



TO: Mike Mahon
President and Vice Chancellor

DATE: October 3, 2017

FROM: Alan Siaroff
Chair, Academic Quality Assurance Committee

RE: Master of Education 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 Education at its September 26, 2017 meeting.

The Self Study Committee for this review comprised David Slomp (Program Review Coordinator), Nancy Grigg, Danny Balderson, and Blythe Shepard. The review produced four documents:¹

1. *Master of Education: Self Study Report* (received March 13, 2017) – Self Study Report, developed by the M.Ed. Self Study Committee.
2. *External Reviewers' Report: May 14, 2017* (received May 15, 2017) – by Jill McClay (University of Alberta) and Anne Marshall (University of Victoria) based on their site visit of April 12 - 13, 2017.
3. Program Response (received June 13, 2017) – response of the Self Study Committee to the external review.
4. Dean's Response (received September 1, 2017) – response to the review, written by Craig Loewen (Dean of the Faculty of Education), Thelma Gunn (Associate Dean of the Faculty of Education), and Robert Wood (Dean of the School of Graduate Studies).

¹ All documents are available upon request.

Self Study

The Self Study identified the strengths of the M.Ed. program:

- The M.Ed. program and each Major and cohort within it have vision statements that are clearly communicated and understood by faculty and students.
- Supervisors feel that students are well prepared to take on the project and capstone culminating options. Students are very satisfied with the supervision of these culminating options.
- Faculty list the three major strengths of the program as: quality of faculty; cohort structure; and class sizes.
- Faculty feel that the program has been strengthened by the ability to tailor core courses to cohorts.
- Faculty members: are committed to the program; feel their perspectives on the program are respected; appreciate the collaboration amongst faculty involved in the program; and are satisfied with the opportunities to teach in the program.
- All faculty surveyed are willing to continue to supervise in the program.
- Marketing for the program is effective.
- Websites do a skillful job of providing information on the program.
- The program positively impacts the professional advancement of graduates.
- Students are satisfied with the graduate program office and the admission process.

The weaknesses of the program identified in the report were:

- The faculty as a whole lack awareness of the overarching vision of the program and have no consensus on the value of the vision.
- Supervisors feel that students in the thesis route need greater support regarding research.
- Faculty feel that more has to be done to involve students in faculty research.
- The loss of established faculty members will make student recruitment more difficult.
- Only 30% of faculty feel support for online teaching is adequate.
- Policies and timelines can make the program inflexible for students who have full-time professional responsibilities.
- The cohort model makes it difficult to place students who have dropped out of sequence.
- Student satisfaction has to be improved with regard to: access to thesis supervision; supervision during the thesis route; and support for thesis students.

The Self Study noted several opportunities for the program:

- A renewal of faculty members, including new tenure-track hires, gives the opportunity to rearticulate the vision for the M.Ed. program and opens the possibility of developing new programs and courses that reflect the strengths and interests of these new faculty.
- There will be more co-supervision opportunities to help mentor new faculty members.
- More students can potentially be drawn from across Canada and around the world.
- Workflow software could be adopted to support student monitoring, tracking, and progress reporting.

The Self Study presented a list of threats to the M.Ed. program:

- Funding cuts to the Faculty of Education and resulting reductions in the number of tenure track positions threaten to undermine program quality, sustainability, and innovation.
- There is pressure to increase the number of students in the program. If this increase happened it would result in larger numbers of students spread over fewer faculty members.
- The increase in M.Ed. funding as a percentage of the total faculty budget raises questions about sustainability.
- Scholarship funding for students in the M.Ed. General program is inequitable.
- Increased Graduate Assistantship costs may reduce the number of assistantships that can be offered.
- There is undervaluing of the Full Load Equivalent calculation for M.Ed. students compared to the other Masters students at the U of L.
- New faculty must be properly trained and mentored on teaching and effective supervision at the graduate level.
- The cohort model may result in too narrow a focus, which could hurt recruitment.
- There is greater competition from an increasing number of M.Ed. programs in Alberta.
- Neuroscience faculty do not have their teaching in the M.Ed. program counted towards their course loads in Neuroscience. This can impact the allocation of positions in hiring plans, which could undermine this collaborative program.

