

TO: Mike Mahon
President and Vice Chancellor

DATE: December 8, 2016

FROM: Alan Siaroff
Chair, Academic Quality Assurance Committee

RE: Master of Science (Management) Academic Quality Assurance Review

In accordance with the U of L *Academic Quality Assurance Policy and Process*, the Academic Quality Assurance Committee approved the review of the Master of Science (Management) at its October 25, 2016 meeting.

The Self Study Committee for this review comprised Debra Basil (Program Review Coordinator), Mary Runte, Carla Carnaghan, and Corie Lazenby. The review produced five documents:¹

1. *MSc in Management: Self Study Report* (received February 29, 2016) – Self Study Report, developed by the M.Sc. (Mgt) Self Study Committee.
2. *MSc Management program: external review report* (received April 22, 2016) – by Jay Handelman (Queens University) and Eric Warts (Rotterdam School of Management) based on their site visit of April 4-6, 2016.
3. M.Sc. (Mgt) desk review by Gregg Macaluso, Leeds School of Business, University of Colorado, Boulder (received March 16, 2016).
4. *MSc in Management: Self-study Committee Response to External Review Report* (received May 20, 2016) – response of the Self Study Committee to the external review.
5. *Dean's Response - Bob Boudreau and Rob Wood (November 8 2016)* (received November 9, 2016) – response to the review, written by Robert Boudreau, Dean of the Faculty of Management, and Robert Wood, Dean of the School of Graduate Studies.

¹ All documents are available upon request.

Self Study

The Self Study Report summarized the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threat for the M.Sc. Management program:

Strengths:

- The program is relatively unique in Canada.
- Faculty support the program.
- The Dean's office is committed to the program.
- Graduate satisfaction with the program is high.
- Graduates generally feel well-prepared for Ph.D. programs.
- Faculty, alumni, and current students view the program as high quality.

Weaknesses:

- The program does not prepare students for working in industry.
- Opinions differ on the optimal program length: 12 months with project, or 24 months with thesis.
- The common core structure works well for the HR/LR and Marketing areas, but less so for the Accounting and Finance areas.
- Not enough of the program students are well prepared and/or well suited to the program goals.
- The program is labour and resource intensive.
- Some faculty perceive a lack of equity regarding involvement in the program and resulting compensation.
- The program's external profile is lacking.
- Administration perceives that faculty are not sufficiently engaged with the program.

Opportunities:

- The U of L is committed to growing graduate programs.
- A downturn in the Alberta economy may provide the opportunity to recruit students with high potential, locally and regionally.
- The Faculty of Management gaining AACSB accreditation may allow the more active pursuit of stronger foreign and domestic students for whom accreditation is a priority.
- Program variants could be developed that have greater industry, market, and area-specific appeal.
- Offering a variety of culminating activities could appeal to a wider audience.

Threats:

- There is a growing number of similar programs in Canada.
- Other institutions are pursuing and gaining AACSB accreditation and it is uncertain when the Faculty of Management will gain its accreditation.
- Consistent under-enrolment in the program may lead to decreased support from senior administration, or even cancellation of the program.

The body of the Self Study Report included several additional program strengths:

- The degree is widely recognized in Canada and around the world.
- The program liaises well with other faculties and with the School of Graduate Studies.
- The program is relevant to each of the U of L Strategic Plan's five strategic priorities.
- Many program graduates go on to complete Ph.D.s, to work in nonprofit organizations, or to take leadership roles in other organizations.
- 69% of alumni's M.Sc. Management theses have been presented at conferences.
- Students and alumni are satisfied with the quality of student advising.
- Faculty are actively engaged in research in their disciplines.

