

FINAL ASSESSMENT REPORT

PROGRAM UNDER REVIEW

PROGRAM	SENATE APPROVAL DATE	PREPARED BY
Schulich School of Education	September 13, 2019	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	Oct. 29, 2018
2. Site Visit Conducted	Nov. 29-30, 2018
3. Reviewer's Report Received	Jan. 23, 2019
4. Internal Review Committee's Response Received	Mar. 20, 2019
5. Dean's Response Received	April 29, 2019

The members of the review committee were:

- Dr. John Nadeau (Internal)
- Dr. Carolin Kreber, Cape Breton University (External)
- Dr. Paul Berger, Laurentian University (External)

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

- Bachelor of Education
- Master of Education (Curriculum & Leadership)
- PhD in Education (Educational Sustainability)
-

This review was conducted under the terms and conditions of the IQAP approved by Senate on May 17, 2013.

B. PROGRAM STRENGTHS

External Reviewers: There seems to be strong alignment between Nipissing University's mission, Nipissing University and OCAV degree level expectations/standards, and program outcomes for the BEd, MEd and PhD. Assessment procedures, admission requirements, length of study and rate of degree completion seem appropriate and consistent with those of similar programs at comparable universities with which we are familiar.

In the BEd program, we heard from students and faculty members that there are many opportunities for hands-on learning and for connecting theory to practice in meaningful ways. The early start and structure of the student teaching placements, allowing for practice to be explored in courses, was one element of this. Divisional courses, where students worked on assignments for teaching portfolios that would be of immediate value to themselves, and in some cases peers, as they start their teaching careers, is another example.

One BEd student noted that “we’re doing things that teachers do” such as teaching to the rest of the class. We heard from students and faculty members that action research projects give students the opportunity to work on things that are valuable to them in their placements and as beginning teachers and that many instructors bring world events into their courses. We were pleased to hear that equity and inclusion, and to some extent, Indigenous Education, are infused into content courses, and that some students are challenged to create cross-curricular assignments, helping to break down the silo mentality prevalent in some schools.

The ITEP and TILSL programs are important programs supporting Indigenous students in gaining a diploma, certification or BEd.

We heard that there is a robust mechanism in place to gather BEd student ideas for consideration by faculty members, and that this process has led to positive changes. We commend the commitment to acting on student feedback.

With regards to the PhD program, we highlight as strengths the annual progression reports that students are expected to complete and the comprehensive examination, both procedures representing important initiatives that support student progression and success.

Faculty members teaching on the MEd and PhD programs all hold doctoral degrees and are research active. Faculty members’ research interests and areas of research engagement are diverse, which entails a range of choices and opportunities for students in terms of thesis supervision and graduate research assistantships.

There is an impressive range of graduate courses on offer for both MEd and doctoral students, which speaks further to the faculty’s rich and diverse research interests.

The faculty also make strong contributions to academic and professional associations and communities outside of Nipissing University.

Students seem to benefit from numerous learning opportunities beyond the classroom and receive robust support when applying for external funding. We also note as a strength of the doctoral program that all students receive \$10,000 in residency funding. Since the PhD program requires two summer institutes/residencies, the available funding makes the program more affordable, and, by extension, competitive.

We deem the programs we reviewed to be of appropriate quality.

C. OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT AND ENHANCEMENT

External Reviewers Recommendation #1: Faculty renewal

The Nipissing faculty complement is comprised almost entirely of full-time faculty members and they are “aging up” with a large percentage set to retire in the next 10 years. Planning for faculty renewal is important to maintain capacity to deliver the BEd program.

Unit’s Response: We recognize that we are a highly experienced faculty. As our BEd student numbers continue to renew and faculty begin to retire, we will work to maintain and enhance our faculty complement; we will also look to engage part-time faculty who are working professionals with current and/or recent experience in the school system.

