



Executive Summary and Implementation Plan

Quality Assurance Cyclical Program Review

Master of Environmental Studies – Northern Environments and Cultures

Faculty of Science and Environmental Studies

September 2018

In accordance with the Lakehead University Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP) and the Ontario Quality Assurance Framework (QAF), the Graduate Coordinator for this program submitted a self-study (March 2015). Volume 1 presented the program descriptions and outcomes, an analytical assessment of the program and program metrics including results from a student survey along with institutional information and statistical data. Volumes 2 and 3, respectively, provided a collection of the program course outlines and the CV's for each full-time faculty member with teaching responsibility in the program.

Two external reviewers and one internal reviewer, selected by the Senate Academic Quality Assurance Sub-committee (SAC-QA) from a set of proposed reviewers, examined the materials and completed a two-day site visit in April 2015. The site visit included meetings with the Provost and Vice-President (Academic), Deputy Provost, Dean of the Faculty of Science and Environmental Studies, Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Studies, Graduate Program Coordinator, Chair – Department of Geography and the Environment, Chair – Anthropology, Director – School of Outdoor Recreation, Parks and Tourism, the University Librarian, faculty members from several academic units that support the program, technicians providing support to the program, current students and recent alumni. The Review Team toured University facilities, including the Anthropology laboratories and the Geospatial Data Centre.

In their report (May 2015), the Review Team provided feedback that describes how the MES NECU program meets the Quality Assurance Framework evaluation criteria and aligns well with the University's mission and academic priorities and commitment to be "responsive to the needs of northern rural and remote communities". The program explicitly supports several of the University's research priorities, including "Cultures, Societies and Social Justice", "The Environment and Natural Resources, "First Nations, Métis, and Inuit (Aboriginal) Research" and "Northern Studies". The admission standards are appropriate.

The admission standards, curriculum structure and delivery, and teaching and assessment methods are appropriate, reflect the current state of the discipline, and are

effective in preparing graduates to meet defined program outcomes and the University's Graduate Degree Level Expectations.

The Review Team summarized the many strengths of the MES NECU program as follows:

“The MES NECU is ... an innovative and unique teaching program ... The success of graduates in both professional and academic milieu indicates that the program functions well and provides insight and skills necessary for employment in northern regions.”

“... key strengths of the MES NECU program are its commitment to and implementation of genuinely interdisciplinary approach ... and ... that it is designed to allow students to conduct original research.”

Furthermore, the Review Team noted that the content and curriculum of courses reflect the interdisciplinary nature of the program which is identified as one of its strengths. At the same time, there is an opportunity to examine how to better introduce and highlight the benefits of this interdisciplinary nature to new students.

The Review Team identified areas for improvement through recommendations including:

1. That an explicit long-term plan for the program be developed,
2. That communications with students be enhanced and instituted earlier in the program, and
3. That funding support for the program be clarified.

The Graduate Coordinator and the Dean of the Faculty of Science and Environmental Studies submitted responses to the Review Team Report (January 2017 and May 2018, respectively). Clarifications and corrections were presented followed by a response to each of the recommendations made by the Review Team.

A Final Assessment Report (FAR) has been prepared to provide a synthesis of the external evaluation and internal response to the recommendations. This report identifies the significant strengths of the program, the opportunities for program improvement and enhancement, and sets out and prioritizes the recommendations that have been selected for implementation.

The Implementation Plan identifies who will be responsible for approving the recommendations set out in the FAR; who will be responsible for providing any resources made necessary by those recommendations; any changes in organization, policy or governance that will be necessary to meet the recommendations; who will be responsible for acting on those recommendations; and timelines for acting on and monitoring the implementation of those recommendations.

Implementation Plan (Part A): Program Responsibilities

Recommendations	Proposed Follow-up	Responsibility*	Timeline
<p>Recommendation 1 and 2:</p> <p>Develop long-term plan for the program</p>	<p>a. Schedule appropriate consultation (i.e. meetings, retreat) with program faculty to discuss governance structure, recruitment, curriculum and other program elements</p> <p>b. Prepare report for the Dean FSES identifying plan</p> <p>c. Bring revised program through Senate review and approval process</p>	<p>Program Coordinator*, Program faculty</p>	<p>a. December 2016</p> <p>b. January 2017</p> <p>c. June 2017</p>
<p>Recommendation 3 and 4:</p> <p>Improve communications with students</p>	<p>a. Adapt promotion and course material to better reflect emphasis on interdisciplinarity</p> <p>b. Prepare information handbook (paper and/or electronic) to clarify logistical and mechanical elements of the program</p>	<p>Program Coordinator*, Program faculty</p>	<p>June 2017 (to reflect program changes)</p>

Implementation Plan (Part B): Decanal & Administration Responsibilities

Recommendation	Proposed Follow-up	Responsibility*	Timeline
Recommendation 5: Dedicate 2.0 FCE to budget of MES NECU program	As part of annual Budget allocation process, consider opportunities and partnerships to offer additional program support	Dean FSES*, Program Coordinator, Dean FSSH	Annually
Report on Recommendations to the Provost and Vice-President (Academic)	Monitor progress of program meeting recommendations and provide summary as part of annual report to the Provost	Dean FSES*	Annually

- Indicates individual with lead responsibility