There were several issues mentioned in the body of the report:

- The perceived purpose of the program is not clear. Some see the purpose as Ph.D. preparation; others see it as both preparing students for doctoral studies and preparing them for industry.
- The program has little or no liaison with the business community.
- The program has no formal external community engagement.
- There is no external advisory board for the program.
- Enrolment growth has lagged behind enrolment goals.
- While the number of applicants has increased, the number of offers and registrants has been decreasing. Faculty perceive that the applicant pool is lower quality than desired.
- The average years to graduation for program students has gradually been increasing.
- Faculty feel that communication is lacking between instructors and between program administration and instructors.
- The program was innovative when first introduced, but is now less so, due to the introduction of similar programs at other institutions.
- Some students are concerned about a lack of clear expectations in some classes.
- Workload equity is a concern for some faculty participating in the M.Sc. Management program.
- There is some feeling among faculty that the program is not being adequately promoted.

- There is some faculty concern about curriculum, which may necessitate a review of the content of each course and how the courses fit together.
- Faculty training for thesis supervision and supervisory committee membership may strengthen the student experience.
- The program lacks sufficient skills development for students, e.g. interviewing skills and placement assistance.
- The Faculty of Management should consider officially recognizing and compensating thesis supervision.

The report listed seven possible future directions to improve the program:

1. Improve communication between the program director and the faculty, and among faculty instructors.
2. Revise entry requirements to require sufficient area-specific background and specify verbal and quantitative levels for the GMAT/GRE.
3. Develop a comprehensive marketing strategy.
4. Review and revise curriculum to meet specific area needs.
5. Revise the program structure to provide industry preparation, or delete industry preparation as a pathway.
6. Consider linking student support to merit and teaching/research assistantships.
7. Examine faculty teaching and supervisory compensation, considering the structure used by the Faculty of Arts and Science.

The Self Study had seven questions for the External Reviewers:

1. What is the most appropriate program purpose: Ph.D. preparation, industry preparation, or both?
2. What is the most appropriate program length and are there alternative program structures?
3. Should other culminating activities be considered, beyond just a thesis?
4. What changes to curriculum content and structure should be considered?
5. To address area-specific or industry needs, should different program tracks or new programs be introduced?
6. How can marketing and recruitment for the program be improved?
7. How can resource use and compensation structures be improved?

External Review

I. Desk Review

In his desk review of the Self Study Report, Gregg Macaluso made the following main comments:

- The Faculty of Management has to choose one intent for the M.Sc. program (industry preparation vs. doctoral studies preparation).
- Developing external partnerships is critical.
- If the program becomes more oriented to industry, expand it carefully, keeping in mind the credibility and authenticity of the student placement experience and of the relationship between the program and industry expectations.
- The program should be marketed by developing relationships with potential applicants in targeted demographic groups. To help in marketing the program, consider offering financial support that covers the entire term of the program.
- To help the program liaise with industry, assign a faculty member or administrative professional to handle engaging corporate relationships.
- Develop ways of involving industry partners in the classroom, in case competitions, in coaching, in professional mentoring, etc.
- A one-year duration is appropriate for an M.Sc. program intended to provide training for advanced placement in a corporate setting.
- The “program track” model is effective for this type of program.
- Concerns about the lack of qualified applicants are common to similar programs in the U.S.

II. External Review Report

Overall, the External Review Report stated that faculty commitment for the program is limited and that the program is misaligned with trends in graduate education. The report recommended a fundamental re-evaluation of the MSc Management program, and offered several specific recommendations:

1. Review the national and global marketplace for Master’s degrees in management and the goals and expectations of faculty for the program.
2. Based on the review from recommendation 1, develop integrated learning outcomes for the program.
3. Encourage faculty members to approach graduate studies in a more diverse way, to be cognizant of the fact that not all graduate students will follow an academic career trajectory.
4. Review graduate program-related compensation for faculty members.
5. Include quality assurance and strategy in the responsibilities of the Program Director and Program Committee.

6. Ensure student program alignment by the following:
 - a) Review entry requirements for the program. For example, a minimum GMAT score of 550 is sufficient for a professional Master's program but not for a PhD preparation program.
 - b) Develop a more visible and interactive program website. Consider including on the site webinars that showcase research and describe the experience of being in the program.
 - c) Develop ways to optimize the application and admission funnel. Use active sales approaches, including face-to-face elements in recruitment.
 - d) For incoming international students, build an intensive support program and support package.
7. Offer career and placement support for students.
8. Encourage faculty members to more actively apply for external research grants. Consider implementing grant writing and peer mentoring support.
9. Implement an alumni tracking system to show where alumni go and how the M.Sc. Management influences alumni career trajectory.