The report included a list of nine recommendations:

1. Implement a graduate forum to facilitate discussion on the M.Ed. program vision and to address issues in the program.
2. Develop more robust processes for the thesis route, including: thesis option application process; collaborative processes to select thesis option students; collaborative process for constituting supervisory committees; and tracking process for monitoring student progress regarding their thesis.
3. Implement workflow software to more effectively track student progress.
4. Clarify processes, expectations, and standards for culminating activities.
5. Revisit the structure of the capstone presentation day.
6. Resolve the FLE credit disparity for students in the M.Ed. program as compared to the other Masters students.
7. Address the inequity in scholarship funding for M.Ed. students.
8. Officially recognize the role of cohort and program leads. Clarify their roles, responsibilities, and credit on Professional Activity Reports.
9. Initiate a working group to develop common expectations for the content of an M.Ed. research course.

The Self Study had ten questions for the External Reviewers:

1. Does the current resourcing and structure of the M.Ed. program support its quality?
2. How can we best ensure the M.Ed. program is providing support and foundation to our new Ph.D. program?
3. How can we address concerns about our cohort structure while maintaining a commitment to specialized programs?
4. Are current M.Ed. course GPAs reasonable? How could we best monitor this issue?
5. How do we manage potential conflicts of interest that occur when sessional faculty teaching in the program are also superintendents that employ students who are enrolled in the classes they teach?

6. With respect to online teaching, what supports should reasonably be expected of the Faculty of Education and of the University?
7. How can we improve the supports for our thesis route students?
8. Should we consider a pure thesis-based (several core courses plus thesis) program option?
9. How do we improve the placement process for students while maintaining flexibility?
10. How can the Faculty of Education ensure that the expanded, accredited M.Ed. Counselling Psychology program is sustainable and will continue to meet the expectations and needs of students?

External Review

The External Review Report summarized the strengths of the M.Ed. program:

- Faculty are committed, collegial, take initiative, and want to provide the best education for students.
- Faculty support for doctoral studies and program accreditation show they are interested in quality education and in knowledge production.
- The cohort model gives students a predictable structure and timing for their programs and allows a focus to develop throughout programs.
- Students view their programs and professors very positively, and program completion rates are excellent.
- Faculty and students appreciate the professionalism, knowledge, student focus, and responsiveness of the support staff.
- Students share their knowledge at the school and school district levels.
- Community educators, administrators, and mental health professionals support the program by supervising field placements, internships, and applied research projects.

Weaknesses and challenges noted in the report included:

- Of the General route students, 17% take more than five years to complete their program.
- Planned cohorts sometimes have to be cancelled due to insufficient enrolment.
- To meet Council on Accreditation of Counsellor Education Programs (CACEP) accreditation requirements the M.Ed. Counselling Psychology will have to increase coursework units and practicum hours, which will make the program more costly for the University and for the students.
- Students have to find their own placements. This makes some students feel pressured and that they are in competition for the best placements.
- Local school districts do not allow their counsellors to supervise practicum students as part of their workload.
- CACEP accreditation will require extensive faculty and financial resources.
- Students are confused about the purpose and criteria behind the three exit routes (Thesis, Project, or Capstone).
- There is variation in the rigour and expectations between different courses.
- For the program to be viewed as credibly leading to Doctoral studies the lack of distinction of superior student work from satisfactory work is a problem.
- The reduced number of faculty members is a critical issue.
- If the Faculty of Education takes on more students at every education level then there will be negative consequences for every program.
- The role of the cohort coordinator is not officially recognized, which causes concern among the faculty.
- Some courses are taught by current or recently retired school district superintendents or administrators. This can cause conflicts of interest when students in these courses are teachers in the instructors' districts.
- There is a wait period for technical support for online learning.
- Scheduling lab space is a problem.

