
Information	☐

DATE: **28 April 2020**

FROM: **Undergraduate Studies Committee**

SUBJECT: **Final Assessment Report – Bachelor of Education Program Review**

COMMITTEE MANDATE:
In accordance with Articles 8.10 (a)(b) of By-law Number 1, the Academic Council "holds delegated authority from the Board to establish academic standards and curricular policies and procedures of the University and to regulate such standards, policies and procedures, including

> ii) To determine and regulate the contents and curricula of all courses of study".

And, "Academic Council may appoint committees and authorize them to exercise its powers under this section".

Under the Undergraduate Studies Committee (USC) Terms of Reference, USC is to "to approve Final Assessment Reports (FARs) and action plans arising out of the cyclical review of undergraduate programs and report to Academic Council on the outcomes of reviews conducted during the academic year".

MOTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION:

That, pursuant to the recommendation of USC, Academic Council herby approves the Final Assessment Report for the Bachelor of Education Cyclical Program Review.

BACKGROUND/CONTEXT & RATIONALE:
A recent program review was completed for the Bachelor of Education. The Final Assessment Report provides 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.

RESOURCES REQUIRED:
A number of recommendations and the Faculties' plans to address them are outlined in the Final Assessment Report. The Academic Resource Committee (ARC), chaired by the Provost, reviewed these plans and any requested resources will be managed through the normal budget process. Information and support will be required from various areas of the University in order to implement the plan.

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 Academic Council the FAR will be presented to the Board of Governors for information and posted to the University's website

SUPPORTING REFERENCE MATERIALS:
- Program Review Final Assessment Report

FINAL ASSESSMENT REPORT
February 7, 2020
Bachelor of Education
Program Review
Dean: Dr. Robin Kay

Under Ontario Tech University'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. Program reviews involve several stages, including:

1. A comprehensive and analytical self-study brief developed by members of the program under review.
2. A site visit by academic experts who are external to and arm's length from the program who prepare a report and recommendations on ways that it may be improved based on a review of the program's self-study and supporting material, and a two-day site visit involving discussions with faculty, staff and students and a tour of the facilities.
3. Development of a plan for improvement by the program and proposed timelines for implementation.

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 2017-2019 a program review was scheduled for the Bachelor of Education.

This is the second 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. John Allison, Nipissing University and Dr. Julie Mueller, Wilfrid Laurier University
Site Visit: October 21 and 22, 2019

Program Overview

The Faculty of Education at Ontario Tech University offers both concurrent and consecutive programs of education with areas of study in the Primary/Junior and Intermediate/Senior divisions, leading to a Bachelor of Education degree.

Concurrent Education Overview

The Faculty of Education's Concurrent Education Program allows students to apply for advanced acceptance into the Bachelor of Education Program when they apply for admission to an Ontario Tech University undergraduate degree program. These students do not take any Bachelor of Education courses while completing their undergraduate degrees. The Concurrent Education option is available for both the Primary/Junior and Intermediate/Senior programs.

The Concurrent Education Program allows students to participate in education seminars, visit B.Ed. classes, and discover if a career in education is right for them, while completing their undergraduate degree at Ontario Tech University. Students are encouraged to meet faculty, current teacher candidates, and graduates to gain a better understanding of the teaching profession and the multiple career paths one may pursue with a Bachelor of Education degree. Enlisted and qualifying undergraduates will be admitted to the Consecutive Education Program upon completion of their Ontario Tech University undergraduate degree.

Consecutive Education Overview

The Faculty of Education offers a 16-month Consecutive B.Ed. Program in the preparation of Primary/Junior (P/J) and Intermediate/Senior (I/S) teachers. The emphasis on technology in learning and teaching is a defining element of the Bachelor of Education Program. Teacher Candidates (TCs) use technology in their own learning experiences so that they will understand how to integrate technology into classroom practice. Courses use inquiry and problem-solving approaches, with a focus on the importance of subject matter as the catalyst for teacher-learner interaction, as well as individual learning and teaching in shaping learning conditions. The Faculty's Bachelor of Education Programs are based on key educational principles, including technology, diversity, reflection and praxis. The Enhanced Program models key elements of education at the edge of innovation, such as a blend of face-to-face and online curriculum offerings, encouraging the use of digital technologies and multiple forms of literacy so that TCs will be leaders of technology in their schools and school boards, and in other workplaces that require professional development, training or adult education.

