

FINAL ASSESSMENT REPORT AND IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

PROGRAM UNDER REVIEW

PROGRAM	SENATE APPROVAL DATE	PREPARED BY
Psychology	October 11, 2024	Provost and Vice-President

A. SUMMARY OF REVIEW PROCESS & LISTING OF PROGRAMS UNDER REVIEW

SELF-STUDY REVIEW TIMELINE	DATE
1. Self-Study Presented to AQAPC	November 23, 2023
2. Site Visit Conducted	March 26 – 28, 2024
3. Reviewer's Report Received	May 28, 2024
4. Internal Reviewers Response Received	August 26, 2024
5. Dean's Response Received	September 12, 2024

The members of the review committee were:

- Dr. Beth Visser, Lakehead University
- Dr. Dwayne Keough, Algoma University

The academic programs offered by the Department which were examined as part of the review included:

- Bachelor of Science, Psychology
- Bachelor of Arts, Psychology

This review was conducted under the terms and conditions of the IQAP re-ratified by the Quality Council on January 30, 2023 and approved by Senate on June 26, 2023.

B. PROGRAM STRENGTHS

A particular strength of Nipissing's Psychology program is the extraordinary willingness on the part of faculty to meet their students' needs. We heard from students that they appreciated the lengths that faculty members went to in order to get to know them. We also heard that students were engaged in research activities with faculty, even publishing together. The Psychology faculty members are to be commended for their remarkable efforts to support their undergraduate students.

C. OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT AND ENHANCEMENT

NOTE: RECOMMENDATIONS AND COMMENTS ARE AS RECEIVED.

External Reviewers Recommendation #1: It is recommended that all members in the department of psychology participate in a retreat as soon as reasonably possible. We also recommend that the department be provided with a facilitator to guide the discussions. The key topics for discussion should be 1) Masters Programming, 2) The B.Sc. degree, 3) strategic plan, 4) hiring priorities, & 5) undertake a full curriculum review.

Unit's Response: We agree that a retreat should be utilized to identify priorities and near-term goals and aspirations for the program. The Chair recognizes that the high number of current faculty sabbatical leaves may delay the timing of the retreat since full participation is critical to the success of this process. There are several items that have already been agreed upon, including a major modification of the BSc program. A Letter of Intent was submitted Feb. 2024. We look forward to receiving feedback and a decision on this LOI as a signal that our efforts to innovate our programs and curriculum will be supported by the institution.

Dean's Response: I support this recommendation. Position requests, program and curricular revisions, and any potential graduate program proposals must be founded on a coherent programmatic mission and vision grounded in the strategic and academic plans. The Dean's Office will support the program's development of mission and vision statements in any way it can. If it is the program's judgment that a facilitator is necessary for this process to be successful, a proposal including a clear rationale for the role, an indication of the benefits to be gained from it, and a description of the qualifications necessary, should be submitted to the Dean.

Provost's Response: I support the recommendation and guidance of the Dean. I would suggest that the Manager of Quality Assurance and Program innovation facilitate any retreat.

External Reviewers Recommendation #2: We recommend that the department be granted at least 2 tenure-track positions to replace the retiring faculty members, in areas they determine are required from the retreat. We also strongly recommend that the department request a 3rd tenure-track position. The previous department review highlighted that an additional faculty member would be needed, we agree. A full-time position would help offer diverse programming the department strives to provide students (e.g., there were discussions about adding Indigenous content, thus a targeted hire could be considered for this role).

Unit's Response: We obviously welcome this recommendation which goes beyond our suggested request in the IQAP self-study document. We also recognize the financial constraints that will influence any decision around 'new' tenure track positions. The IRC would like to stress that the Psychology faculty complement has been reduced by two as of July 1, 2024, due to retirements. In this way, this recommendation is not for new positions but for the maintenance of the existing positions. Given the relatively large number of students majoring in our two programs, we certainly feel this is reasonable. Before our retreat, we will seek clarity on the necessity for all tenure track position requests to be cross appointed or at least be able to contribute to multiple programs. Members of the IRC and the Psychology programs more broadly, have heard different things in this regard. We have a strong desire to invest the time to complete the comprehensive position request form knowing there is a realistic chance the effort will be supported.

Dean's Response: A cross-appointment in Child & Family Studies and Psychology in the area of Indigenous Youth Mental Health has been approved for the 2025/26 Academic Year. The position will be advertised in September 2024. Future position requests must be grounded in a clear articulation of the future direction of the Psychology program and its vision and mission (See Recommendation #1 and Dean's Response). The ability of a position to contribute to multiple programs (for example, the capacity of a position in Neuroscience to contribute to Biology) would strengthen such requests. I note, however, that requests for faculty positions are subject to budgetary processes and approvals within the Faculty and the University as a whole.

Provost's Response: Requests for positions are reviewed carefully through a rigorous annual process. Since a retreat is needed to determine the direction of the program, any position request would flow from that work which will take significant time and reflection.

