

## Final Assessment Report

### Academic Review

#### Economics

##### **A. Summary**

- i. The Self Study was reviewed by PPC on March 10, 2015.
- ii. The Review Committee consisted of two external reviewers: Dr. Livio Di Matteo, Lakehead University and Dr. Michael Charette, University of Windsor and two internal reviewers, Dr. Jamie Murton and Dr. David Hemsworth.
- iii. The site visit occurred on November 17 and 18, 2014.
- iv. The Reviewers' Report was received on December 5, 2014.
- v. The Unit's response was received on February 17, 2015.
- vi. The Faculty Dean's response was received on February 17, 2015.

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

BA Major  
BA Minor

This review was conducted under the terms and conditions of the IQAP approved by the Nipissing University Senate on May 17, 2013, and ratified by the Quality Council on June 28, 2013.

##### **B. Strengths**

The Review Team noted the following in relation to the strengths of the Economics program: *"The Economics Program at Nipissing provides a high quality education in economics with a modest set of resources. The Economics faculty must be commended for doing much with little. The Economics program is a small program within a small department at what is, of course, a small university, and as a result has evolved to be responsive to the broader needs and opportunities of the university. Economics makes an important contribution to Nipissing University's liberal arts and science offerings. Economics provides important service courses to the Business program. This is a common structure at smaller and mid---sized universities: a relatively small number of Economics majors combined with a relatively large amount of service teaching."*

##### **C. Opportunities for Improvement and Enhancement**

The Review Team offered the following specific recommendations:

1. Average grades in the economics program are lower than the average for all Arts and Sciences courses, especially in first year. This pattern is not unfamiliar to economics programs at other Ontario universities that have substantial service enrollment with students reflecting a range of preparation and abilities as well as other programs with technical and analytical demands that are challenging for their students. Given that it has been pointed out that students in first year often lack the analytical tools to do well, more resources need to be expended on support for students in first year either through additional remedial course requirements or perhaps tutorials.

In its response, the Department noted that *“we are in favour of remedial mathematics resources and tutorials to supplement our first-year courses and have asked for these resources in the past.”*

The Faculty Dean responded that *“student success and retention are challenges for Economics, in particular for the 1st year courses. I support the recommendation of the reviewers in terms of developing additional remedial course requirements or tutorials. I will discuss this further with the Economics faculty.”*

PPC response is as follows: **PPC recommends that the Department develops options to provide first-year students with remedial courses or tutorial help to ensure they have the analytical skills to succeed in the Economics program.**

2. With respect to long term planning and hiring, as department renewal occurs, some consideration should be given to acquiring some faculty expertise in areas of special interest to northern Ontario such as natural resource economics, environmental economics, transportation, regional economics or the economics of First Nations. This would also complement the university’s mission as a university in the north. Some of this new expertise could be gained through selective hiring at the sessional or contract level as the opportunity arises.

The Department responded that *“we agree that a third position in economics is necessary if we are to continue to achieve our mission, maintain our close relationship with our students, increase enrolments, expand our course and program offerings to include a 4-year Honours Specialization, and contribute to interdisciplinary programs with Political Science, Philosophy and Mathematics. An additional faculty member would allow us to expand our course offerings to include senior microeconomic and macroeconomic theory courses, and econometrics, as well as increase our research expertise in areas of special interest to northern Ontario.”*

The Faculty Dean responded that *“the growth of Economics will require new upper--year courses and hence a new faculty position. Considering the budget issues Nipissing is facing, and the enrollment issues, the addition of a new faculty position and the creation of new programs need to be carefully planned. I believe that the potential to create a third position is there given the number of service courses offered in Economics.”*

PPC response is as follows: **PPC notes according to Quality Assurance Framework Reviewers are asked to comment on the “Appropriateness and effectiveness of the academic unit’s use of existing human, physical and financial resources in delivering its**

program(s)”. In making this assessment, reviewers must recognize the institution’s autonomy to determine priorities for funding, space, and faculty allocation.” Accordingly, PPC refers this matter to the Dean for consideration as part of the normal budgetary process. However, PPC recommends that the next hire in Economics should reflect the University’s mission as a university in the North.

**D. PPC RECOMMENDATIONS**

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 of Arts and Science has the overall responsibility for ensuring that the recommended actions are undertaken.

<b>PPC Recommendations</b>	<b>Responsible</b>	<b>Projected Date</b>
<b>(1)That the Department develops options to provide first-year students with remedial courses or tutorial help to ensure they have the analytical skills to succeed in the Economics program.</b>	<b>Department</b>	<b>June 2017</b>
<b>(2)That the next hire in Economics should reflect the University’s mission as a university in the North.</b>	<b>Dean</b>	<b>No specified date</b>