Program Response

In their response to the External Review Report, the Self Study Committee addressed each of the specific recommendations:

1. Review the national and global marketplace for Master's degrees in management and the goals and expectations of faculty for the program.	Agreed. The program is challenged to attract students in a saturated market and would benefit from a thorough strategic analysis of competitive offerings.
2. Based on the review from recommendation 1, develop integrated learning outcomes for the program.	Agreed. Moreover, the entire curriculum may need revision.
3. Encourage faculty members to approach graduate studies in a more diverse way, to be cognizant of the fact that not all graduate students will follow an academic career trajectory.	Agreed. Faculty member support for other forms of Master's degrees, should the Faculty decide to go that route, is essential. Relatedly, guidelines for student theses may need to be developed to ensure Master's students have appropriate expectations placed on them.
4. Review graduate program-related compensation for faculty members.	Agreed. A review of graduate program compensation at other faculties and other institutions may be helpful in this.
5. Include quality assurance and strategy in the responsibilities of the Program Director and Program Committee.	The Program Director is currently involved in quality assurance as part of the AACSB accreditation process. In future QA reviews the Program Director could have a greater consultative role. Involving the Program Director and Program Committee in strategy discussions is a good suggestion, but implementing strategic changes requires full faculty involvement.

6. Ensure student program alignment by the following:	
a) Review entry requirements for the program. For example, a minimum GMAT score of 550 is sufficient for a professional Master's program but not for a PhD preparation program.	Agreed. Also, in certain circumstances the GMAT can be waived.
b) Develop a more visible and interactive program website. Consider including on the site webinars that showcase research and describe the experience of being in the program.	Agreed.
c) Develop ways to optimize the application and admission funnel. Use active sales approaches, including face-to-face elements in recruitment.	Agreed. Seeking a higher conversion rate is desirable. Conducting online interviews of prospective students could be beneficial.
d) For incoming international students, build an intensive support program and support package.	It may be useful to split up the current four-day orientation into key facts at the beginning of the program and course and thesis information a few weeks into the semester.
7. Offer career and placement support for students.	Agreed. A career placement and support initiative is resource intensive and perhaps could be coordinated through the School of Graduate Studies. The Program Administrator should also research the proportion of students seeking Ph.D. programs versus those seeking industry employment.
8. Encourage faculty members to more actively apply for external research grants. Consider implementing grant writing and peer mentoring support.	The number of research-oriented faculty in Management has risen over the past few years and so the number of faculty applying for external research funding will likely be increasing. The policies governing graduate student employment should be reviewed to ensure they align with student learning needs and faculty research support needs.
9. Implement an alumni tracking system to show where alumni go and how the M.Sc. Management influences alumni career trajectory.	Agreed. A database of M.Sc. Management alumni could be created.

The Program Response went on to discuss the External Reviewers' commentary on questions identified by the Self Study Committee:

Should Management increase the flexibility of the M.Sc. Management program?	This question was essentially addressed in the External Review response to recommendation 1. Moreover, the External Reviewers suggested a strategic assessment of the purpose of the program, including developing various scenarios for future program design and evaluating these scenarios based on available resources and areas of expertise.
How should the M.Sc. Management curriculum structure be altered?	The External Reviewers encouraged the development of clear learning outcomes and the redesign of the curriculum based on these outcomes.
Does the program neglect the development of student skills?	The External Reviewers addressed this question in their recommendation 7 ("Offer career and placement support for students").
Should the current funding model be altered?	The External Reviewers suggested that faculty members should be encouraged to more actively apply for external research grants so they can better support graduate students.
Should the program length be altered?	This question was essentially addressed in the External Review recommendation 1. The reviewers noted that the market has moved to shorter, more focused Master of Management programs and encouraged an assessment of what program approaches could best fit with the Faculty of Management.
Faculty compensation and equity.	The reviewers addressed this in their recommendation 4 ("Review graduate program-related compensation for faculty members").
Promotion and recruitment.	This is addressed in recommendation 6, where the reviewers suggest "Develop a more visible and interactive program website" and "Develop ways to optimize the application and admission funnel. Use active sales approaches, including face-to-face elements in recruitment."
Should the Faculty of Management begin a Ph.D. program?	The External Reviewers did not address this question directly, but they did suggest a strategic review of the vision and goals for graduate education within the Faculty.

