**Queen's University**
**Executive Summary of the Review of the School of Environmental Studies**

In accordance with Queen's University Quality Assurance Processes (QUQAP), the school of environmental studies submitted a self-study on May 2, 2015 to the faculty of arts and science, school of graduate studies and the office of the provost and vice-principal (academic) to initiate the cyclical program review of its undergraduate and graduate programs [BA, BSc, BScH, MES and PhD]. The approved self-study presented program descriptions, learning outcomes, library report and analyses of data provided by the office of institutional research and planning and the school of graduate studies. Appendices to the self-study contained CVs for each core faculty in the school of environmental studies and the library report.

Three arm's-length reviewers (Peter Duinker, School for Resource and Environmental Studies, Dalhousie University; Mark Seasons, Faculty of Environment, University of Waterloo; and, Paul Martin, Department of Biology, Queen's University) examined the materials and conducted a site visit on November 19 & 20, 2015. The site visit included interviews with the vice-provost (teaching and learning), vice-provost and dean and associate dean of the school of graduate studies, dean, vice-dean, associate deans of arts and science and meetings with cognate heads, undergraduate and graduate students, staff and faculty. The site visit also included a tour a of the analytical services unit (ASU) facilities.

In their report (December 3, 2015), the review team provided feedback that describes how the school of environmental studies meets the QUQAP evaluation criteria and are consistent with the university's mission and academic priorities. The review team noted the high quality of the academic programs offered by the school and both the excellence and hard work of the faculty and staff that support them. The review team commended the school for its ongoing efforts in offering a suite of strong, interdisciplinary environmental programs in both the arts and sciences.

Founded on the opinion that there is significant potential to be realized, the review team did make a number of comments and recommendations pertaining to the future direction for the school and its programs.

Based on all of the above documentation, a *Final Assessment Report* and an *Implementation Plan* were prepared by the vice-provost (teaching and learning) and approved by the provost (June 29, 2016).

The academic programs in the school of environmental studies have been approved to continue and are scheduled for their next review in eight years (2023-2024)

Prepared by the vice-provost (teaching and learning) June 27, 2016

# Final Assessment Report & Implementation Plan for the Cyclical Program Review of the School of Environmental Studies

In accordance with Queen's University Quality Assurance Processes (QUQAP), this final assessment report provides a synthesis of the external evaluation and the internal response and assessments of the undergraduate and graduate programs [BA, BSc, BScH, MES and PhD] delivered by the school of environmental studies. This report identifies the significant strengths of the programs, together with opportunities for program improvement and enhancement, and it sets out and prioritizes the recommendations that have been selected for implementation.

The report includes an implementation plan that identifies who will be responsible for approving the recommendations set out in the final assessment report; who will be responsible for providing any resources entailed 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.

## Summary of the Cyclical Program Review of the Academic Programs in the School of Environmental Studies

The school of environmental studies submitted a self-study to the faculty of arts and science, school of graduate studies and the office of the provost and vice-principal (academic) on May 2, 2015. The self-study presented the program descriptions and learning outcomes, an analytical assessment of the academic programs, and program data including the data collected by the office of institutional research and planning and the school of graduate studies. Appendices to the self-study contained CVs for each core faculty in the school of environmental studies and the library report.

Two arm's-length external reviewers (Peter Duinker, School for Resource and Environmental Studies, Dalhousie University and Mark Seasons, Faculty of Environment, University of Waterloo) and one arm's-length internal reviewer (Paul Martin, Department of Biology, Queen's University) were selected by the vice-provost (teaching and learning) in consultation with the deans of arts and science and the school of graduate studies, from nominations submitted by the school of environmental studies. The review team evaluated the self-study documentation and then conducted a site visit to Queen's on November 19 and 20, 2015. The site visit included interviews with the vice-provost (teaching and learning), vice-provost and dean and associate dean of the school of graduate studies, dean, vice-dean, associate deans of arts and science and meetings with cognate heads, undergraduate and graduate students, staff and faculty. The site visit also included a tour of the analytical services unit (ASU) facilities.

In their report (December 3, 2015), the review team provided feedback that describes how the school of environmental studies meets the QUQAP evaluation criteria and are consistent with the university's mission and academic priorities. The review team noted the high quality of the

academic programs offered by the school and both the excellence and hard work of the faculty and staff that support them. The review team commended the school for its ongoing efforts in offering a suite of strong, interdisciplinary environmental programs in both the arts and sciences.

Based on the opinion that there is significant potential to be realized, the review team did make a number of comments and recommendations pertaining to the future direction for the school and its programs.

The interim director, after consultation with faculty and staff in the program, submitted a response to the review team report (January 4, 2016). The associate dean of arts and science (January 6, 2016) and the dean of the school of graduate studies (January 5, 2016) also submitted their responses to the provost's office. Specific recommendations were discussed, and clarifications and corrections presented.

Subsequent to receipt of the review team report and the internal responses from the faculty and the dean of graduate studies, the senate cyclical program review committee (SCPRC) dedicated its meeting of February 2, 2016 to this particular discussion.