Significant Strengths of the Program
- The 16-month condense program format allows students to fast track their degree and enter the workforce earlier. By Spring, when boards are hiring for the following autumn, Ontario Tech teacher candidates are graduates.
- The Foundations courses are innovative and unique, serving as the "backbone" of the program. Further, the external reviewers report highlighted the course instructors act as University

Liaisons to make the connections between the Foundations course and the application of the content and professional practice.

- The focus on technology and digitalization provides student teachers with the most up-to-date experiences with current technology for the classroom.
- Curriculum content areas are integrated with a focus on STEAM that fits emerging, future-ready skills and knowledge areas.
- The program offers fully online semesters to help students develop skills in teaching and learning in online environments.
- Effective creation of authentic digital portfolios promotes digital literacy skills and reflection.
- Active regular review of course outlines and assessments to ensure consistency and quality of instruction.
- The role of part-time faculty in the delivery of the program cannot be understated. Their wealth of experience, their ongoing and vigorous connections with local school boards, and their allied theoretical knowledge provide for an extremely solid foundation on which teacher candidates can build.
- Faculty and students were overwhelmingly supportive, upbeat, and positive about the program and what they had learned.

Opportunities for Program Improvement and Enhancement
- The Primary/Junior division required additional time devoted to two key curricular areas: 1) Health and Physical Education (HPE); and 2) The Arts. Prior to the self-studies, the two disciplines were combined within one course and provided only 18 hours of instruction for each subject area. A small committee of the B.Ed. Program instructors/faculty worked together to adjust the program map for the Primary/Junior division to create two distinct 36-hour courses.
- The program faculty has improved participation of full-time faculty in the B.Ed. program but still rely heavily on sessional instructors. To enhance coherence and cohesion throughout coursework and practicum experiences, it is necessary for instructors to work closely together, requiring sessional instructors to participate in planning meetings much like full-time faculty.
- Examine the program admission processes to admit high-calibre candidates to the program based on criteria other than the requisite GPA (which is the current requirement), in a manner that is cost-efficient. We have engaged in discussions with the Office of the Registrar regarding potential alternative strategies for admissions to account for non-academic and dispositional-related criteria for a professional program such as initial teacher education.
- The Foundations series of courses, although innovative and unique, does require deep commitment from a full-time faculty member willing to take a lead in the foundations series to ensure that the multiple "tutorials" that are led by part-time faculty are consistent with the program goals and the intent of the course. This approach could possibly "fall apart" with the loss of a dedicated lead instructor or part-time instructors who are not willing to collaborate in the design and implementation. Work on building capacity is needed to ensure that this innovation is sustainable.

The External Review
The site visit took place on October 21 and 22, 2019. Dr. John Allison and Dr. Julie Mueller met with members of the Faculty as well as key stakeholders at the University, including Dr. Langis Roy (Dean, School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies, Dr. Bill Hunter (on behalf of Dr. Robin Kay, Dean), Stephen Thickett (Director of Planning and Operations in Student Life) 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
Provision of more solid succession planning in terms of the position of director of the B.Ed. program. It was clear from the discussions that the directorship of the program is absolutely key.

Response
We agree wholeheartedly with the ERR's suggestions related to succession planning for the B.Ed. Director role. The B.Ed. Program is complex and not a typical university program given the professional nature of the program. The B.Ed. Director must be in constant communication with stakeholders such as University Liaisons, school boards, the multiple federations within the Ontario Teachers' Federation, the practicum specialist, the academic advisor, the university administration, program faculty/instructors (comprised largely of sessional instructors--84% of program instructors in Fall 2019 and 72% of program instructors in Winter 2020), and the teacher candidates. Given the professional nature of the B.Ed. Program, the director also deals with issues regarding professionalism on an ongoing basis. Each semester prior to the practicum, the B.Ed. Director (along with the academic advisor and/or the practicum Specialist) meets with teacher candidates who have been referred to the Practicum Committee. The number of referrals vary each semester and is contextual but the range varies from 4 to 12 referrals depending on the academic year. The process is very time consuming, however, it has in the past prevented issues from exacerbating in the practicum where partnerships with schools then can become compromised. The B.Ed. Director role (like other directors) needs to hire staff, have regular program meetings, and ensure that Foundation Fridays that occur on campus are organized and implemented. In addition, prior to starting the course work, the B.Ed. Director organizes a mandatory and full day on campus to orient the new teacher candidates to the professional nature of the program. At the end of the semester, the B.Ed. Director also organizes the wrap-around days (Debrief Day for Year 1 and Culminating Day for Year 2) for teacher candidates to return to campus on two separate days to debrief their practicum experiences with their small group Foundations cohorts. These initiatives reflect the teacher education program research literature that stresses the need for cohesion and coherence in initial teacher education (ITE) as typically, ITE programs have been criticized in the literature for fragmented courses and field experiences.