The Program Response also addressed the desk review's response to Self Study Committee questions and initial concerns:

What is the most appropriate program length and are there alternative program structures you can propose?	The desk review suggested that one year is an appropriate length for a Master's program with an industry focus. This may be too short for a PhD-oriented program. A market assessment will give greater clarity on appropriate program foci and attendant program lengths.
To address area-specific or industry needs, should different program tracks or new programs be introduced?	The desk review noted that program tracks can be beneficial, and encouraged cross-institutional collaboration.
Regarding efforts to train students for industry, is it best to: expand these efforts; keep them at the same level; or eliminate them?	The desk review did not offer a specific response to this question, but noted that industry must be the focus for an industry-oriented M.Sc., especially if there is a practicum or internship option. Due to a current lack of resources, any new industry-oriented graduate programs will have to deemphasize practicums or internships in favour of industry experience through other means, like case studies.
If the M.Sc. Management should expand, what is the best way to do this?	The desk review emphasized the need for industry involvement and advocated an internship-based program. Due to resource constraints, the Faculty will have to assess if an internship is a viable culminating activity, as part of a larger strategic reassessment.
What are recommendations for more effective student recruitment?	The desk review suggests focusing recruiting activities on target groups and making the program's web page more effective.
What are recommendations for liaising with industry?	The desk review suggests hiring a person explicitly for this purpose.

Overall, the Self Study Committee pulled the following key messages from the external reviews:

- The Faculty of Management must choose and commit to a strategy for the M.Sc. Management program.
- Recruiting methods for the program must be revamped.
- Management must communicate with the program stakeholders and address their needs.

Dean's Response

The Dean's Response presented comments and proposed actions:

- The M.Sc. (Mgt) program is high quality but has some misalignment.
- A "champion" for the M.Sc. (Mgt) has to be identified, who can lead a strategic review of the program's vision, content, structure, and resourcing.
- The Associate Dean of Management is currently the Acting Director of Management Graduate Programs. This individual will continue in this role during the strategic review process.
- The Faculty of Management and the School of Graduate Studies will work together to build more management content into the skills training provided to graduate students in Management.
- Management will review Theory Into Practice Program offerings to look for opportunities to build career and placement support for Management graduate students.
- Management will implement several actions to ensure alignment between the M.Sc. (Mgt) program and its students. These actions include: evaluating entrance requirements; redeveloping the program web site; studying factors that impact conversion ratios; and developing a student reception and "buddy" program.
- As part of the AACSB International Accreditation process, there is a plan to test learning objectives in four graduate courses and the thesis.
- The Dean of Management will continue to support and expand internal and external research capacity.
- The Acting Director of Management Graduate Programs will develop a short-term marketing and enrolment plan to increase the number of graduate students for the 2017 intake.
- Continue to work on new graduate programming.
- The results of the strategic review will be used in the development of a comprehensive marketing and enrolment plan.
- The results of the strategic review will be used in the hiring of a permanent Director of Management Graduate Programs.

The Academic Quality Assurance Committee is satisfied that the M.Sc. (Mgt) academic quality assurance review has followed the U of L's academic quality assurance process appropriately, and acknowledges the successful completion of the review.

Sincerely,

ORIGINAL SIGNED BY:

Alan Siaroff

Chair, Academic Quality Assurance Committee

Cc: Andrew Hakin, Provost and Vice President (Academic)