



FINAL ASSESSMENT REPORT
February 2021
Forensic Psychology
Program Review
Dean: Dr. Peter Stoett

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 three-day virtual 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 Resource committee, the appropriate standing committee of Academic Council (USC/GSC), and are subsequently reported to Academic Council, the Board of Governors and the Quality Council.

In academic years 2018-2020 a program review was scheduled for the Bachelor of Arts in Forensic Psychology.

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. Evelyn Maeder, Carleton University and Dr. Steven Smith, Saint Mary's University

Virtual Site Visit: November 12, 19 & 20, 2020

Program Overview

The Forensic Psychology undergraduate program at Ontario Tech University focuses on the interface between Psychology and Law. The program combines disciplinary study in Psychology, specialized study in Forensic Psychology and applied learning experiences to prepare students to work in a variety of settings.

The first and second years of study are common to all Forensic Psychology students. Specifically, students begin the program with the Faculty-wide common first year, which includes introductory courses in psychology, community development, communication, legal studies or criminology, political science, and sociology. The second year largely consists of core psychology courses that focus on educating students in each of the major psychological subdisciplines, including forensic psychology, social psychology, clinical psychology, developmental psychology, cognitive psychology, and biological psychology. In addition, students also take courses in research methods and quantitative data analysis in the second year of the program. In the third and fourth years, students develop unique knowledge bases and skills through carefully selected elective coursework in forensic psychology and related disciplines and applied learning experiences. This may include courses such as investigative psychology, treatment in forensic settings, eyewitness psychology, selected topics in forensic psychology, directed laboratory research, practicum or internship, and forensic psychology honours thesis.

Members in the Forensic Psychology undergraduate program serve on both Faculty- and University-level committees. Within the Faculty, at least one member represents the program on the undergraduate curriculum committee and on any committee where program-specific representation is required.

Significant Strengths of the Program

- The curriculum and how it is delivered was praised by the reviewers, specifically, for how comprehensive the curriculum is and for the number and type of course offerings.
- The Forensic Psychology faculty members were lauded by the reviewers for having “impressive scholarly records, top-notch quality and externally-funded research, and very strong evidence of student supervision”.
- The academic services that support the program, such as the library are appropriate and effective with positive relationships among the students, faculty and Ontario Tech staff.
- The program’s receptiveness to feedback and their eagerness to continuously improve the quality of the program.

Opportunities for Program Improvement and Enhancement

- Enhanced connection in the curriculum between core courses that the students take in first year from other programs to content discussed later on in their forensic psychology courses. Conveying this interdisciplinary approach to students as an asset of the program.
 - Second, the Research Methods course and two Data Analysis courses are currently taught by faculty members in the Criminology program. It may improve the Forensic Psychology curriculum to have Forensic Psychology specific courses in these topics.
- Size of the Forensic Psychology faculty, the reviewers noted that the permanent Forensic Psychology faculty is small in number (N=9).
- The constantly changing landscape of research lab space. Lab space is an absolutely essential component of psychology research and training. This is impacted with spaces being moved, subdivided and renovated several times.
- Student engagement in downtown campus life: While the program appreciates the downtown location, it has presented unique challenges for promoting student engagement with campus life and ensuring students have access to adequate campus resources.

The External Review

The virtual site visit took place on November 12, 19 & 20, 2020. Drs. Maeder and Smith met with members of the Faculty as well as key stakeholders at the University, including Dr. Lori Livingston-Provost, Dr. Peter Stoett- Dean of the Faculty of Social Science and Humanities, Dr. Lindsay Malloy-Undergraduate Program Director 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 twelve 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

We were asked specifically by the Dean to comment on opportunities to increase enrolment in the BA Forensic Psychology program (and by extension, the new BA General Psychology program). We deal with some specific recruitment initiatives below. However, one point of discussion related to curriculum was to explore the ability to continue offering online courses once the effects of the pandemic are no longer as significant an issue. There was some interest on doing this by the faculty, and there is a significant trend for this nationally and internationally. To the extent

the Program can offer online courses, this will facilitate students taking their required and elective courses and may have a positive impact on the recruitment of both domestic and international students. However, it should be noted that doing online courses well involves significant technological investment, as well as investment in professional development of faculty and the ability to offer these courses in addition to in-person courses, rather than instead of them. Students were clear that their preference was for in-person courses. To the extent that courses are offered online, this should include a mix of required “bottleneck” courses (such as data analysis) and electives that might otherwise be offered less frequently or at times that are challenging for students.