The above paragraph merely provides an overview of the B.Ed. Director role to provide context to the ERR recommendation for additional staff support for research for the B.Ed. Director. One course release does not provide sufficient time for the B.Ed. Director to devote to research, given the additional service requirements related to other university committees. The external reviewers noted:

> *"The reviewers felt that there were a few areas in which the B.Ed. program could increase efficiencies. These will be reiterated in the conclusion. One was regarding succession planning and capacity building. The former is very important particularly for the directorship of the program. In addition, some thought needs to be given to capacity building in terms of full-time*

*faculty. Additionally, **staff support** for faculty research would help offset the very important focus the faculty is placing on teaching. Further, reflection on the compact nature of the program and student/faculty overload is important" (page 6 of the report).*

Rather than consider staff support recommended by the ERR for faculty research (i.e., for the individual in the B.Ed. Director role--as the demanding nature of the B.Ed. Director role restricts the individual's research time), we believe that any additional staff support would benefit the program more effectively if we have a support staff dedicated to the B.Ed. Program. We will seek university support to build a more adequate support system for the B.Ed. so that it is sustainable regardless of directorship.

To address this recommendation, we will:

- Document the director tasks on a monthly basis for the incoming director;
- (Re)Develop the Field Experience Handbook so that it is more of a B.Ed. Program Handbook (digital and web-based) to ensure that B.Ed. processes are documented;
- Seek additional support staff from the university.

Recommendation 2
Further development of doctoral level instructors and potentially future faculty. The notion of "grow your own" is very critical here. Potential faculty should be encouraged, incentivized, and supported in the completion of doctoral programs in education.

Response
Since the inception of the four-semester program, we have an increased number of sessional faculty with doctoral degrees or in various stages of doctoral work. We do not yet have a doctoral program in our Faculty of Education, however, we agree that "growing our own" is important to continue to foster community, cohesion, coherence, and excellence in the B.Ed. Program. Some of our sessional instructors are retired practitioners and the majority of sessional instructors already hold Masters' degrees.

To address this recommendation, we will:

- Continue to conduct hiring practices that attract committed, qualified, and open-minded sessional instructors. We will continue to include a doctoral degree as an asset in job descriptions;
- Seek university resources to increase the number of **Limited Term Faculty Member contracts;**
  - This will help build the infrastructure of the program and provide the program with additional individuals to participate in service activities;
- Continue to develop opportunities for sessional instructors to integrate into our BEd program (e.g. regular training, workshops, online events);
- Encourage sessional faculty to participate in research projects.

Recommendation 3
The integration of digital technology across courses is supporting the STEAM focus of the program and successfully providing students with opportunities to develop digital literacy. This aspect of the program also promotes the reputation in the education community of Ontario Tech University as the leader in the field. This is something that could be marketed to educators and perhaps provide a window for professional development with local school boards in collaborative support for in service teachers as well as the preservice teachers.

Response
We agree that the integration of digital technologies across courses is something that could perhaps be better communicated in promotional materials. We currently have existing partnerships with local schools, however, we believe that a more cohesive marketing strategy in general would benefit the B.Ed. Program and Faculty of Education.

To address this recommendation, we will:

- Develop a marketing strategy for BEd program with the communications officer (e.g., videos, social media materials);
- Continue to expand Open-House in Mar 2020 where we continue to showcase our program by inviting our faculty/instructors and teacher candidates to demonstrate and/or share examples of our STEAM focus;
- Implement an Education & Technology conference for our local partners (this idea was already in development).