The report compiled recommendations for improvement:

Curriculum:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review the consistency of the quality, expectations, and assessment of the curricula, particularly in research courses and core courses. To address the problem of grade inflation, faculty must discuss grading practices and the commitment to consistent and high quality academic standards. 2. Articulate clear criteria that distinguishes the three exit options. Consider eliminating the Project Route. 3. Before planning new cohorts or promoting the Thesis Route, conduct a needs assessment. 4. Complete a quality assurance review of the M.Ed. in Addictions Counselling. Identify ways to avoid overlap between the three U of L counselling psychology programs. 5. Review and assess the practice of requiring students to find their own practicum placements. Consider equitable honorarium payments. 6. Examine how to address the additional practicum hours required by CACEP accreditation. 7. Consider implementing a program fee for the practicum. This could support a dedicated placement coordinator and some supervision costs.
Cohorts:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 8. Consider increasing the size of cohorts to 20-22. 9. Consider changing the cohort structure of the General stream to a partial "open" cohort model. Think about requiring two to four core courses (e.g., two research methods courses, one curriculum studies course, one assessment course). 10. Review core courses so that they could serve the focuses of all General stream cohorts.
Faculty and Staff:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 11. Prioritize goals and make realistic projections for academic program development. Appoint a new faculty member in Leadership. 12. Focus on increasing research output and tri-council grant success. Use mentorship in this endeavour. 13. When planning program expansion, consider the full scope of a faculty member's responsibilities. Give Neuroscience faculty credit for teaching in the M.Ed. program. 14. Formally recognize the role of Cohort Coordinator. 15. Hire a specialist in online higher education course development. Have this person provide professional development for faculty to help them create online learning opportunities. 16. Consider how new faculty members are mentored into the professoriate, particularly related to graduate supervision and the development of research programs.
Student Experience:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 17. Develop a recruitment plan that addresses priorities, long and short term goals, and steps to achieve goals. 18. Support students in learning about publishing and other dissemination options for their final work. 19. Work with the School of Graduate Studies to address inequities in students' enrolment status and eligibility for awards and other opportunities.

Program Response

In their response to the External Review Report, the Self Study Committee addressed the recommendations from that document:

1. Review the consistency of the quality, expectations, and assessment of the curricula, particularly in research courses and core courses. To address the problem of grade inflation, faculty must discuss grading practices and the commitment to consistent and high quality academic standards.	These two tasks should be done in a retreat, a planning week, and/or Committee of the Whole meetings.
2. Articulate clear criteria that distinguishes the three exit options. Consider eliminating the Project Route.	A committee should be organized to clearly articulate the exit options. The Self Study Committee believes that the Project Route is a valuable exit option and should be maintained.
3. Before planning new cohorts or promoting the Thesis Route, conduct a needs assessment.	A meaningful feasibility study would be difficult to develop and implement, and may be of limited value.
4. Complete a quality assurance review of the M.Ed. in Addictions Counselling. Identify ways to avoid overlap between the three U of L counselling psychology programs.	Agreed.
5. Review and assess the practice of requiring students to find their own practicum placements. Consider equitable honorarium payments.	Two positions have been created: Clinical Practicum Coordinator; and Program Coordinator. These positions are currently unfunded and it will be important to ensure funding for them is not at the expense of other Education programs.
6. Examine how to address the additional practicum hours required by CACEP accreditation.	The current U of L requirement is 150 hours (75 client hours); CACEP requires 500 hours (250 client hours). Supervision sites will likely prefer the lengthier practicum requirement.
7. Consider implementing a program fee for the practicum. This could support a dedicated placement coordinator and some supervision costs.	It is uncertain if the provincial government will allow an additional fee.
8. Consider increasing the size of cohorts to 20-22.	Agreed. This is a goal for the program, but application numbers have not always allowed larger cohorts.
9. Consider changing the cohort structure of the General stream to a partial "open" cohort model. Think about requiring two to four core courses (e.g., two research methods courses, one curriculum studies course, one assessment course).	Agreed. This should be discussed at a Faculty retreat and/or a Committee of the Whole meeting.
10. Review core courses so that they could serve the focuses of all General stream cohorts.	Agreed. This should be discussed at a Faculty retreat and/or a Committee of the Whole meeting.