IAT’s Response to recommendation 1

The Forensic Psychology (FP) faculty would like to continue offering a mix of online and in-person courses, and we offered a fair number of online courses before the pandemic. We are committed to adding an increasing number of online courses post-pandemic, and in the years to come. However, at this time, we do not have a particular number or proportion of courses in mind. We agree with the reviewers that doing this well should involve “significant technological investment, as well as investment in professional development of faculty.” The university has provided the necessary technological/professional resources to achieve program growth to date, and is committed to continuing those investments moving forward.

Dean’s Response

We are committed to offering at least 50% of our courses online. In the case of forensic and general psychology it is likely that at least half the introductory sessions will be available online in the post-pandemic context. Several of the psychology professors have preferred the temporary transition to 100% online and will probably continue to offer their courses in this format. We would also like to establish the infrastructure to permit hyper-flex classrooms (wherein students can be in class, or online, for the same classroom).

Recommendation 2

Additional TA support could have a significant positive effect on the program. Currently, the student to TA ratio is approximately 50:1, until courses get over 200, when there are no additional TA supports. TAs reporting doing primarily scantron processing, grading of multiple choice, and proctoring, particularly in large classes. Smaller classes provided opportunities for more 1:1 contact with students, and evaluating more complex (e.g., written) work. Overall, we recommend that the

Student to TA ratio be reduced and that larger classes (over 200) get additional TAs to maintain that ratio. We also recommend that all upper year courses get TA support. One major benefit is that courses with TA support might be able to shift away from assessments focused primarily around multiple-choice questions (that many faculty see as a “necessary evil”) to more short answer and essay type questions that can be better evaluations of learning. We believe that adjusting student to TA ratios would also allow TAs the opportunity to do work that is closer to “teaching”. The TAs (all graduate students) expressed a desire to have more opportunities to develop their professional skills around teaching and asked to have formal evaluations of their teaching related activities for their own professional development. It is understood that adding TA support will have consequences. It will require additional funding but would also likely open TA opportunities for undergraduate students, who could be targeted in courses that require more straightforward support for grading of multiple-choice type questions and proctoring. TAs also expressed a desire to indicate their TAing preferences (in terms of topics) annually.

IAT’s Response to recommendation 2

We share the reviewers’ concerns regarding our current student to TA ratio and support additional TA support in principle. We agree that benefits of additional TA support could include a “shift away from assessments focused primarily around multiple-choice questions” and better professional development opportunities for graduate student TAs who have long expressed a desire to develop their teaching skills and requested more formal evaluations of their teaching.

Dean’s Response

TA support can be increased incrementally but it is important to understand that we have a relatively small graduate programme and thus limited TA pool. Efforts will be made to increase the pool and to look outside the programme (at alumni, for example) to bolster the TA team.

Recommendation 3

An issue that was mentioned by students, faculty, and support staff was the frequency of elective courses. Though all agreed that the breadth of courses was excellent (and we concur) most elective courses are offered only once per year due to staffing constraints. Students, faculty, and staff all indicated that more frequent elective course offerings would be ideal.

IAT's Response to recommendation 3

We completely agree that it would be ideal to offer FP elective courses more frequently as many are currently offered once per year, and some are not even offered yearly. (i.e., more than once per year). With the introduction of the undergraduate program in General Psychology and a tenure track hire in that area currently in the works, more elective courses will be available to Forensic Psychology students in the next few years. However, most of these will still only be offered once per year, and we agree that it would be ideal to increase the frequency of elective courses offered beyond this, a goal that would require more resourcing from university administration.