Dean’s Response: Acceptances for the BEd program have increased 115% for the 2019-20 academic year, and we have three faculty members retiring this year. It will be necessary to hire part time faculty who are currently working in the school system. It is not possible at this point to know whether the increase in numbers is the beginning of a new trend in teacher education or whether it is an anomalous year. If it is a trend, we will begin to anticipate areas in which a tenure-track hire would best support the program.

Provost’s Response: Planning for faculty renewal was established as part of the annual academic planning process in 2018-2019. The Unit is invited through the annual academic planning process to annually consider and anticipate changes to faculty complement in the context of programme development and delivery.

External Reviewers Recommendation #2: Classroom management

Consider how to make it possible for all BEd students take a course on classroom management. This is typically an area of great concern for teacher candidates and we have understood that it is currently an elective course that not all students can take.

Unit’s Response: Over the past few years, we have noted that this particular elective is well-subscribed by students. When we moved to the two-year program, we committed to watch for these patterns and make adjustments as necessary. Making classroom management mandatory has been an ongoing conversation at program meetings for the BEd programs and we thank the committee for its observation. At the February 18, 2019 faculty council meeting, *Inclusive and Proactive Management* was approved as a required course for all BEd students entering the program after September of 2020.

Dean’s Response: This motion will go the Faculty Council from ARCC. If approved, classroom management will become a required course and Technology Enhanced Teaching and Learning will become an elective. We will continue to listen to students and Associate Teachers as they make recommendations for new areas of focus in the program.

External Reviewers Recommendation #3: Indigenous education

We heard that Indigenous Education is “seeping into courses” rather than being specifically planned for broad inclusion. We believe faculty members are very open to increasing their capacity in this area and recommend a curriculum specialist or other strategies to help faculty members Indigenous curriculum and their teaching.

Unit's Response: The Chair in Indigenous Teacher Education has put forward a number of suggestions to ensure that broader inclusion of Indigenous content takes place in our BEd programs; this may include review of course outlines, developing workshops for faculty, and continuing the ongoing institutional efforts at Indigenization (i.e., through the Office of Indigenous Initiatives).

Dean's Response: Institutionally, it is time to require a course in Indigenous education in every degree program. We are working with the Chair in Indigenous Education to ensure an appropriate course in the BEd program. Our original decision to include Indigenous content in a variety of courses is not effectively providing the required content.

Provost's Response: The Indigenization Steering Committee is in the process of developing a strategic plan. This entails a consultative process with students, staff, faculty, and community in the areas of: 1) Governance, Vision Statements and Strategic Plans, 2) Indigenous Student Success, 3) Teaching and Learning, 4) Human Resources, and 5) Research and Community Engagement. The Strategy will inform all units developing their approaches to indigenization.

External Reviewers Recommendation #4: Climate change education

Our world urgently needs to tackle climate change. To do so will require many transformations, both technical and cultural. We heard that teaching about climate change may be encountered in the IS science course and the elective course in Environmental Education. We recommend that the Faculty consider how all teacher candidates can learn to incorporate climate change teaching in the divisions and subjects they will teach.

Unit's Response: While we do not currently offer a dedicated course in climate change education, some of this content is addressed in our mandatory science courses for P/J and J/I, the J/I and I/S science electives, and our elective course on environmental education. Climate Change Education is always an option, dependent on individual faculty members' interpretation of its implications in various areas. We will consider adding climate change outcomes to appropriate courses that might include: Social Studies, Science, Geography, Environmental Education, Outdoor and Experiential Education.

Dean's Response: Moving forward, including course learning outcomes that address climate change will be discussed at Faculty Council as we consider ways in which to adjust aspects of course programming in the BEd degree.

Recommendations 3 and 4 - Combined Response:

Unit's Response: We are considering the development of a seasonal land-based experience for all BEd students that would naturally integrate Indigenous content and climate change in an educationally sustainable way and would feed nicely into our MEd and PhD programs.

Dean's Response: In collaboration with our Chair in Indigenous Education, work is underway on this course with a tentative first offering date of the 2020-21 academic year.

