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***SUBMITTED TO OUCQA FOR INFORMATION – May 31, 2017***

***APPROVED BY TRENT UNIVERSITY’S SENATE COMMITTEE – Dec 6, 2016***

# CYCLICAL PROGRAM REVIEW COMMITTEE (CPRC)

# FINAL ASSESSMENT REPORT & IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

**MA IN SUSTAINABILITY STUDIES**

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| **DEGREE PROGRAMS BEING REVIEWED** | **MA Sustainability Studies** |
| **EXTERNAL REVIEWERS** | * **Dr. Sandra Lubarsky, Appalachian State University, North Carolina, Sustainable Development** * **Dr. Olaf Weber, University of Waterloo**   **School of Environment, Enterprise and Development** |
| **INTERNAL REPRESENTATIVE** | * **Dr. Jocelyn Williams, Anthropology** |
| **YEAR OF REVIEW** | **2014-2015** |
| **DATE OF SITE VISIT** | **May 28-29, 2015** |
| **DUE DATE FOR IMPLEMENTATION REPORT BY SUSTAINABILITY STUDIES** | **October 1, 2017** |
| **DATE OF NEXT CYCLICAL REVIEW** | **2022-2023** |
| **NEXT STEPS** | * **For Approval by the Provost & VP Academic** * **For Information to Senate** |
| **DATE PREPARED BY CPRC** | **October 5, 2016** |
| **DATE APPROVED BY PROVOST & VP ACADEMIC** | **November 25, 2016** |

This is the first review of the MA in Sustainability Studies. The first intake of students for this program was September 2009. The Cyclical Program Review Committee (CPR) concluded that the MA in Sustainability Studies is a program of Good Quality.

The MA in Sustainability Studies program is designed to enable students to explore the sustainability of human societies and the natural environment and will provide them with the education and training that will prepare them to be intellectual and organizational leaders within academia, government, industry and the non-profit sector.

The MA in Sustainability Studies, as described by the reviewers, ‘carries out interdisciplinary graduate education and research that improves understanding of environmental responsibility, social equity, economic health, and cultural vitality and strives to promote leadership in understanding and engaging social, cultural, environmental, and economic dimensions of sustainability. These goals are consistent with the Trent’s strategic plan and its efforts to foster the environmental, social and economic dimensions of sustainability. In addition, the program advances the professional development of students, requiring research that is community-based and directed toward real world problem-solving with tangible value for community partners.’

The MA in Sustainability is unique from other programs as it integrates environmental studies, Indigenous studies, and business with a focus on curricular engagement and community development. The Program is well aligned with the university’s strategic areas of institutional strength and growth, which include the Environment, Sustainability Studies and Indigenous Studies are areas of institutional strength and growth.

**SUMMARY OF PROCESS**

During the 2014-2015 academic year, the MA in Sustainability Studies underwent a review. Two arm’s-length external reviewers (Dr. Sandra Lubarsky, Appalachian State University; Dr. Olaf Weber, University of Waterloo) and one internal member (Dr. Jocelyn Williams, Anthropology) were invited to review the self-study documentation and then conducted a site visit to the university on May 28-29, 2015.

This Final Assessment Report (FAR), in accordance with Trent University’s Institutional Quality Assurance Policy (IQAP), provides a synthesis of the cyclical review of the undergraduate degree programs. The report considers four evaluation documents: the Program’s Self-Study, the External Reviewers’ Report, the Program Response, and the Decanal Response. A summary of the review process is as follows: the academic unit(s) is responsible for completing a self-study which encompasses all degree programs under review. The self-study addresses all components of the evaluation criteria as outlined in Trent’s IQAP. Appendices will typically include the course outlines in each of the degree programs, CVs for full-time faculty members teaching in the degree programs, learning outcome and enrolment data tables. Qualified external reviewers are invited to conduct a review of the degree programs which involves a review of all relevant documentation (self-study, appendices, IQAP), and participating in a university site visit. During the site visit reviewers meet with the Provost and Vice President Academic, relevant Dean(s), the Chair and or Director of the degree program(s), full- and part-time faculty, support staff and students. Once the external reviewers’ report is received both the program and dean provide responses to the report.

