

Final Assessment Report for the Cyclical  
Review of the B.A., B.Sc., and M.Sc. in  
Kinesiology & Physical Education

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## **Part 1: Synthesis of Review Documents**

### **a. Summary of Self-Study**

This was the third cyclical review of the programs offered by the Department of Kinesiology & Physical Education with previous cyclical reviews taking place in 1999 and 2005. Since the last cyclical review of the B.A. and B.Sc., the Department has added a M.Sc. program in Kinesiology entitled Physical Activity & Health that enrolled its first cohort of students in 2006 and has demonstrated steady growth each year. The Department has also in developed a PhD program in Kinesiology which, pending MTCU approval, anticipates enrolling its first cohort of students in September 2015.

One of the recommendations in the 2005 review was the necessity of hiring additional faculty members to support program growth. Since that review, five additional faculty members were added to the department but three additional faculty members were lost.

In the section entitled Concerns of the Unit, the Department expressed the following concerns:

- The large proportion of courses taught by part-time CAS instructors;
- The lack of a method to recognize graduate student supervision with respect to teaching workload;
- The insufficient number of graduate courses taught, which has resulted in graduate course requirements being fulfilled by a number of twinned or directed studies courses;
- The need for additional administrative staff within the Department;
- The need to increase the laboratory and hands-on experiences of the students;
- The impact of the Health Sciences Program on the Department including: faculty workload, demands on laboratory coordinators and graduate teaching assistants, and competition amongst students for required courses.

Throughout the Self-Study, the Department also notes the following:

- Significant curriculum changes are being planned for the undergraduate degrees to better serve the needs of its students.
- The MSc program does not currently meet the requirement of offering two-thirds of its coursework at the graduate level and that the insufficiency of graduate course offerings has resulted in some students taking courses outside of the institution.
- Undergraduate students have the opportunity to pursue a 1.0 research project in their final year and that, while the number of students who pursue this option is small, the quality of their work has been very high.

- The Department identifies their smaller interactive classes at the 1<sup>st</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> year levels, as well as the practicum and laboratory opportunities that students are exposed to, as innovative program-level practices.
- Due to the restricted enrolment in the undergraduate program, the Department performs limited service teaching, but notes that this has increased with the addition of the Health Sciences program.
- In teaching evaluation scores, the departmental mean is consistently higher than both the Faculty of Science and University mean.
- The Department notes that having a dedicated Undergraduate Academic Advisor has allowed the quality of student advising within the undergraduate program to remain relatively high in spite of enrolment growth.
- In describing the relationship between the undergraduate and graduate programs, the Department highlights some of the twinned courses that are taken by both undergraduate and graduate students, as well as graduate students serving as mentors for undergraduate students within research laboratories.
- Progress within the program is monitored closely at both the undergraduate and graduate levels via worksheets and progress reports.
- In terms of strategic planning, the Department identifies the following:
  - limiting the growth of both the undergraduate and graduate programs;
  - maintaining an approximate 2:1 ratio for the BA:BSc;
  - hiring additional faculty to support program growth as well as the possible addition of a PhD program in 2014;
  - increasing the number of unique laboratory offerings to students;
  - hiring additional support and laboratory staff to support program growth.
- All courses within the Department are taught face-to-face and low dropout and failure rates are cited as indicators of success with this mode of delivery.
- A variety of assessment methods are used to track student progress and level of achievement in relation to defined learning objectives and degree level expectations. A future external indicator will be student success in writing the College of Kinesiologists of Ontario accreditation examination.
- The Department feels that the collective faculty expertise is appropriate in its breadth of the areas represented and that most, if not all, faculty members make active service contributions to the discipline, have active research programs and the necessary research and professional output necessary to sustain the programs under review.
- The undergraduate admission average for the Department is higher than average in comparison to other programs in the Faculty of Science and within the University more broadly; program attrition is very low. Overall undergraduate program enrolment has grown steadily during the time period under review.
- Average undergraduate class sizes are purposefully low at the 100- and 400-levels as this is consistent with the design of the curriculum to mentor and foster student success. Average class sizes for the MSc have grown in step with overall enrolment growth since the program began.