The SCPRC would like to recognize the following strengths of the school of environmental studies:

- Offering truly interdisciplinary programs that complement single discipline programs offered in the faculty of arts and science;
- Excellent faculty who are highly accomplished, productive scholars and are highly regarded both nationally and internationally;
- Excellent staff who foster a positive learning environment;
- Strong, consistent and dedicated leadership since the school's inception in 1995;
- Curriculum and learning outcomes that are well aligned with provincial learning expectations and Queen's strategic mandate.

The SCPRC identified the following opportunities for enhancement. The school is encouraged to continue to explore:

- The undergraduate learning experience with an eye to improving opportunities for inquiry-based learning in large lecture classes. The school is strongly advised to consult with the centre for teaching and learning;
- Ways to increase enrolment in the undergraduate, MES and PhD programs;
- A review of the six under-enrolled BScH Specialization programs;
- New revenue streams for the analytical services unit (ASU) to ensure its financial sustainability;
- Ways to monitor, evaluate and expand the Tongji 2+2 Program;
- Ways to ensure compliance with legislated equity training requirements for all members of the school.

**Summary of the Reviewer's Comments/Recommendations with the Internal Responses**

**Undergraduate Program**

The review team recommended the establishment of a BAH Major program in environmental studies.

> *The school of environmental studies responded that it is exploring this option grounded in existing faculty expertise and capacity, differentiated from and complementary to other units within arts and science and at Queen's, and for revenue-generation.*
>
> *The associate dean of arts and science responded that the faculty is supportive of curriculum revision in the school, but pointed out that a review must be taken first of the six under-enrolled BScH specialization programs in various aspects of environmental science. The response went on to say, that a review must also consider the impact of introducing a BAH Major would have on cognate units. Faculty policy states that new programs must demonstrate that they will be successful in bringing in new student enrolments, without negatively impacting enrolments elsewhere in the faculty, as well as maintaining or increasing the quality of incoming students.*

**Graduate Program**

The review team recommended increasing the MES enrolments (course-based stream) by removing advisor and funding requirements, expanding courses and offering an internship component.

> *The school responded that it will explore these recommendations. Adopting the recommendations could extend graduate training opportunities, decrease financial burden on faculty advisors, and generate revenue. However, a number of concerns were raised within the school including: the faculty resources required to teach additional course offerings; impacts of increased class sizes on learning outcomes; increased workload for the graduate assistant and coordinator; creating a two-tiered system (research- vs. course-based); ensuring quality of applicants (funding package attracts strong students); and, internship constraints.*
>
> *The dean of the school of graduate studies (SGS) responded that with respect to funding, the elimination of funding for MRP (major research paper) students would not be supported by the SGS since both routes to degree completion are equivalent. MRP and thesis students are enrolled in the same degree program with the same learning outcomes and expectations; they simply have a choice in how they meet the degree requirements. If the availability of funding is an issue, the unit could consider lowering its guaranteed funding level for MES students as there is no requirement to guarantee $18k; however this could negatively impact enrolment.*

**Analytical Services Unit (ASU)**

The review team commented on the ASU and the key support role it has played in the school's environmental research.

> *The associate dean of arts and science responded that the faculty is well aware of the importance the ASU is to the school's research mission, as well as research in other cognate units (e.g. biology). The ASU has seen a significant reduction in external contracts over the last several years. The faculty has already engaged with both the director of the ASU and of the school of environmental studies in order to identify new sources of revenue, and consider future initiatives that will keep the unit on a firm financial grounding. The faculty noted that it will continue to provide support moving forward.*

**Implementation Plan:**

| Recommendation | Proposed Follow-up | Responsibility for Leading Follow-up | Timeline for Addressing Recommendation |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Explore all potential avenues to enhance its programs' visibility and enrolments by creating a marketing and promotion strategy for both an on-campus and external audience. | Initiate discussions with director of the school and relevant associate deans in arts and science and school of graduate studies | Deans faculty of arts and science and school of graduate studies | Deans of faculty of arts and science and school of graduate studies' report to the vice-provost (teaching and learning) September 1, 2017 |
| 2. Explore the feasibility of developing a graduate diploma with an eye to expanding the school's program offerings by launching a new credential. | Initiate discussions with director of the school and relevant associate deans in arts and science and school of graduate studies | Dean school of graduate studies | Dean of school of graduate studies' report to the vice-provost (teaching and learning) September 1, 2017 |

**The deans of arts and science and the school of graduate studies shall be responsible for monitoring the implementation plan. The details of progress made will be presented in writing to the vice-provost (teaching and learning) and filed in the office of the provost and vice-principal (academic). Monitoring reports will be posted on the university web site.**

**Final Assessment Report & Implementation Plan** **June 29, 2016**
**Approval Date**

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|---|---|
| **Vice-Provost (Teaching and Learning)** |  **Signature** |
| **Dean, Arts and Science** |  **Signature** |
| **Vice-Provost and Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies** |  **Signature** |
| **Final status of academic programs in the School of Environmental Studies** | **Approved to Continue** |
| **Date of next program review** | **2023/2024 Academic year** |