Dean's Response

Without new hires there are limited possibilities here – the tenure track hire in General Psychology and an anticipated TF hire next year (2022) should enable the offering of more electives

Recommendation 4

Students and advisors discussed the challenge of the common first year curriculum in the Faculty (students typically take 7 required courses in their first year and three electives). Students expressed a dissatisfaction with the limited options they have in the first year, in particular as it related to the electives they have to choose from (as well as the specific required courses). Although some direction is useful for most students, and the development of a basic set of academic skills is important, there could be some consideration about how these could be achieved across a broader range of courses to allow for more choice.

IAT's Response to recommendation 4

We appreciated hearing how students felt about the first-year curriculum. We believe that review of the first-year curriculum should remain an ongoing priority of the Faculty of Social Science and Humanities as a whole, and the Forensic Psychology faculty are happy to be part of this process.

Dean's Response

Re-designing the FSSH first-year programme map will be a priority in the 2021-2022 academic year, with changes implemented in the Fall 2022 semester. We will discuss moving away from the current approach so students have more choice in terms of their first-year courses; this applies to all incoming FSSH students.

Recommendation 5

A significant curriculum issue was the data analytics courses that are offered across programs. We were told that the two (non-forensic psychology) faculty that teach these courses do so in very different ways. Students who take both data courses with the same professor can do well, but if they change between the first and second course (an outcome they have little control over) they find themselves at a significant disadvantage. In addition, the second data analysis course is only offered once per year. Students who do not get a minimum grade of B in this second course have to wait a year to re-take it, as LOPs to take the course at another university are almost never approved (only once in the last several years). This is unfair to students. It is common at any university that faculty who teach a common required course, especially one that is a pre-req for other courses and/or a core graduation requirement, are required to teach the course in a similar manner, with the same learning outcomes. The failure to do so in this case must be addressed as it created a significant barrier to student experience and success. A potential solution to this issue would be for Forensic Psychology to offer the required data analysis courses in-house, so that it can ensure that learning objectives are met and that there is continuity across courses. Regardless, if students need to repeat a core course, there must be additional offerings of this course or students must be allowed to use the LOP process to achieve their graduation requirements.

IAT's Response to recommendation 5

The Forensic Psychology Program Committee will review the Data Analytics courses in light of this recommendation, consider the development of a Forensic Psychology based course, revisit the minimum grade requirement, and investigate the resources needed to offer the new course.

Dean's Response

The new tenure track hire is committed to teaching this course to psychology students in the future (which will also reduce numbers in the other sections). Ideally, the new TF hire will also be able to do this. There is no doubt that this is an ongoing problem that must be rectified.

Recommendation 6

Students were particularly pleased with the opportunities in the Program to participate in research. However, the students noted that this they typically became

aware of opportunities “through the grapevine” or were approached directly by faculty. We recommend that research opportunities be made more broadly known, as this is such an important element to student development, especially for those considering graduate training.

IAT’s Response to recommendation 6

The FP faculty uses multiple methods to inform students of research opportunities, including mass emails to students who have obtained grades/GPAs above a certain threshold, in-course announcements, and direct contact with students who have performed particularly well in faculty’s courses. Based on this recommendation, the FP faculty commits to making research opportunities more broadly known, including via the university’s/program’s social media channels and the FP website. However, it should be noted that students must still meet the selection criteria as determined by each individual faculty member or the Honours Thesis course.

Dean’s Response

I agree with the IAT response: we do circulate this information amongst eligible students. Academic advisors can also play a key role here, and can be reminded of the significance of research opportunities to our students.

Recommendation 7

When meeting with Program faculty, we asked about their role in recruitment. They indicated that they had no role in recruitment, and that was “centralized”. They did say that many of them have been involved in going to open houses, doing high school visits, and going to recruitment fairs. This is actually an excellent level of recruitment involvement; thus, it is interesting that they did not see it as such. We recommend that a more formal relationship between Recruitment and Marketing and the Program be developed. In an ideal situation, the recruiters could consult annually with the Program, and have a true bilateral discussion around how the program is sold, and what faculty see as their strengths and selling points. Faculty involvement in recruitment would be an excellent way to enhance enrolment as well as student connections to and interest in the University and its Program.