External Reviewers Recommendation #5: ITEP 3rd summer

The change to the length of teacher education programs in Ontario has caused challenges to ITEP delivery that may be met through adding a third summer. This is under consideration and we encourage the Faculty to continue working on a plan that works optimally for ITEP students. Alumni survey results suggest that TILSL students may prefer to have enhanced supports for success in the online courses rather than another summer; the decision around program structure for these courses will not be easy.

Unit's Response: In February 2018, administration completed a series of 360 review meetings of ITEP and TILSL. At that time, it was decided to maintain the current structure of two summers and two F/W sessions. We will continue to advocate for the Student Success Coordinator who provides enhanced support for ITEP and TILSL students in online and face-to-face courses.

Dean's Response: We have put forward a request to make the Student Success Coordinator a fulltime permanent position.

Provost's Response: The external review suggests that enhanced support maybe offered through technology rather than personnel.

External Reviewers Recommendation #6: Workshops

Students suggested that workshops to help them understand things such as professionalism, including the interview process, MEd possibilities and AQ courses, would be helpful. We recommend tasking the Teacher Candidate Advisory Council with determining student demand for possible workshop topics and then considering which could be offered to enhance the program and student experience.

Unit's Response: Students have workshops available to them through the professional learning centre and during the designated professional learning week. While these workshops vary year to year, they are not mandatory. Topics typically include professionalism, resume writing, the interview process, MEd possibilities, and AQ courses. Students are encouraged to maintain communication with their Teacher Candidate Advisory Council members as well as the professional learning coordinator for possible workshop topics that could be offered to enhance the program and student experience.

Dean's Response: The SSoE has a long history of providing workshops to students. Professional Week is a unique feature that was developed for just this purpose. I believe this recommendation speaks more to the lack of awareness on the part of our students and of the need for us to find more effective ways of communicating these opportunities to our students.

Provost's Response: As SSoE becomes part of the new Faculty for education and Professional Studies July 1st, 2019, there is an opportunity to explore ways of supporting learning about professionalism in collaboration with other professional schools, and Faculty of Arts and Science.

External Reviewers Recommendation # 7: Practicum feedback

Consider implementing a mechanism to encourage student feedback on their practicum experience. While we believe that most students are satisfied with their associate teachers and we acknowledge the challenges in finding associate teachers, they are critical to teacher education

programs and it is important that they support teacher candidates and the program. In cases where there are student concerns about the associate teacher, an avenue to voice the concerns is needed.

Unit's Response: In the Fall of 2018, the Association Dean initiated a practicum survey for students to solicit their feedback regarding their practicum experience. The practicum office maintains an open door policy for student concerns about practicum and when warranted, practicum placements can be modified. As well, students are encouraged to communicate with their chairs who can then bring issues forward to the practicum office or to the Dean's Advisory Committee.

Dean's Response: The above-mentioned survey will be ongoing and will assist us in ensuring that our students are having productive and supported practicum experiences.

Provost's Response: This work should also connect with the new Dean of Teaching as development of infrastructure to support experiential learning, including work integrated learning, will be part of their portfolio.

External Reviewers Recommendation #8: Grading

BEEd graduating averages appear to be considerably inflated compared to entrance or concurrent program averages. This is a common phenomenon at many Faculties of Education across Ontario. While many justifications are typically provided (not just at Nipissing), such as more chances for mastery learning or better instruction, it is generally recognized that when the average marks on exit are in the high 80s, grades have substantially lost their meaning as conveyors of information to students and others.

Changing the culture of grading at a Faculty of Education can be a very painful process. Consideration should be given as to the benefits versus the drawbacks. Benefits may include modelling that is closer to what we hope teacher candidates will do as teachers, and more accurate feedback regarding teacher candidate competency. We recommend that the Faculty consider whether to pursue a reset of grading practices, proceeding if there is wide agreement to do so.

Unit's Response: The purpose of assessment, authentic assessment techniques, grading, and inflation of marks will continue to be ongoing discussions in our faculty and at the divisional level. As noted by the review team, this is a difficult topic that requires wide agreement of the faculty.

