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Public Policy and Administration, Bachelor of Public Administration (BPA) and Master of Public Policy and Law (MPPAL), School of Public Policy and Administration, Faculty of Liberal Arts and Professional Studies

Cyclical Program Review – 2007 – 2014

Final Assessment Report and Implementation Plan _ Summary

Reported to Joint-Committee on Quality Assurance: December 12, 2016

Program Description

The first students were admitted into the MPPAL program in September 2007. In addition to the Master’s program, the School offers the Graduate Diploma in Justice System Administration (GDJSA), concurrent or standalone, which admitted its first students in its present format in September 2007.

The Bachelor of Public Administration (BPA) degree program was launched in Fall 2010. It replaced three BA programs (90-credit Ordinary and 120-credit Specialized Honours) in Public Policy and Administration (PPA), Public Policy and Management (PPM), and Public Administration and Justice Studies (PAJS). The program offers a minor option, and In addition, two certificates were launched in 2013 the Professional Certificate in Public Administration and Law and the - Professional Certificate in Public Policy Analysis.

Table with 4 columns: Program, Accepts 2014, Enrolment FTES 2014, Degrees Awarded 2014. Rows include BPA and Master's.

Reviewers appointed by the Vice-Provost Academic:

- Susan Phillips, Professor, School of Public Policy and Administration, Carleton University, Ottawa
Luc Bernier, Professeur titulaire, École nationale d’administration publique, Québec City and Montréal, Quebec
Burkard Eberlein, Associate Professor, Schulich School of Business, York University

Documentation Provided to the External Reviewers

Prior to the site visit, the external reviewers are provided with the following:

- Dean's /Principal's Agenda of Concerns
- Department/Program Omnibus Statement (where applicable)
- Program Self-Study Brief, which includes program structure, curriculum and learning outcomes, program reflection, enrolment and retention data, resources, student input and quality enhancement opportunities
- Faculty CVs
- University, Faculty and Program planning documents

Site Visit: September 16, 17, 2015

The reviewers met with Vice-Provost Academic, Alice Pitt, the Dean of Graduate Studies, Barbara Crow, Vice Dean Kim Michasiw, the Chair of the Department, James Simeon, the Graduate Program Director, Susan Dimock, and the Undergraduate Program Director, Lorne Foster. During the two day site visit, the review team met with faculty and contract instructors, the university librarian, staff, students, alumni and York University administration, and sat in on a graduate and undergraduate class. The review team spent considerable time in McLaughlin College where SPPA is located and visited classrooms both on campus and at the downtown facility where MPPAL courses are held.

Outcome: The Joint Subcommittee on Quality Assurance concluded that the Dean's Implementation Plan, established over the course of much consultation with the program, outlined a comprehensive plan for program enhancements at both the graduate and undergraduate levels. The Committee members noted that the intensive discussions that took place over several months delayed the finalization of the Dean's Implementation Plan, and therefore, consideration of the Cyclical Program Review materials. Progress on the Dean's Implementation Plan will be provided in two stages. In June 2017, the Dean will provide an interim report on the outcomes of "an objective assessment of the feasibility for SPPA to continue to offer the BPA as a Major in its current form" and, in relation to the MPPAL, the assessment of "the potential of the current graduate program" as the foundation for a full-time program. The interim report will revisit the status of action items described in the Dean's Implementation Plan and provide an updated chart with timelines, responsibilities and resources to support the full implementation of the plan or alternate directions as may emerge during the period leading up to the interim report. A final Follow-up Report is due June 2018. The next Cyclical Program Review will begin in the Fall of 2021.

Strengths

Among the many strengths noted by the Reviewers in their report and by the Dean in the Implementation Plan, is the fact that the School of Public Policy and Administration has strong relationships with alumni of the program.

Graduate program

- The programs are designed for mid-career, part time students, carrying on the legacy of the former Atkinson Faculty's commitment to part-time learners. The MPPAL is the only program in Ontario designed for these students.
- Students are frequently promoted at their workplace during the course of the program, indicating that the program can enhance student career paths.
- Students are organized into cohorts, helping them to develop networks among their co-students and with alumni.
- The program offers the only part-time option in the Greater Toronto Area.

Undergraduate program

- The program's law and justice dimension of the program is unique in the discipline.
- The library resources are considered to be very good or excellent.
- The School offers workshops and other services to BPA students to support the search for internships and summer jobs; more students should be encouraged to make use of these.

Opportunities for Enhancement and Reviewer Recommendations

The Review Report provided a fulsome and robust discussion of the materials included in self-study, including the program's agenda of concerns, and appendices and their meetings with faculty and students.