External Reviewers Recommendation #3: It is recommended that the department of psychology initiate the process of applying to offer a graduate degree in psychology. Further to this, it is recommended the program chair apply and be awarded the additional course releases that the external reviewers were informed existed for this purpose.

Unit's Response: In response to the second point first, the current Chair, and IRC more broadly, recognize that Chair compensation is governed by the collective agreement. That said, the Department, including PSYC (BA and BSc), CHFS, SOCI, and SWLF, now encompasses approximately 37% of the majors in the Faculty of Arts and Science with only 20% (approx.) of the faculty complement. This mismatch does put a heavy burden on all of us and the Chair in particular. In terms of graduate programming, this has been a long-standing priority for us. There has been a recent movement for members of the Psychology program to get involved with, and begin supervising in, the MA in Sociology Program. While a good initial step, the long-term goal continues to be the development of an MA or MSc followed by a PhD in Psychology. As fully outlined in the Self-study and supported by the external reviewers, support for this development is overdue. The first LOI related to graduate programming was submitted in Nov 2021 and we have never had an official response. We look forward to further discussions with the incoming AVPRGS and the Associate Dean of Graduate Studies related on how to best move things forward related to this recommendation.

Dean's Response: Any proposal for a graduate degree in Psychology must be grounded in a clear articulation of the future direction of the Psychology program and its vision and mission (See Recommendation #1 and Dean's Response). New program proposals should also demonstrate congruence with the University's Strategic Plan and the Academic Plan. I agree with the Unit's Response that consultation with the AVPRiGS and the Associate Dean of Graduate Studies should be central to any such proposal. Chair compensation is governed by the Collective Agreement which allows for a three-credit course release for Graduate Program Coordinators.

Provost's Response: The Dean's response is comprehensive.

External Reviewers Recommendation #4: It is recommended that the department discuss the concerns presented to reviewers about their advanced statistics course and discuss whether an alternative course could be offered to students (e.g., the research methods course offered to BA students). This is a request to help the department retain students and increase the focus to the extremely successful program they have established.

Unit's Response: Curriculum review and renewal will be a central focus of the proposed Faculty Retreat. The various methods and statistical courses within our BA and BSc programs will be carefully considered to ensure we are in line with sector best practice while maintaining our strength in this area. The IRC is certainly aware of the student concerns related to one of our advanced statistics courses that is required for the BSc degree and will ensure this is addressed during the curriculum renewal process.

Dean's Response: I agree with this recommendation. If curriculum review and renewal are to be a central focus of the proposed Faculty Retreat, this must be accompanied by a thorough review of the Program-Level Learning Outcomes and a curriculum map that places all courses, including the advanced statistics course at issue, in relation to each other and the PLLOs. This exercise will demonstrate clearly what contribution each course is making to the PLLOs and whether a course such as the advanced statistic course is truly a core requirement. Any course that hinders student progression in the program without contributing to sector-wide core competencies outlined in updated PLLOs should be removed from program requirements.

Provost's Response: I appreciate that attention will be put on the advanced statistics course. I recommend that the Registrar's Office be included in any conversation, as they can provide the data with respect to student performance/success in these courses. Dr. Kari Rasmussen can provide support in the course design and clarity of learning outcomes. As well, the AVP Students should be included (or a designate) as student academic support is also provided and should align with the expectations of the program.

External Reviewers Recommendation #5: It is recommended that the department of psychology discuss whether new programming could be created between the newly formed programs (e.g., with sociology, child and family studies, or as they see fit) . If it is determined that none can be forged then it is recommended that this be communicated to administration and move forward with the plan that will be developed from their retreat.

Unit's Response: Progress has been made related to this recommendation already, but it is important to remember that these are still early days with the merger of departments not yet a year old. Additionally, the Social Welfare and Social Development group has joined the department as of July 1, 2024. Preliminary meetings of the entire group are planned before the Psychology focused retreat. This order of gatherings will ensure we can effectively address this recommendation. While we anticipate many ways of working together to enhance each other's programs, ultimately, it will be the Psychology group that decides on their future direction. The IRC commits to communicating these plans to administration in a timely manner as per this recommendation.

Dean's Response: I support this recommendation. Psychology shares a number of commonalities with Child and Family Studies, Sociology, and Social Welfare and Social Development demonstrated by the large number of cross-listed courses and required courses held in common between the programs. The Provost has encouraged all programs within Arts & Science to develop and propose innovative programs taking advantage of Nipissing's existing expertise and inspiring hiring strategies that strengthen multiple programs. The Dean's Office is eager to facilitate discussions between complementary programs and to receive innovative program proposals.

Provost's Response: The Dean's response is comprehensive. All effort should be applied to supporting cohesive and cohort programs.

External Reviewers Recommendation #6: It is recommended that the department of psychology engage in discussions to enact major modifications to their B.Sc. degree program, as per their recommendation. Please note that this is already in motion, however the reviewers learned of this as the interviews began. Thus it is recommended that they continue this endeavour as they deem fit.