Dean's Response: Though a difficult topic, it is important that we critically examine our assessment and evaluation practices in the program, generally, and in individual courses. In addition to ongoing faculty discussions about the high grades in our BEEd courses, student continue to express frustration with self and peer assessment, and what they perceive to be an unnecessary focus on group work.

Provost's Response: The Dean of Teaching may be able to assist with identifying best practices in the field.

External Reviewers: Seven recommendations stand out for us for the MEd and PhD programs:

External Reviewers Recommendation #9: Introduce different concentrations/specializations for the MEd

Within each of the three available routes for the MEd, students, at present, choose between four and seven course electives. Over twenty electives are listed in BEd/PhD Table 4.3. While it is very unlikely that all these courses are available all the time, even if only ten of these were available students nonetheless would have a rather broad choice. While some choice is good, many students may appreciate the opportunity to focus. We suggest introducing different concentrations, each with clearly defined learning outcomes. When selecting a concentration, students would then need to choose a certain number of courses from a more limited group of courses. This change would help students build expertise in an area of interest.

Unit's Response: At present, there are a set of themes (i.e., Literacy, Adult Ed) available to MEd students that are largely reflective of a formal education focus. As we begin to explore reducing from three to two routes, we will redefine our program learning outcomes and what an MEd for the SSoE looks like. This will likely require some consideration of where our students are coming from (i.e., education, nursing, business, etc.) as well as a reconsideration of what we want to be known for. At present, we are accredited to offer an MEd in curriculum leadership; this may require reapplication to COU to broaden beyond the traditional education focus.

Dean's Response: Graduate faculty are actively engaged in beginning a review of the MEd program. Applications are down and it is vital that we review and refresh the structure and programming of the MEd degree.

Provost's Response: Any programme review and renewal will be supported by alignment with the new NU-IQAP.

External Reviewers Recommendation #10: Clarify different expectations for MEd and doctoral students on master level graduate courses

Although it is appropriate that doctoral students take master level courses, we recommend determining the expectations, learning outcomes and assessments associated with these courses for Doctoral students versus MEd students.

Unit's Response: At present, PhD students are encouraged identify themselves as PhD students to their course instructors. This *ad hoc* approach is not fully captured in our course outlines. We will explore different ways to engage PhD students that allow them to take on such tasks as moderation, planning, leadership, and fostering a more critical perspective in course work.

Dean's Response: This is being actively discussed and, as a graduate faculty, we will develop a clear means of engaging PhD students at a level appropriate for their PhD work.

Provost's Response: The appropriate alignment of learning outcomes with degree expectations is a priority issue to be resolved.

External Reviewers Recommendation #11: Change the core of the PhD program to better reflect (and justify) the focus on 'sustainability' We were surprised to see that the core courses of the doctoral program do not demonstrate a clear and strong focus on educational sustainability. If

educational sustainability is indeed the distinctive aspect of the Nipissing PhD in education, one might argue that one or two core courses should take up that theme. It is also not entirely clear from the self-study, the website and conversations we had with colleagues how the notion of educational sustainability is interpreted. The self-study states that the program seeks to prepare for educational sustainability through an emphasis on inclusivity and wellness, ethical leadership, inquiry-based professional growth and multiple literacies. While we do recognize the linkages between sustainability and these concepts, we feel that these linkages need to be clarified. A course or two that explicitly help students understand the meaning and importance of sustainability to the field of education would strengthen the program.

Unit's Response: At present, there is a lack of understanding among faculty to fully understand what is meant by educational sustainability. Here we are looking at the broader focus more akin to educationally sustainable development that has reach to the cultural, social, ecological, social, even self influences. Admittedly, because the program is relatively new, we have not taken time to guild capacity faculty-wide nor, as of yet, renew the program. A meeting of PhD faculty is required in order to check in with the overall focus of the program, review outcomes, and open a conversation in order to build capacity faculty-wide. We currently do have an elective course that has not been offered recently that focuses on Educational Sustainability, and we will consider offering the course consistently. We are also looking at developing a Week 1 workshop for our residencies that helps students understand the meaning and importance of educational sustainability in various settings, contexts, and fields not simply those deemed formal education.

