

Internal Academic Review 2004-2005
School of Policy Studies
Internal Academic Review Committee Report to Senate

School of Policy Studies

The School of Policy Studies features two professional graduate programs which balance theoretical and applied research taught by faculty and senior practitioners. The School has taken a leading role and established a highly visible and collaborative research profile within the University. Faculty members are very well regarded with strong reputations as leaders and analysts on Canadian public policy issues. The School's student body is regionally and professionally diverse and they commented on the benefits of the programs' excellent and numerous networking and employment opportunities. External Reviewers expressed envy for the remarkably professional, qualified and dedicated staff.

The School of Policy Studies has undergone a period of unprecedented change and the amalgamation of the Schools of Policy Studies and Industrial Relations has resulted in a larger, more complex Unit. The intention of the integration was to produce administrative efficiencies and encourage positive interdisciplinary, supportive teaching and research partnerships between the internal disciplines. The challenge of the integration was compounded by faculty turnover, rising enrolment and strong demand for its programs. The School has completed the merger and it is now poised to map a new direction with renewed focus. The Senate Internal Academic Review Committee (IARC)'s key recommendations are intended to guide the Unit as it rebuilds this newer, and larger foundation and to enhance and support its leadership in the multi-disciplinary efforts of the University.

Major Recommendation

1. CURRICULUM REVIEW: The IARC noted the high level of participation of students in the review and gave serious consideration to their comments. Students were clearly aware of the merger and they expressed areas of satisfaction with the quality of the programs and the mix of the academics and practitioners teaching the programs.

vision. The next few years will be crucial in determining the future profile of the School of Policy Studies.

We are grateful for the IAR Committee and the external consultants for their time and advice in our ongoing efforts to improve the School of Policy Studies.

Follow-up on these recommendations and issues will take place in the annual budget and staffing strategy meetings between the Dean of the School of Graduate Studies and the Vice-Principal (Academic)

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Queen's University

learning. Graduates of the programs have enhanced employment options, confidence in their professional capacity (knowledge and skills), and a sophisticated approach to problems in their professional fields.

Instructors often follow disciplinary norms of student evaluation in core courses. In optional courses, there is a wide range of evaluative instruments, including exams, research papers, short assignments, briefing notes, student presentations, group work, and workplace simulations. Students are evaluated on written and other assignments that replicate the work they will undertake in professional settings, such as preparing briefing notes, cabinet memoranda, presentations, and oral briefings.

The courses in the MIR program are designed to provide an appropriate balance between labour and management perspectives. The core courses emphasize a required body of knowledge and skills for an integrated understanding of policy and practice in both Human Resource Management and Labour Relations. The changing skill needs are covered through analytical seminars and elective courses. The course content is heavily oriented towards applied research and policy to meet changing market demands.

3.1 Challenges

The growth of the MPA program, the merger with Industrial Relations, and the focus of new faculty have created significant tension and uncertainty for the students and faculty alike. For example, with the growth of the MPA program from 35 to 50 students, several of the newer faculty expressed concern about larger class sizes. However, the Committee did not see a significant issue with some faculty members having a class size of 35 students. The Committee believes that with increasing enrollments, faculty will need to be encouraged and supported to adjust their pedagogy from a seminar style (traditionally used in SPS) to a lecture-discussion style approach.

The Committee, through faculty interviews found that the current arrangements of allocating teaching credits between faculty and schools make it difficult to have cross-teaching arrangements. There should be greater flexibility of such arrangements between the SPS and other cognate units such as Political Studies and Economics.

The Committee encourages the SPS to conduct an in depth curriculum review of their programs in the coming year. With the growth of the MPA, it is apparent that there are insufficient faculty who are willing to act as supervisors for Masters Research projects. As a result, students feel that they are being actively discouraged from undertaking a research project.

In addition, the merger provides the SPS with an excellent opportunity to examine course requirements and weights, seminar versus lecture-discussion courses, and linkages across programs. The latter may provide opportunity for common or joint elective courses across the three programs. This may alleviate the concern some MIR students expressed that not all courses in the calendar were being offered.

If one examines a university program as input-process-output, then the output side is the placement of its graduates. It is apparent from conversations with the students that they are concerned about their career prospects and the support they are receiving for career planning and placement. The Committee would encourage the SPS to allocate more resources in this area to support students in their job search. The Committee also recognizes that with tight budget constraints, this is a difficult task. However, the SPS may want to reallocate resources from the Industrial Aptitude Test that students take on entering either program to the placement function. It was felt by the IAR Committee that the Industrial Aptitude Test is an unnecessary expense, as the graduate students had

The SPS has a highly qualified and dedicated staff. The staff members have been very understanding about the stress induced by the changes to the School during the merger. They felt that the majority of reallocation of staff and their duties was complete and thus looked forward to the challenges ahead.

5.2 Recommendations

It is recommended that the University and the SPS work together to determine all accessibility issues and address them as soon as possible. In addition, the University should move to identify all deferred maintenance issues in the SPS building and address them in order to create a pleasant work and academic environment.

6.0 Strategic Planning

Over the last year the SPS has been merging under two strategic plans. Once this process is complete, it is important to develop a long-term strategic plan (minimum five years) for the SPS. This will help focus the new amalgamated unit, and set the direction for program development, research focus, and centre support for the SPS.

7.0 Conclusion

The SPS has just gone through a challenging period in its history with the amalgamation with the School of Industrial Relations. It now faces the task of building upon a strong history and an excellent staff and faculty in a collegial and supportive institutional culture. It is hoped that the SPS will find the recommendations of the IRA Committee helpful as they move ahead.