IAT’s Response to recommendation 7

In Fall 2020, the Undergraduate Program Directors for the FP program and the General Psychology program met with the student recruitment team at the Office of the Registrar to have the kind of discussion that the reviewers described in their recommendation. The FP faculty are committed to ongoing and formal

communication with Recruitment and Marketing and to remaining actively involved in recruitment efforts (e.g., open houses, OUF).

Dean's Response

In addition to the measure discussed in the IAT response, next year (2021-2022) we will inaugurate a new Associate Dean, Student Experience who will be responsible for coordinating (amongst several other things) the recruitment efforts of faculty, advisors, and staff.

Recommendation 8

One recommendation that was made that would support student learning is to further incorporate information literacy into the curriculum, and specifically PSYC 1000, and PSYC 4101/4102 (Honours Seminar). Doing so would allow student to have a better understanding of how to do effective research within the context of the resources available. The library is enthusiastic about such an opportunity and would welcome the collaboration. In addition, the Library would like the Program to encourage students and faculty to seek research consultations with a librarian to support their research work.

IAT's Response to recommendation 8

The FP faculty appreciate this reminder of the resources available at the Ontario Tech library. Prior to the start of each semester, the Undergraduate Program Director (UPD) will send a reminder about the information literacy resources available at the library to all faculty teaching courses that semester so that each faculty member can decide whether to incorporate these important resources in their courses. The UPD will also suggest related "boiler plate" language on library resources that can be included in course syllabi and/or on Canvas, should the faculty wish to include it.

Dean's Response

Full support for the initiative described by the IAT.

Recommendation 9

BA Forensic Psychology students are frequent users of FSSH academic advising services. Generally, the advisors had positive things to say about the program and students and faculty were satisfied with the quality of advising services. However, it was noted by students and faculty that advising services were busy, and that

additional support services, either in the form of additional Faculty advising support, or a Program specific advisor, would be beneficial. Students also suggested that additional career advising would be beneficial; they found that existing presentations did not make it clear for them how to turn their education into a career.

IAT's Response to recommendation 9

The FP faculty are happy with the excellent quality of services offered by our advising staff. We agree that they are under-staffed and think it would benefit the students if they had additional advising services as recommended by the reviewers.

Dean's Response

Compared to other Faculties at Ontario Tech University, we have been fortunate to have a relatively large group of excellent advisors.

Recommendation 10

It is important to note that the University and Faculty have strong and diverse student retention initiatives. Importantly there is clear engagement by Program faculty in these initiatives. However, there is always opportunity for improvement. Specifically, there would be value in replicating, to the extent possible, services available at the North campus at the downtown campus. Students, support staff, and faculty noted that many services were not available at both locations, and not all students have the time or ability to travel easily between campuses.

IAT's Response to recommendation 10

In principle, the FP faculty supports methods for ensuring that our FSSH students on the downtown campus feel like full-fledged members of the university and that they have the same opportunities for education, growth, and wellness as students on the North campus. Thus, in principle, we support the offering of more services for students at the downtown campus.

Dean's Response

We are constantly lobbying for more student services downtown; however, with the transition to online content and services this will be a less pressing matter.

Recommendation 11

We had an opportunity to have a tour of faculty lab space by looking at schematics of space and having faculty provide voiceovers of how they use their space. One of the excellent elements of the Program is that undergraduate students are actively recruited by faculty to get involved in research (but see recommendation 6, above). In terms of developing marketable skills for graduating students and for helping those students moving on to graduate school, involvement in research is vitally important. The faculty currently have excellent space, but we understand the space is largely going to be lost when the lease on the current space expires. We recommend strongly that when the move occurs that faculty be provided with similar space in terms of size and functionality, and that the space, wherever possible (and if appropriate to the research) be co-located with office space, and with the rest of the FSSH Faculty Programs. An added benefit would be that bringing the forensic psychology faculty and teaching back with the rest of FSSH will enhance student access to supports.

IAT's Response to recommendation 11

The FP faculty share the reviewers' concerns about the future of FP research lab space, their understanding that research lab space is vital to the success of the faculty members, graduate students, and undergraduate students, and fully agree with their recommendation here (i.e., that they be provided with similar space in terms of size and functionality).

Dean's Response

Efforts to lease a second floor of the building at 2 Simcoe are currently underway.