With regards to the School, the reviewers made the following observations.

- The overall leadership model for the School should be reassessed.
- Succession planning for the School's directorship and the program directors needs to be undertaken.
- Sabbatical and leave planning should be improved to ensure consistency in the program.

For the graduate program, the reviewers made recommendations related to the curriculum, including areas to consider incorporating into the programs:

- An analysis of learning outcomes should be used as an approach to quality assessment rather than primarily from the perspective of curriculum development.
- The managerial components of the program are under developed relative to student career interests

- The program should consider covering areas such as collaborative management in the public sector, policy instruments, policy implementation, innovation and public entrepreneurship.
- The program should consider adding a core policy analysis course.
- Pedagogy in the program could be more practically relevant and engaging to professional adult learners, and delivery of the courses could be better suited to adult learners
- The lack of anchor appointments has the potential undermine the capacity to offer the programs and establish a sound research culture.
- Recommendations and observations to consider for the undergraduate degree program included, among others, the following:
 - The program should consider offering some courses online.
 - Consideration of experiential learning opportunities should include ways to accommodate a coop or internship, in addition to activities within regular courses.
 - Changing some 6.0 credit courses to 3.0 credit courses should be explored as an option.

Students don't always know about the experiential education opportunities offered by the program before arriving. Better information prior to admission would be beneficial.

In several places the reviewers had questions and recommendations for the undergraduate curriculum. "Considering that many students work for the provincial government after graduating or for municipalities and related organizations, why not one on local or provincial government?". Another comment was this: "...professional focus is not unique to SPPA but is being experienced across most Canadian universities. In this regard, the required courses are more valued than are a wide range of electives, stressing the need for the core courses to deliver the right mix of theory and practical skills relevant to a public sector job environment." The need for a review of the curriculum is addressed in the Dean's Implementation Plan.

Dean's Implementation Plan

The Dean's Implementation plan comprises four sections. Sections I and II address the planning needs for the undergraduate and graduate programs respectively. Section III addresses the planning needs related to the organizational structure, with a view to ensuring resources are focused on academic needs rather than administrative duties.

Section I – The BPA Program

In Section I the Dean's Implementation Plan notes that the Bachelor of Public Administration faces some challenges with regards to applications, enrolment and retention. In light of this data, the Dean asks the unit to develop a plan that examines what is realistic for the undergraduate program and to present an assessment of the feasibility of additional resources in that light. following:

- the feasibility of the major in its current form and the potential for offering the program as Minor only;
- focus on the learning outcomes of the program;
- consider carefully what courses should be offered by the School's full-time faculty and what should be mounted through collaboration;
- consider what management related curriculum should be included in the program and prepare any subsequent proposals for consideration of the Dean
- Develop blended and online content and outline how experiential education will be incorporated into the learning outcomes framework

Section II - The MPPAL Program

A similar plan should be developed for the MPPAL program, with the following questions in focus: the student application pool, research, curriculum and pedagogy, overload teaching by full-time faculty, careful consideration of the opportunities and challenges of developing a full-time program.

Section III. Organizational/Administrative Issues

There is agreement between the Reviewers, the Program and the Dean's Office that administrative and organizational burdens are impacting student experience at both the undergraduate and graduate levels.

The Program's plan must include a statement that outlines how its administrative needs can be met. Such a statement must offer a clear sense of the School's priorities in relation to the questions raised in Sections I and II and must delineate the opportunity costs of deploying faculty resources to administrative needs, relative to the number of students that are served.

Section IV. Summary and concluding observations

The Dean's Implementation Plan is summarized in the chart below. As mentioned at the outset, the two programs should be considered in and of themselves, but must also be considered in relation to one another. Are they supporting each other in the current model or are

they in competition for resources? The Dean's Office looks forward to collaborating, as the School deems necessary or helpful, and commits to reviewing and assessing the plans in order to determine resource allocation for implementation.

Action	First Responsibility	Final Responsibility	Timeline
1. Develop a plan to address issues raised in Sections I- III.	SPPA	SPPA in collaboration with the Dean's Office	March 31, 2017
2. Develop a Report on the viability of a full-time MPPAL Program	SPPA	MPPAL in collaboration with AD Graduate and Research in LA&PS	March 31 2017

The Follow-up Report, which will be due in June 2018, as prescribed by the York University Quality Assurance Procedures, will give a fulsome report on the status of the development of plans, assessments and implementation progress. The delays in finalizing the Dean's implementation plan must not be repeated for the Follow-up Report.

Alice J. Pitt
 Vice-Provost Academic
 York University