- The Department indicates that graduate student funding has not been sufficient to attract the quality of students desired for the MSc.
- Students in both the undergraduate and graduate programs report high employment rates and success in obtaining employment in their field.

In sum, the Self-Study presents a picture at both the undergraduate and graduate level of programs that is, with some exceptions (e.g. limited graduate course availability), attracting high quality students and managing growth without sacrificing signature high impact practices. The Self-Study does caution that in order to maintain the current level of quality, additional resources are necessary, especially in light of the strain placed upon the Department by the new Health Sciences program and the possible addition of a PhD.

### **b. Summary of External Reviewer's Report and Recommendations**

The review committee for the cyclical review consisted of Dr. Audrey Hicks from the Department of Kinesiology at McMaster University; Dr. Jim McAuliffe, from the School of Physical and Health Education at Nipissing University and Dr. Roger Buehler from the Department of Psychology at Wilfrid Laurier University. The site visit took place on January 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup>, 2013.

The reviewers provided the following Executive Summary in their Reviewers' Report:

There are clearly many positives associated with the undergraduate and graduate programs in KPE at Laurier. Both programs enjoy healthy enrolments, attract high quality students and have excellent retention, with learning outcomes that are entirely consistent with Laurier's mission, vision and academic plan. Faculty and staff enjoy a healthy collegial environment, and everyone shares a common passion for delivering a high quality KPE experience to its students. Given the fact that WLU is situated within a highly competitive market (with Waterloo, Western, Guelph, Brock and McMaster close by), the undergraduate KPE program has been able to maintain its attractiveness by offering a high quality program that provides opportunities that are not always present at competitive programs (e.g. activity practicums, small first-year class experiences). There are only a few undergraduate kinesiology programs in the province that still offer activity practicums, and there appears to be a strong commitment (from both faculty and students) that Laurier should continue to be one of the few programs providing these opportunities. The reviewers agree that Laurier's KPE program should maintain this unique feature, although financial benefit could be attained through some streamlining of the many activity options. The graduate program is relatively new, but it has experienced healthy growth since its inception in 2006 and we were pleased to hear that students are, for the most part, pleased with their graduate experience and the quality of the mentorship/supervision they receive.

Despite the many positives, there was a consistent message within the self study report of the need for more faculty/teaching resources, especially in light of the expected launch of

the new Ph.D. program in KPE. Probably the most significant factor that is contributing to the current strain in being able to adequately resource the KPE teaching needs (at both the undergraduate and graduate level) is the practice of sectioning Level I (and to some degree Level II/III) courses to provide small class experiences to its students. While we fully appreciate the history behind this practice, as well as the benefits associated with it, it may not be the most efficient way to distribute limited teaching resources in this current climate of fiscal restraint. Our strongest recommendation would be for the Department to seriously explore alternative means to enhance the undergraduate experience (e.g. offer only one section of lectures, but several sections for tutorials/seminars, the latter being resourced by TAs) to free up valuable teaching workload that could be assigned to either the undergraduate or graduate curriculum.

### **c. Summary of Unit Response**

The Department of Kinesiology and Physical Education provided the following response to the External Reviewers' Report:

#### **INTRODUCTION**

The Kinesiology & Physical Education (KPE) Department was visited by Dr. Audrey Hicks (McMaster University), Dr. Jim McAuliffe (Nipissing University) and Dr. Roger Buehler (Wilfrid Laurier University) on January 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> 2013. Over the two days, they met members of the Department, senior administration, undergraduate and graduate students, and prepared a very thorough review of the BA, BSc and MSc programs in the KPE Department. The Department appreciates the time and effort that the reviewers, senior administration, faculty and staff invested to complete this Departmental Review.

The report outlines the strengths and some areas of concern that the Department should address. Overall the report was very positive and commended the Department on both its undergraduate and graduate programs. Among the positive aspects were healthy enrolments and application numbers for our undergraduate programs, high quality students, excellent student retention and learning objectives aligned with those of the University. Additionally, the reviewers also commented on the strong scholarly output of the full-time faculty and their commitment to involving both undergraduate and graduate students in faculty research projects, publications and conference presentations. The Department is pleased with the overall positive tone of the report and the acknowledgement by the reviewers of the quality and strength of both our undergraduate and graduate programs.