Recommendation 12

In addition to aiming to increase the diversity of the student body, in particularly attracting international students, there has been an institutional focus on increasing equity, diversity, and inclusion in hiring. Despite clearly supporting this goal, the faculty expressed a lack of knowledge about exactly what they could do to broaden the reach of their hiring initiatives (though they noted increased diversity in applicants in the most recent hiring process). We recommend that a more visible and intentional EDI program be put in place at the university to support student recruitment, and hiring of faculty and staff. Should this occur and University Policy and provincial legislation allow, we recommend that the program conduct a preferential hire to increase the diversity of its faculty members.

IAT's Response to recommendation 12

The FP faculty are supportive of a more visible and intentional EDI program at the university which could include a preferential hire to increase the diversity of the FP faculty.

Dean's Response

We will look into the idea of a targeted EDI hire when a tenure track hire becomes possible in the future. In the meantime, we are having a special session on racial equality in academia during our Faculty Retreat which will be led by our Director of EDI.

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
<p>Explore the ability to continue offering online courses once the effects of the pandemic are no longer as significant an issue.</p>	<p>The Dean's Office is committed to working towards offering at least 50% of the courses online. In the case of forensic and general psychology it is likely that at least half the introductory sessions will be available online in the post-pandemic context. Several of the psychology professors have preferred the temporary transition to 100% online and will probably continue to offer their courses in this format. We would also like to establish the infrastructure to permit hyper-flex classrooms (wherein students can be in class, or online, for the same classroom.</p>	<p>UPD, Dean</p>	<p>More online content post-pandemic. Cannot predict exact date of post-pandemic era.</p>	<p>Technical assistance for professors converting to online material</p>

<p>Student to TA ratio be reduced and that larger classes (over 200) get additional TAs to maintain that ratio. In addition, it is recommended that all upper year courses get TA support.</p>	<p>TA support can be increased incrementally but it is important to understand that we have a relatively small graduate programme and thus limited TA pool. Efforts will be made to increase the pool and to look outside the programme (at alumni, for example) to bolster the TA team.</p>	<p>GPD, Graduate Secretary</p>	<p>Evaluation over the summer of 2021.</p>	<p>Extra funding for taking on additional TAs</p>
<p>Review of the first-year curriculum of the Faculty of Social Science and Humanities as a whole.</p>	<p>Re-designing the FSSH first-year programme map will be a priority in the 2021-2022 academic year, with changes implemented in the Fall 2022 semester. We will discuss moving away from the current approach so students have more choice in terms of their first-year courses; this applies to all incoming FSSH students</p>	<p>Dean, Associate Dean Innovation, UPD</p>	<p>Evaluation in the summer and fall of 2020</p>	<p>No immediate resource needs</p>

<p>Offer the required data analysis courses in-house</p>	<p>The new tenure track hire is committed to teaching this course to psychology students in the future (which will also reduce numbers in the other sections). Ideally, the new TF hire will also be able to do this. There is no doubt that this is an ongoing problem that must be rectified.</p>	<p>Dean, UPD, new faculty member</p>	<p>New hire starts in July 2021, re-design of Data Analytics to take place over summer of 2021.</p>	<p>No resource implications</p>
<p>Recommend that a more formal relationship between Recruitment and Marketing and the Program be developed to enhance enrolment as well as student connections to and interest in the University and its Program.</p>	<p>In addition to the measure discussed in the IAT response, next year (2021-2022) we will inaugurate a new Associate Dean, Student Experience who will be responsible for coordinating (amongst several other things) the recruitment efforts of faculty, advisors, and staff.</p>	<p>Dean</p>	<p>New position to commence in June 2021</p>	<p>Working out resource implications.</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 the Academic Resource Committee, Academic Council and the Board of Governors and filed in the Office of the Provost and Vice-President (Academic).

Recommendations not Addressed

Recommendations not addressed and rationale

Recommendation not Addressed	Rationale
3	Additional hires are not available at the moment; TF hire for General Psych program will help diversify course offerings
8, 9, 10, 11, 12	See responses above

Due Date for 18-Month Follow-up on Plan of Action: August 2022

Date of Next Cyclical Review: 2026-2028