Dean's Response: Since the external review, those faculty members who have taught in the PhD summer residency have met to discuss ways in which to ensure that the focus on educational sustainability is made more explicit throughout all required courses. As there is a reluctance to increase the number of required courses in the program, faculty agreed that we should offer the Educational Sustainability course as an elective for PhD students in the upcoming Fall semester.

Provost's Response: I am pleased that the SSoE has taken quick action on this recommendation, but will need to see a more articulated description of how our PhD is specifically a PhD in educational sustainability.

External Reviewers Recommendations #12: Consider introducing a professional development program for supervisors (for both programs but especially doctoral supervisors)

Co-teaching seems to be a common practice on the PhD programs during the residencies. We are not sure whether the idea of team teaching extends to graduate supervision, especially at PhD level. If it does, great; if not, this is something the University may wish to consider. Not only do students benefit from differences in perspectives or areas of expertise held by the two supervisors but the practice of graduate supervision is also learned best through observation and socialization. Setting up a mentoring program whereby more experienced supervisors are paired with less experienced supervisors is recommended.

In addition, we recommend that the Faculty of Graduate Studies in collaboration with the new Dean of Teaching develop a professional development program for supervisors addressing the pedagogical, ethical and regulatory/policy components of graduate supervision.

Unit's Response: We recognize importance of mentorship and will reinforce the importance of co-supervision. At present, this is *ad hoc* in the faculty and dependent on relationships among faculty members; a more formalized process with expectations would be welcome. We will work with the School of Graduate Studies to re-introduce the student-supervisor agreement working on the importance of relational principles and understandings for faculty and students. As well, we will work with the new Dean of Teaching to provide a set of workshops that will build and enhance mentoring relationships faculty to faculty as well as faculty to student.

Dean's Response: I have reached out to the Dean of Graduate Studies and Research to discuss the possibility of formalizing the recommended set of guidelines for students and supervisors. This is a detailed and balanced document that could provide much-needed support for supervisors and their students.

Provost's Response: PD for graduate student supervision could easily be part of the faculty PD programme to be developed by Dean of Teaching.

External Reviewers Recommendations #13: Consider formalizing professional development opportunities for PhD students

We commend Nipissing university for affording graduate students many learning opportunities outside the regular academic classroom. Yet, we recommend that the Faculty of Graduate Studies in collaboration with the new Dean of Teaching consider developing a formalized co-curricular program for graduate students similar to the 'transferable skills' programs in the UK. The idea is that the most competitive graduate programs are those that prepare students not just for an academic career, let alone for a single job elsewhere, but for adaptability, flexibility and success in all areas of life (for example, how can research findings be communicated to non-academic audiences, how can doctoral level research expertise be communicated to future employers, etc.)

Unit's Response: Over the years, we have experimented with different ways to support graduate student culture including monthly meetings, a graduate student blog, graduate student orientation. This is often dependent on the perspective of the Graduate Studies Chair at the time. We will consider formalizing the role of the Chair/Coordination in building graduate student culture, particularly for MEd students. Because the PhD program is immersive over a period of weeks, graduate student culture can be built through social gatherings, outside events such as yoga and wellness sessions, BBQs, etc. We will work directly with the School of Graduate Studies to explore more formal opportunities for PhD students (for example, courses to teach, labs to instruct, more sustained funding for conferences and publications).

Dean's Response: I fully support the recommendation and response above.

Provost's Response: Agreed, and again a PD programme for students on Teaching and Learning is a position expectation for the Dean of Teaching.

External Reviewers Recommendation #14: Develop recruitment and retention strategies for international students, MEd and PhD

At present, the percentage of international students studying at Nipissing University is very small. We recommend investing in recruitment strategies to attract more international students and also in retention strategies to support these international students once they have arrived. The strong online component in both the MEd and PhD programs might be a deterrent for

international students on scholarships or those wishing to immigrate into Canada, who, when applying for a post-degree work permit, typically need to have taken face-to-face courses to demonstrate they were in Canada. We suggest exploring the possibility of an on-campus program option.