Recommendation 4
The online term in May and June of the first year appears to be something students appreciate in terms of location (i.e., no need to commute to class) but there was less consensus among students about how many courses should be offered each day and for how many days. The need for synchronous class time does not take best advantage of online pedagogy. This aspect of the program continues to evolve, and the reviewers see this as an area of great potential to include collaborative inquiry and integrated experiential learning that is more differentiated and individualized during that spring term. What that online portion of the program looks like could morph based on a changing vision, research, leadership, and reflection.

Response
We agree with the ERR in that the teacher candidates appreciate the flexibility of the third semester, however, the feedback regarding the online content and pedagogies is mixed. For the past two Spring/Summer semesters, the B.Ed. Director held weekly meetings with the instructors (the majority were sessional instructors) in Adobe Connect to discuss online pedagogies and best practices. Based on student feedback, we have already rearranged the program map to adjust the course offerings for the third semester, and again the student feedback was inconsistent. In the feedback we have gathered these past two summers, some teacher candidates indicate they would rather have more synchronous time with the instructor (which we have increased since the first offering of this semester in 2016 from one hour to two hours) so that the instructor could "talk" at them for a greater amount of time, rather than work in asynchronous groups. It is a conundrum, in that we want our teacher candidates to live the social constructivist learning process by participating in small groups outside of the synchronous portion, yet the feedback we collect indicates they don't have time to work in groups or they do not want to

work in small groups, or they do not value the online collaborative process as a collective. Currently, several courses already include experiential opportunities such as attending school board meetings, interviewing special education specialists, and conducting observations in a public setting. We share the ERR's opinion in that we also see this online semester as an area of great potential and that it could continue to evolve as it has since the inaugural offering in the 2015 - 2016 academic year.

To address this recommendation, we will:

- Continue to seek feedback from Semester 3 instructors and teacher candidates and make adjustments if possible and as applicable;
- Schedule number of courses over 3 days this upcoming Semester 3 (based on feedback from last year's teacher candidates and based on the increased number of students we have this year);
- Continue to meet with instructors during semester 3 to discuss pedagogy and any other online-related topics as needed;
- Open up 2 classrooms for students on campus to ensure that all students have access to Internet (we learned through our feedback processes that not all teacher candidates had access to high speed Internet in their homes);
- Encourage students to meet in online professional learning communities in the Adobe General Room for the B.Ed. Program.

Recommendation 5
Efficiencies could be addressed in some areas as noted above in relation to faculty and staff complement and the use of existing university supports.

Response
The B.Ed. Program staff and faculty implement innovative and creative solutions to provide an excellent ITE program for our teacher candidates. We problem solve collaboratively to resolve potential issues without compromising the integrity and quality of our B.Ed. Program and our service to our constituents. The appropriate and effective use of university wide resources and academic services was noted the ERR:

> *"Lastly, apropos to the appropriate and effective use of university wide resources and academic services, it appears in the eyes of the reviewers that the B.Ed. effectively links to networks and the constellation of university assets and personnel to bolster the success of the program. This was evident in meetings with Ontario Tech Student Life personnel, in the reviewers' visit to the Social Science and Education Library and the Lois Sleightholm Education Collection, at 61 Charles St. in Oshawa. Further, teacher candidates in the Faculty of Education did not in any way feel that their experience of the B.Ed. program was any lesser because their campus and faculty were geographically removed from the main Ontario Tech campus at 2000 Simcoe St. N. in Oshawa."* (page 6 of ERR)

We agree with the noted recommendation regarding the faculty and staff complement:

> *"The reviewers felt that there were a few areas in which the B.Ed. program could increase efficiencies. These will be reiterated in the conclusion. One was regarding succession planning and capacity building. The former is very important particularly for the directorship of the program. In addition, some thought needs to be given to capacity building in terms of full-time*

faculty. Additionally, staff support for faculty research would help offset the very important focus the faculty is placing on teaching. Further, reflection on the compact nature of the program and student/faculty overload is important. While some thought has already been given to this question with the development of the Student Academic Advisor position, the broader issue of providing support for both students and faculty in this compressed program remains important." (page 6 of ERR)

We agree with the external reviewers in that the "broader issue of providing supports for both students and faculty in this compressed program remains important" (page 6 of ERR), and as described in our response to Recommendation #1, we will continue to address these efficiencies as we described.