The Cyclical Program Review Committee (CPRC) reviews and assesses the quality of the degree programs based on the four review documents and reports on significant program strengths, opportunities for improvement and enhancement, and the implementation of recommendations.

The Implementation Plan identifies those recommendations selected for implementation, and specifies: proposed follow-up, who is responsible for leading the follow-up, and the specific timeline for addressing the recommendation, if applicable. Academic units, in consultation with the respective Dean(s), will submit an Implementation Report in response to the recommendations identified for follow-up.

**SIGNIFICANT PROGRAM STRENGTHS**

* Most notably the reviewers remarked that this Program ‘has the capacity to be an international model for sustainability studies.’ This program is interdisciplinary and draws from the expertise of multiple programs across the disciplines. It educates students for leadership roles in their communities.’
* ‘Students are exposed to contemporary issues in sustainability relevant to Canadian communities, eg sustainability in mining and first nations. For example, the integration of Indigenous knowledge provides graduates with ‘the capacity to engage in the resource sector with stakeholders and Indigenous people regarding resource use. Student training is unusual in this regard and affords them excellent job opportunities globally.’
* Integrating theory and practice with a community based research component is part of the core curriculum of this program and is an innovative component that allows for ‘the practice of sustainability.’
* Faculty, contributing to this program represent ‘an impressive intellectual community, comprised of active and productive scholars with an extensive range of expertise and an inspiring commitment to the MA SS program. Core courses are fully team-taught, providing an interdisciplinary intellectual experience and creating a culture of interdisciplinarity. Students are supervised by faculty who are well-versed and often have active research agendas related to important currents in sustainability, eg Northern studies, health studies, Indigenous studies and business.
* ‘Students have the opportunity to study one on one with faculty and to tailor their reading to their particular intellectual needs. Student research is impressive and is ‘an important indicator of the program’s success in connecting theory and practice.’ A number of students have authored or co-authored academic papers which is unusual among master’s level students in the social sciences.’

**OPPORTUNITIES FOR PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT AND ENHANCEMENT**

* Recurring comments from both the External Reviewers and the Program were that the program’s capacity and further program development are significantly curtailed by the current level of resource support. With the adoption of the new budget model, Responsibility Centred Management, Deans(s) will ensure that programs receive funds relevant to student numbers enrolled in individual programs. As well the Graduate Dean will work closely with the relevant Undergraduate Deans to ensure sufficient faculty resources are in place.
* MA SS students need to be aware of, and be able to access courses in other graduate programs in the university.
* Students value experiential education opportunities. There is a need for a proactive, integrated strategic approach to service and relationship management between program and key community stakeholders to identify, coordinate and manage field placement sites.
* The Colloquium course allows for opportunities for greater collaboration between students and faculty, in particular deepening exposure to Indigenous studies.
* An advising handbook should be developed for faculty, and should include: program expectations and timelines, listing of relevant and available graduate courses, and important forms.

**COMPLETE LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS**

**RECOMMENDATION 1**

A distributive graduate program such as the MA SS is very cost effective, but it requires two principle investments: a) core courses that are taught on-load and b) sufficient release time for the program director. As it is, the program relies heavily on the goodwill of faculty who are not compensated for teaching in the program. To insure a consistent, reliable curriculum--one that can be sustained over time--we recommend that core courses be taught on-load. This will recognize faculty effort, insure a committed core faculty, and stabilize the program. This will require dedicating a portion of a faculty member's line to the MA SS program. In addition, we recommend that the program director receive release time equivalent to the time spent directing the program, factoring in time for the director to pursue avenues that will lead to program growth.

Program Response

* Courses Taught on Overload – Compensation for graduate teaching and supervision at Trent has been an ongoing issue that precedes this Program. The Current Dean of Graduate Studies has made this a priority in order to assure sustainability of graduate studies.
* Director Compensation – 0.5 release time is consistent with current practice at the University. Increased administrative support would assist with the demands and responsibilities of the Director position.