11. Prioritize goals and make realistic projections for academic program development. Appoint a new faculty member in Leadership.	The Self Study Committee agrees that the Faculty must study the feasibility of a Ph.D. in Counselling Psychology before pursuing the development of this program.
12. Focus on increasing research output and tri-council grant success. Use mentorship in this endeavour.	Agreed. The Faculty of Education is developing a mentorship program for new faculty. However, faculty in Education have five-course teaching loads with intensive supervision, heavy service loads, and limited access to full-time graduate students to support research programs. These factors will have to be addressed for the Faculty to build research capacity. Also, faculty members will have to discuss how to change the distinct research culture in the Faculty of Education.
13. When planning program expansion, consider the full scope of a faculty member's responsibilities. Give Neuroscience faculty credit for teaching in the M.Ed. program.	Agreed.
14. Formally recognize the role of Cohort Coordinator.	Agreed. Formal descriptions of the roles and responsibilities of Cohort Coordinators would address many of the concerns raised by faculty members.
15. Hire a specialist in online higher education course development. Have this person provide professional development for faculty to help them create online learning opportunities.	Drawing on existing expertise through meetings and collaborations will suffice to address issues related to creating online learning opportunities.
16. Consider how new faculty members are mentored into the professoriate, particularly related to graduate supervision and the development of research programs.	Agreed. A more sustained mentorship program for building research programs is needed. Such a mentorship program will require regular meetings throughout the first several years of a new hire's career.
17. Develop a recruitment plan that addresses priorities, long and short term goals, and steps to achieve goals.	Education's Graduate Studies office is implementing a recruitment plan. This plan should be enhanced to target international students and specific subject areas.
18. Support students in learning about publishing and other dissemination options for their final work.	Reimagining the Capstone presentation day to a broader celebration of graduate student research could encourage students to publish their work.
19. Work with the School of Graduate Studies to address inequities in students' enrolment status and eligibility for awards and other opportunities.	Agreed. Addressing the issue of FLE disparities should be a priority for the U of L.

The Self Study Committee also considered another issue discussed by the External Reviewers, that of the potential conflicts of interest when active Superintendents teach classes in which teachers from their School Division are enrolled. The committee agreed that this is a concern and that this practice be discontinued.

Dean's Response

In their response, the Dean of Education and the Dean of Graduate Studies addressed the review recommendations:

1. Review the consistency of the quality, expectations, and assessment of the curricula, particularly in research courses and core courses. To address the problem of grade inflation, faculty must discuss grading practices and the commitment to consistent and high quality academic standards.	<p>In addition to discussions during Faculty Retreat and Committee of the Whole meetings, instructors of the core M.Ed. Research Methods courses should meet as a group to revisit the core elements of these courses and identify elements needed for understanding basic research methods and for preparing for further graduate studies.</p> <p>The M.Ed. Counselling program includes a Research Methods course that spans quantitative and qualitative methods, and not a Nature of Educational Research course like the M.Ed. program. For some Counselling cohorts this course has been tailored for their concentration, which has led to some informal criticism by students and has disadvantaged them for later ventures.</p> <p>Grade inflation has to be discussed.</p>
2. Articulate clear criteria that distinguishes the three exit options. Consider eliminating the Project Route.	The definition of each exit route must be clearly communicated. The Project Route should not be eliminated, but a stronger definition of a project must be developed.
3. Before planning new cohorts or promoting the Thesis Route, conduct a needs assessment.	<p>Agreed regarding a needs assessment for planning new cohorts. Ensuring that cohorts will be of interest for practicing teachers may be necessary.</p> <p>It is unclear how promoting the thesis and a needs assessment for new cohorts are related.</p>
4. Complete a quality assurance review of the M.Ed. in Addictions Counselling. Identify ways to avoid overlap between the three U of L counselling psychology programs.	A QA review of the M.Ed. in Addictions Counselling should be completed after the program has been in place for seven years.
5. Review and assess the practice of requiring students to find their own practicum placements. Consider equitable honorarium payments.	The new positions of Clinical Practicum Coordinator and Program Coordinator are critical for the M.Ed. Counselling Psychology to be accredited and for the success of the Masters of Counselling and the Ph.D. in Counselling Psychology. Also, helping students find suitable placements is imperative. These positions will be compensated with course release components.
6. Examine how to address the additional practicum hours required by CACEP accreditation.	A lengthier practicum is essential for meeting accreditation standards.