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
Provision of more solid succession planning in terms of the position of director of the B.Ed. program. It was clear from the discussions that the directorship of the program is absolutely key.	*Document the director tasks on a monthly basis for the incoming director* *(Re)Develop the Field Experience Handbook so that it is more of a B.Ed. Program Handbook (digital and web-based) to ensure that B.Ed. processes are documented* *Seek additional funding from the university to hire additional support staff*	*B.Ed. Program Director and Dean* *Director of Planning and Operations*	*January to July, 2020*	*University support to hire additional support staff for undergraduate programs (we have a full-time support person dedicated to the graduate programs in both FSSH and FED).* *Given the recommendations of this report, we propose a full-time support staff for our two undergraduate programs in the Faculty of Education to ease the intense work load of the directors.*
Further development of doctoral level instructors and potentially future faculty. The notion of "grow your own" is very critical here. Potential faculty should be encouraged, incentivized, and supported in the completion of doctoral programs in education.	*Seek university resources to increase the number of Limited Term Faculty Member contracts; This will help build the infrastructure of the program and provide the program with additional individuals to participate in service activities;* *Continue to provide opportunities for sessional instructors (where possible) to integrate into our BEd program (e.g. regular*	*Dean* *B.Ed. Program Director*	*January to December, 2020*	*Potential funding for PD opportunities for our sessional instructors; University support for creating LTFM positions;*

	training, workshops, online events);			
	Encourage sessional faculty to participate in research projects.	*B.Ed. Program Director and Dean*		
The integration of digital technology across courses is supporting the STEAM focus of the program and successfully providing students with opportunities to develop digital literacy. This aspect of the program also promotes the reputation in the education community of Ontario Tech University as the leader in the field. This is something that could be marketed to educators and perhaps provide a window for professional development with local school boards in collaborative support for in service teachers as well as the preservice teachers.	*Develop a marketing strategy for Bed program with the communications officer (e.g., videos, social media materials);*	*Dean and Communications officer*	*January to December, 2020*	*Communications and Marketing / Office of the Registrar assistance in creating and disseminating Information*
	Continue to expand Open-House in Mar 2020 where we continue to showcase our program by inviting our faculty/instructors and teacher candidates to demonstrate and/or share examples of our STEAM focus;	*Office of Registrar and B.Ed. Program Director*		*Faculty budget to enhance the annual Open-House in March where individuals who have received offers into our B.Ed. Program visit the faculty*
	Implement an Education & Technology conference for our local partners (this idea was already in development).	*Dean*		*Event planning support from university (conference services)*
Regarding the online semester of the B.Ed. program: This aspect of the Program continues to evolve, and the reviewers see this as an area of great potential to include collaborative inquiry and	*Continue to seek feedback from Semester 3 instructors and teacher candidates and make adjustments if possible and as applicable;*	*B.Ed. Program Director*	*January to July, 2020*	*n/a*
	Schedule number of courses over 3 days this upcoming	*Director of Planning and Operations*		

integrated experiential learning that is more differentiated and individualized during that spring term. What that online portion of the program looks like could morph based on a changing vision, research, leadership, and reflection.	*Semester 3 (based on feedback from last year's teacher candidates and based on the increased number of students we have this year);* *Continue to meet with instructors during semester 3 to discuss pedagogy and any other online-related topics as needed;* *Open up 2 classrooms for students on campus to ensure that all students have access to Internet (we learned through our feedback processes that not all teacher candidates had access to high speed Internet in their homes);* *Encourage students to meet in online professional learning communities in the Adobe General Room for the B.Ed. Program.*	*B.Ed. Program Director* *B.Ed. Program Director* *B.Ed. Instructors*		
Efficiencies could be addressed in some areas as noted above in relation to faculty and staff complement and the use of existing university supports.	*Seek additional funding from the university to hire additional support staff;*	*Dean*	*January to April, 2020*	*University support to hire additional support staff for undergraduate programs (we have a full time support person dedicated to the graduate programs in both FSSH and FED).*

				Given the recommendations of this report, we propose a full-time support staff for our two undergraduate programs in the Faculty of Education to ease the intense work load of the directors.

*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: July 20, 2021
Date of Next Cyclical Review: 2025 - 2027