

4-YEAR POST IQAP FOLLOW-UP REPORT

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

PROGRAM	IQAP REVIEW DATE	PREPARED BY
Biology, Environmental Biology and Technology (DEPT of BIOL & CHEM)	March 1, 2013	Dean of Arts Science

PROGRESS OF PPC RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION	% COMPLETE	RESPONSIBLE MEMBER/UNIT	EXPECTED COMPLETION
1. Multi-Year Course Planning Strategy	20	Chair, DEPT BIOL & CHEM	Mar 31, 2018
2. More Balance Of Course Offerings By Reducing Ecology Courses	70	Chair, DEPT BIOL & CHEM	Mar 31, 2018
3. That the Department of Biology and Chemistry reviews how to include student representation in Departmental committees and meetings	80	Chair, DEPT BIOL & CHEM	Feb 15, 2018
5: That the Department investigates how it could participate in the Ontario Summer Field Course program	100	Chair, DEPT BIOL & CHEM	Sep 1, 2017

SUMMARY OF PROGRESS TO DATE

[The unit will prepare and submit a brief report in which members of the unit comment on the consequences of the review and initiatives undertaken in response to it and any comments from PPC]

The Final Assessment Report arising from the academic review of Biology and Chemistry asks the Department to respond to four of the five recommendations given at the end of the document (D. Recommendations, p. 10).

RECOMMENDATION 1: That the Department adopt a multi-year course planning strategy, two or three years.

Response: The Department is in full agreement with this recommendation and we have had conversations related to this on several occasions over recent years. We recognize the importance of having a predictable path for our students to complete program and certificate requirements in a timely and convenient manner. Since the external review we now offer a more diverse range of courses in Biology and Chemistry. Many of our courses (mostly Ecology courses – see Recommendation #2), are now offered on rotation. However, the greatest challenge to advance planning for course offerings is the inability to predict staffing, in that faculty members may a) receive a course teaching release; b) apply and be approved for a sabbatical leave; and c) be replaced (or not) during a sabbatical leave. The Department is developing a consistent multi-year plan for our course offerings so that students can plan ahead, and we will attempt to adhere to the plan as best we can, given the variables mentioned above.

RECOMMENDATION 2: That the Department provides more balance within its course offerings by reducing the number of Ecology courses offered.

Response: Considering that Biology is a broad foundational discipline that prepares students for a diverse range of careers, we agree that our course offerings should be diverse and have balance. We aim to provide students with a well-rounded undergraduate experience that includes excellent preparation for graduate/professional programs or the workplace keeping in mind the diverse career paths down which a Biology degree can lead. While there is some overlap between the Environmental Science and Ecology courses, they target different audiences, and take different perspectives. Courses based on principles of Ecology include a wide range of specialized areas related to natural resources, which are the foundation of the Northern Ontario economy. Our strength in Ecology arises from opportunities presented by our natural surroundings and the collaborations and partnerships in environmental and natural resource sectors. Rather, we would aim to achieve balance by strengthening those areas of Biology where our curriculum has gaps. Since the external review, the Department has added “non-Ecology” courses (e.g., Evolution, Cell and Molecular Biology) with plans to add others (e.g. Medical Histology) soon. Following Stage 1 Approval, the Department has been working on a Stage 2 document for a proposed program in Biomedical Science. Based on the many inquiries about our offerings in Biomedical Science (in addition to Environmental Science) from prospective students at the annual University Fair, the proposed program will attract additional students to the University and broaden our undergraduate course offerings. Given the high degree of student satisfaction at Nipissing University expressed in various provincial and national surveys and the fact that Biology has grown to have the greatest number of FTEs in the Faculty of Arts and Science, we are clearly moving in the right direction.

RECOMMENDATION 3: That the Department of Biology and Chemistry reviews how to include student representation in Departmental committees and meetings.

Response: At the time of the external academic review, student representatives were not participating in departmental meetings and committees. In past years, however, student representatives have been invited to, and have participated in meetings of the Department and on departmental hiring committees. The Department has never been opposed to having student representation. In consultation with (student) members of the Nipissing University Biology Society executive, we are working to finalize a nomination procedure for student representatives and will continue to invite Biology student representatives to participate in the business of the Department.

RECOMMENDATION 5: That the Department investigates how it could participate in the Ontario Summer Field Course program.

Response: The Ontario Universities Program in Field Biology (OUPFB) (<http://www.oupfb.ca/modules.html>) is a provincial network which allows Biology students from different universities to participate in a range of provincial, national and international field courses offered annually by member Universities. On various occasions, our Department has discussed the possibility of joining this group. In March, 2013, we invited Dr. Jim Staples of the University of Western Ontario to give a presentation to our Department on the OUPFB. However, given the way that our limited number of field courses are operated and funded, where approval to run the course can be rescinded, depending on enrollment, our concern is that our small Department does not have the autonomy or resources needed to regularly mount,

and manage a course that is open to students from across the province. Participation in this network depends on the willingness of individual field course instructors to take on the associated logistical challenges. However, the Galapagos Field Course, that we hope to offer for a third time in Spring 2019, could work under the OUPFB banner. We will continue to investigate how we might participate in the OUPFB. It is ironic, however, that this Recommendation appears to directly conflict with Recommendation #2.

LIST OF ACTION ITEMS LEADING UP TO NEXT REVIEW

ITEM	RESPONSIBLE MEMBER/UNIT	PROJECTED COMPLETION
Develop a 3-year plan for course offerings	Chair, BIOL & CHEM	Mar 31, 2018
Include student representatives at departmental meetings and on committees	Chair, BIOL & CHEM	Feb 15, 2018
New Honours Program in Environmental Chemistry (Stage 2 Planning Document in progress)	Chair, BIOL & CHEM	Sep 1, 2018
New Honours Program in Biomedical Science (Stage 2 Planning Document in preparation)	Chair, BIOL & CHEM	Sept 1, 2018

CONCLUSIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS/NEXT STEPS

[The unit may describe initiatives and plans for the coming 3 to 4 years in preparation for the next program review. Units may wish to consider Section C of the Final Assessment Report which describes opportunities for improvement and enhancement]

Following on the interest in and success of our new Certificate in Forest Resource Management and Conservation, the Department is engaged in talks with forestry professionals about opportunities for more education and research opportunities in Forest Science.