Decanal Response

* Courses Taught on Overload – With the University’s new Responsibility Centred Management, the issue of faculty teaching courses on-load will be an issue discussed between the undergraduate and graduate deans.
* Director Compensation – The issue of director compensation is part of the Trent University Faculty Association Collective Agreement.

**RECOMMENDATION 2**

A marketing strategy should be developed to support and enable program growth. This is an innovative and vibrant program which can and should attract a larger population of students and which deserves to be better known. For example, the program could be marketed to industry on the basis of its unique combination of sustainability and indigenous studies and the preparation of students to mediate stakeholder negotiations over resource use.

Program Response

Marketing responsibilities are central through the Graduate Studies Office. To attract potential students, the Program has recently created a Facebook page, improved its webpage, and highlighted student profiles and program events. The Program will continue to create a ‘brand’ and will work with the Advancement Office to improve student support in order to remain competitive.

Decanal Response

The institutional funds are specifically marked for graduate student enrolment. An effective advertising campaign would be beneficial to the Program. Graduate Studies continues to revise and update web presence for graduate programs. It is noteworthy to mention that the Dean is continually impressed with the quality of both internal and external applicants to the Program.

**RECOMMENDATION 3**

Consideration should be given to anchoring the program within a larger unit. Any such integration must take into account the importance of maintaining the character and purposes of this unique master’s program. The difficulty is finding a way to support the entrepreneurial character of the MA SS program with its broad network of relations while embedding it in a conventional institutional unit. But as long as the MA SS program remains independent of such a unit, it remains vulnerable in terms of resources, faculty, and etc. As the new School for the Environment evolves, it might be a good home to the MA SS program. One immediate benefit would be administrative consolidation, providing the program with more than 9 hours of administrative support, which it badly needs. But this larger unit would need to be sensitive to the needs of a deeply interdisciplinary program that has relations with faculty and programs throughout the campus.

Program Response

There are no core faculty due to the interdisciplinary nature of the program; the program draws upon faculty from multiple undergraduate programs and across three disciplines. A strength of this Program is that the fact that faculty come together outside of their academic units in a collaborative research and teaching culture. This embodies the vision of Trent’s vision as an interdisciplinary community. Placing the program into a single undergraduate program may limit flexibility and the entrepreneurial capacity of the program. Program prefers to be anchored in the Graduate Studies Program.

Decanal Response

The Director should continue to work with the Dean of Graduate Studies to ensure the Program receives sufficient support.

**RECOMMENDATION 4**

Consideration should be given to developing joint programs between the MA SS and other graduate programs, perhaps modeled on such programs that exist at U Waterloo, e.g., MA SS/Indigenous Studies or MA/Environmental Resources. Combined programs combinations might strengthen relations between different faculties, schools and departments and offer field of specialization for students.

Program Response

The Program agrees with this recommendation and will continue to develop new initiatives in this direction. Expansion and development should be strategic; institutional support and resource allocation will need to be considered.

Decanal Response

Dean is in agreement. The Director of the Program should meet with Chairs, and other Deans to discuss possibility of certificates and/or degree programs; and faculty required to support these initiatives.

**RECOMMENDATION 5**

A market analysis should be part of discussions about the development of a professional programme. It is not immediately evident that a professional program will create the income required of professional programs, hence the recommendation that the potential for a professional graduate program be analyzed in detail. The same need for a market study applies to discussion about a certificate program. Although such options might be beneficial to the growth of the MA SS program, first priority should be given to stabilizing the primary program and such development should proceed only after a market study confirms potential.

Program Response

One of the Program’s priorities is to meet the growing demand for more structured hands-on field based learning opportunities. Recently the Program launched a new Professional Certificate Program in Canada Resource Development Training for businesses engaging with First Nations communities, and a new Entrepreneurship and Innovation Management Stream which includes a field placement. This field placement is a challenge to resources and the Program recognizes that significant administration is required to identify, coordinate and manage these placements.