7. Consider implementing a program fee for the practicum. This could support a dedicated placement coordinator and some supervision costs.	The Dean's office will have to investigate if there is a need for a practicum fee and if the government would approve such a fee.
8. Consider increasing the size of cohorts to 20-22.	The M.Ed. in Counselling Psychology and the Master of Counselling could support the increased cohort size. But the only way it would be feasible for the other M.Ed. programs is if the General programs were merged with specializations or concentration streams so there was a common set of course courses and additional specialization courses.
9. Consider changing the cohort structure of the General stream to a partial "open" cohort model. Think about requiring two to four core courses (e.g., two research methods courses, one curriculum studies course, one assessment course).	See response to recommendation 8, above. Faculty should explore these possibilities.
10. Review core courses so that they could serve the focuses of all General stream cohorts.	See response to recommendation 8, above. Faculty should explore these possibilities.
11. Prioritize goals and make realistic projections for academic program development. Appoint a new faculty member in Leadership.	It is agreed that a new faculty member in Leadership is a pressing concern and this position has been advertised several times.
12. Focus on increasing research output and tri-council grant success. Use mentorship in this endeavour.	Mentorship from Research Services and other faculty is supported.
13. When planning program expansion, consider the full scope of a faculty member's responsibilities. Give Neuroscience faculty credit for teaching in the M.Ed. program.	Having faculty regularly teach on overload is problematic. To alleviate strain on teaching resources, cohorts may not be regularly offered. Several core courses amongst cohorts may help. The Faculty of Education may have to explore Neuroscience faculty credit, with the collaboration of senior administrators.
14. Formally recognize the role of Cohort Coordinator.	The Dean's office will have to discuss formal guidelines for who is coordinating cohorts, what their responsibilities are, and how they are compensated. Cohort leaders do receive credit for this work in the teaching portion of their Professional Activities Report.
15. Hire a specialist in online higher education course development. Have this person provide professional development for faculty to help them create online learning opportunities.	External training for online instruction is not a pressing concern.

16. Consider how new faculty members are mentored into the professoriate, particularly related to graduate supervision and the development of research programs.	The Dean's office provides mentorship opportunities for all new hires in the faculty and, for new tenure-track faculty, a course release and startup funding for research. The Associate Dean of Graduate Studies is interesting in creating a research-focused support group to discuss research opportunities, networking, research design, data analysis, etc.
17. Develop a recruitment plan that addresses priorities, long and short term goals, and steps to achieve goals.	Agreed.
18. Support students in learning about publishing and other dissemination options for their final work.	<p>The Dean's office agrees with the Self Study Committee's suggestion to reimagine the Capstone presentation day to a broader celebration of graduate student research to encourage students to publish their work. The difficulty is that each Capstone day is tailored to a specific cohort.</p> <p>The Associate Dean of Graduate Studies is interested in providing workshops or seminars on research and publishing for graduate students. But with M.Ed. General concentrations involving part-time students it is difficult to find a time.</p> <p>M.Ed. Counselling Psychology cohorts are taught about research and publishing in their course work and are mentored by faculty and supervisors.</p>
19. Work with the School of Graduate Studies to address inequities in students' enrolment status and eligibility for awards and other opportunities.	The Dean of Graduate Studies wants to develop a funding structure that would suit the Faculty of Education graduate programs.

The Dean's Response also considered the issue of the potential conflicts of interest when active Superintendents teach classes in which teachers from their School Division are enrolled. The use of Superintendents is necessary due to their levels of expertise. If the program cannot use local experts then it cannot be offered on a regular basis. There are some program changes possible, for example: alter or drop courses requiring Superintendents; or provide assessment supports those students impacted by the conflict would be graded by someone else.

The Academic Quality Assurance Committee is satisfied that the Master of Education 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,



Alan Siaroff

Chair, Academic Quality Assurance Committee

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