Unit's Response: It is important to note that these programs were initially developed to provide equity of access to those living in the north; it is for this reason that we moved from a primarily on-campus program to site-based (i.e., all over the north), and finally to our current MEd that can be taken entirely online. In the Fall of 2018, one mandatory MEd courses was offered onsite with another planned for the Winter of 2019 (it was cancelled due to low enrolment). We are committed to offering the required courses onsite in the Fall of 2019.

The PhD does have an onsite component and taking online courses does not preclude them from staying onsite if that is what they choose. We are also exploring ways in which we might provide full-time funding to PhD students who might want a more research-based degree. To recruit and retain, we will explore producing a short promotional video with our PhD students that can be highlighted online and in discussion with current BEd and MEd students. We are also looking to explore ways that we can aim for continuity across all our programs (for example, making educational sustainability a focus from BEd all the way through to PhD; alternately, we would look at point and advanced standing systems similar to other universities).

While recruitment and retention of international students is certainly something we are looking at, we must be careful not to deter from the original intent and mission of our programs. Recruiting international students would also require additional supports at the university-level, particularly with regard to the numbers of onsite courses required, potential language issues, etc.

Dean's Response: Nipissing has actively partnered with two international recruitment agencies but will continue to focus on our commitment to provide access to students in the North.

Provost's Response: The ability to recruit international students for graduate programmes will depend to some degree on the ability to offer choices as to start dates and ways of engaging with the programmes, as well as the ability to study off-line.

External Reviewers Recommendation #15: Incorporate Indigenous perspectives in MEd and PhD courses

In line with the TRC's calls to action (Education and Reconciliation point 62), we recommend providing all graduate students in education with the opportunity to learn about Indigenous knowledge and teaching methods. While this is especially important for members of the teaching profession, members from other professions (for example public health, nursing, social work or business) would also benefit from knowledge about Indigenous cultures. Moreover, Indigenous perspectives are arguably linked to sustainability and we recommend exploring this connection further in the PhD program.

Unit's Response: Over the years, we have increased the amount of Indigenous content in our PhD courses; a more concreted effort is required for MEd courses. In consultation with our Indigenous Chair of Education, we are in process of reviewing course outcomes, and we are considering offering a site-based

course/workshops/land-based experience for faculty. We are also considering whether outcomes can be infused into courses or whether we need a mandatory course across all programs.

Dean’s Response: I anticipate that as part of the Indigenization process, we will be making some unique opportunities available to faculty and staff.

Provost’s Response: As answered in 3. Above for undergraduates

Recommendations 9 through 15 - Combined Response

Unit’s Response: We are looking ahead to a set of meetings and/or retreat for the MEd program and another for the PhD program that will allow us to reflect on the programs, reconnect with our roots, and what we want to be known for in the Schulich School of Education.

Dean’s Response: We have begun this process with our recent meeting of faculty members who have taught in the PhD residency and will continue with two committees that will be populated and will meet to review both the MEd and PhD programming.

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
#1 - Faculty renewal plan	PVPAR	Annual consideration
#2,3,4 and 15 - Curriculum changes	SSoE	Using NU-IQAP to change
#5 - ITEP and TILSL	SSoE	Review supports in 2019-20
#6 - PD on professionalism	SSoE with Dean of Teaching	Develop a program for students at NU by June 2020
#7 - Student feedback on practica	SSoE with Dean of Teaching	Ongoing 2019-20
#8 - Grading	SSoE with Dean of Teaching	Ongoing 2019-20
#9, 10 - Alignment of learning outcomes with degree expectations	SSoE	Report to VPAR by Dec 2019
#11 - Educational sustainability	SSoE	Report to VPAR by Dec 2019
#12 - PD programme for supervisors	SSoE with Dean of Teaching	Develop a program for students at NU by June 2020
#13 - PD programme for students	SSoE with Dean of Teaching	Develop a program for students at NU by June 2020