Decanal Response

The development of professional programs has significant merit with careful study and further market research.

**RECOMMENDATION 6**

Revisions to the program curriculum are underway. But the most important way of strengthening the curriculum is to ensure that core courses are taught as part of regular faculty load. In addition, the Colloquium course is in need of a budget so that a sufficient number of external speakers can be scheduled in advance to speak. A reliable network of co-op relationships with businesses, non-profits, and various relevant agencies could also strengthen the curriculum, especially its applied dimension.

Program Response

Faculty Load - The Program agreed that faculty should receive teaching releases for graduate courses. Adequate compensation is required.

Decanal Response

* Faculty Load – Same as Recommendation #1 - With the University’s new Responsibility Centred Management, the issue of faculty teaching courses on-load will be an issue discussed between the undergraduate and graduate deans.
* Colloquium – A budget is available through the Office of Graduate Studies.

**RECOMMENDATION 7**

Though the MA SS program is a quality program, well-aligned with the interdisciplinary character of the university, there seems to be a general ambivalence of the university toward graduate education, making it difficult for the MA SS to reach its full potential. A general strategy for the support of graduate program at the university needs to be developed. This is especially the case in regard to release time for faculty participation in graduate course instruction. For programs that complement the mission of the university, such as the MA SS, we encourage more support at the administrative level.

Program Response

Strategies need to be developed to foster institutional change through both culture and policy, to more clearly reflect how the university sees itself in relation to Graduate Studies. The Dean of Graduate Studies has always made this a priority

Decanal Response

No additional comment.

**IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**

The applicable Dean, in consultation with the Department Chair/Director of the relevant Academic Unit shall be responsible for monitoring the Implementation Plan. The Reporting Date for submitting a follow-up Implementation Report is indicated below and is the responsibility of the Academic Unit in consultation with the Dean.

**DUE DATE FOR IMPLEMENTATION REPORT: October 1, 2017**

The Implementation Report should be submitted to the applicable Dean(s) who will then forward the Report to the Office of the Provost.

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| **Recommendation** | **Proposed Follow-Up**  *If no follow-up is recommended, please clearly indicate ‘No follow up report is required’ and provide rationale.*  *Indicate specific timeline for completion or addressing recommendation if different than Due Date for Implementation Report* | **Position Responsible for Leading Follow-up** |
| Recommendation 1   * That course courses be taught on-load * That the program director receives release time equivalent to his/her time spent directing the program | * No follow-up report is required. This issue is being addressed by graduate and undergraduate deans. * No follow-up report is required. This issue is common to the University and is part of the faculty collective agreement. |  |
| Recommendation 2  That a marketing strategy be developed to support and enable program growth | No follow-up report is required. Graduate Dean is currently responsive to this issue. |  |
| Recommendation 3   * That the Program be integrated into a larger unit, for example the School of the Environment * That the Program be provided with more than 9 hours of administrative support | Comment on whether the Programs views this as a quality issue.  No follow-up is required. This is not considered to affect the quality of the program. | Program Director |
| Recommendation 4  That joint programs be developed between MA in Sustainability Studies and other graduate programs within the university | Update should be provided. | Program Director |
| Recommendation 5  That a market analysis be conducted prior to the development of a professional program or certificate in Sustainability Studies | No follow-up is required. Development of new program not relevant to quality of this program. |  |
| Recommendation 6   * That core courses be taught as part of regular faculty load * That the Colloquium course have a dedicated budget to allow for external speakers * That a reliable network of co-op relationships be developed to strengthen curriculum | * No follow-up report is required. This issue is being addressed by graduate and undergraduate deans. * No follow-up report is required. Program is encouraged to apply for funding through the Office of Graduate Studies. * Program to provide plan. | Program Director; Grad Dean |
| Recommendation 7  That a general strategy be developed for the support of graduate programs at the university | No follow-up is required. Issue of support should be addressed through Responsibility Centred Management. |  |