Unit's Response: As discussed above, an LOI related to this recommendation was submitted in Feb 2024. We look forward to learning whether we have support to continue to develop the full major modification application.

Dean's Response: I support this recommendation. The BSc program in Psychology should be much more successful than it currently is. Major modifications, like program proposals, must be grounded in a clear articulation of the future direction of the Psychology program and its vision and mission (See Recommendation #1 and Dean's Response) and should demonstrate congruence with the University's Strategic Plan and the Academic Plan. I also await the Provost's response to the submitted LOI. As LOI proposals at the time it was submitted did not require decanal comment or support, it may be advisable to resubmit the LOI to the Dean's Office at this time. The Provost will advise.

Provost's Response: The LOI should be submitted to the Dean and align with the recommendations that come out of the Retreat.

External Reviewers Recommendation #7: Based on the previous recommendation, the department should communicate the changes made to their B.Sc. degree to various administrators, along with the description of the B.A. degree requirements, as to avoid any confusion in administration as to what each degree option offers students.

Unit's Response: The Chair and individual members of program have done their utmost to communicate the important differences between our BA and BSc degrees to recruiters, the Registrar's office, and any other member of the University that asks. We will continue to do so but would welcome guidance on why this continues to be poorly understood and how and where to communicate the differences more effectively. If the major modification is approved, the planned enhancements to the degree and change of name will immediately help people outside Psychology better understand the differences.

Dean's Response: A side-by-side comparison of the requirements for a BA and BSc Psychology degree shows that the BSc in Psychology requires twelve additional Science credits outside of Psychology, while the BA allows students to substitute two upper-year Psychology requirements of the BSc with other Psychology courses, if they choose. A Psychology student could receive a BSc in Psychology by completing requirements for a Psychology BA along with some additional non-Psychology Science courses. The clearest way the Psychology program could communicate important differences between the degrees to administration, students, the Ministry, and any others, would be to develop Program-Level Learning Outcomes that are more distinctive than the present ones that differ only in the outcomes that are provided by non-Psychology courses. The curriculum of the BA and BSc must be mapped against these PLLOs to demonstrate precisely where the distinctive capabilities are developed in the progression of the programs. This would provide a clear demonstration, supported by evidence, for the distinction between the two degrees.

Provost's Response: The external reviewers can be assured that "administrators" understand the programs offered by the university, and the distinction between the BA and BSc is well understood. The Dean provides concrete direction to map both programs to ensure that the distinctions are clear to all stakeholders. I also request that consideration of "upper-year" courses is limited to third- and fourth-year courses. It is problematic for the programs if second-year courses are accepted as upper-year courses and it is certainly not consistent with the policies of other universities.

External Reviewers Recommendation #8: It is recommended that the department of psychology roster special topics courses at the 4000 level. This will permit the ability for them to offer unique courses not currently available, which was mentioned during the interview.

Unit's Response: This is an excellent idea. We will add it to our agenda to discuss at the upcoming retreat.

Dean's Response: Special Topics courses at upper year levels can be a useful way for faculty members to introduce undergraduates to their specific research area. I have no objection to receiving a curriculum proposal of this nature.

Provost's Response: As long as a special topics course is approved by ACC and Senate, then there is no issue with the offering of them.

External Reviewers Recommendation #9: The department should work directly with recruitment to support their efforts to attract new students to their program. It is critical that the department assist with the narrative they want presented to prospective students.

Unit's Response: The Chair regularly attends the University Fair, responds to emails from potential students, and meets with the recruitment team annually at the end of the summer to discuss the programs before the Fall recruitment cycle. The Psychology faculty regularly open their lab spaces for tours and give guest lectures to student groups that come to campus. As per this recommendation, the members of the Psychology program are completely open to working directly with recruitment to support their efforts to attract new students to our programs. We look forward to being contacted directly when there is an opportunity to assist with the narrative that is being presented to students beyond the activities spelled out above.

Dean’s Response: Members of the Psychology program have been active in the recruitment process in several ways historically. Recruitment at Nipissing University is currently undergoing a restructuring as part of Project Integrate. As this restructuring unfolds, there will be several new opportunities for faculty members and programs to be part of the process. The Dean’s Office will facilitate coordination between the program and recruitment to take advantage of opportunities for growth.

Provost’s Response: Coordination is a standard operating practice of recruitment at Nipissing. It characterize it otherwise is to misrepresent the efforts of the recruitment offices.

D. IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Below are the recommendations that require specific action as a result of the Review, along with the identification of the position or unit responsible for the action in question. Notwithstanding the position or unit identified as the being responsible for specific recommendations, the Dean of the Faculty has the overall responsibility for ensuring that the recommended actions are undertaken

RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSIBLE MEMBER/UNIT	PROJECTED COMPLETION
Recommendation #1 Retreat	Chair and Dean with Manager, QAPI	December 1, 2024
Recommendation #4 statistics course	Chair and Director T&L	December 1, 2024