In response to the recommendations and suggestions from the cyclical review, the Department has established a Priorities and Planning Committee that has representation from each of the four cognate areas (Movement Science, Psychology and Physical Activity, Health, and Sport Development) in Kinesiology and Physical Education. The goal of the

Priorities and Planning Committee is to update our mission statement and develop a new strategic plan to inform decisions about priorities in the upcoming years.

It should also be noted that the Chair is currently embarking on a process of rationalization of course offerings that will involve serious discussion with committees about planning and prioritization in both the undergraduate and graduate programs. More specifically, the Curriculum Committee has been tasked with making significant changes in our undergraduate curriculum, linking program-level outcomes to courses, which will hopefully reduce inefficiencies. In addition, the Graduate Program Committee is exploring the creation of new graduate courses in each of the four cognate areas of the Department and discussing alternative means of offering such courses (e.g., co-teaching courses, rotation of courses).

The reviewers listed only one direct recommendation at the end of their report; however, throughout the report there were several other recommendations and suggestions made that we felt it was important to respond to in the Unit Response. We have first addressed the direct recommendation of the reviewers and then also responded to the indirect recommendations and suggestions made in the document.

## **RESPONSE TO DIRECT RECOMMENDATIONS**

**Recommendation #1:** *"Our strongest recommendation would be for the Department to seriously explore alternative means to enhance the undergraduate experience (e.g. offer only one section of lectures, but several sections for tutorials/seminars, the latter being resourced by TAs) to free up valuable teaching workload that could be assigned to either the undergraduate and graduate curriculum".*

**Response:** As indicated, the Department has established a Priorities and Planning Committee that has representation from each of the four cognate areas, with the goal of updating our mission statement and developing a new strategic plan to inform decisions concerning prioritization. Exploring alternative means to enhancing the undergraduate experience is just one objective of this sub-committee. For example, the Priorities and Planning Committee along with the rest of the Department will determine which courses, from a pedagogical point of view, should be kept to a small number of students versus other courses that can manage larger numbers by sacrificing neither the content nor the student experience. In addition, there are opportunities for both our MSc students and new PhD students (pending final approval from the MTCU regarding the doctoral program) to help free up resources by allowing graduate students to teach small hands-on tutorial sections for some courses or for PhD students to teach an entire course, thus providing them with much needed and coveted teaching experience.

## **RESPONSE TO INDIRECT RECOMMENDATIONS**

**Recommendation #2:** The reviewers questioned the practices of the Department in offering 'Directed Studies' courses as part of core course offerings and some graduate courses being offered as cross-listings of senior undergraduate courses: "*The practices outlined above question the appropriateness of the curriculum to meet the stated learner outcomes. This issue must be addressed immediately to ensure quality programming at the graduate level.*" Further, they noted: "*The Department and faculty should examine resource reallocation to develop a system to offer core disciplinary graduate courses to meet the needs of the students (e.g., offer courses on a rotation basis).*"

**Response:** The Department is currently in the process of developing core graduate-level courses in each of the four areas of expertise within the Department, namely Movement Sciences, Psychology of Physical Activity, Health, and Sport Development. The aim is to develop a minimum of one core course in each of the areas, and require students to take at least one such course during their MSc degree (in addition to the graduate-level seminar and statistics course). This will reduce the need for Directed Studies courses at the graduate level, and place less emphasis on supervisors providing unique course experiences to each graduate student. Further, under discussion is offering an instrumentation course and a research methods course.

Reviewers noted that some students felt the graduate level course in statistics was too basic. Worth noting is that this Fall the average grade on the first test to assess general level statistical knowledge was 45% (with a range of 20% to 60%), indicating that students need a review of basic statistical procedures along with more advanced procedures. The Graduate Program Committee has discussed requiring only entering students who have not achieved a minimum grade in their undergraduate statistics course to take the Department's undergraduate statistics course (or an equivalent). Also under consideration is the notion of separating key statistical concepts into 6 week modules, as has been done at other Universities. Alternatively, the addition of a graduate-level research methods course, as is being considered, might allow entering MSc students who lack the appropriate undergraduate background to review basic research principles and statistics before entering the statistics course.

**Recommendation #3:** The reviewers noted that one of the more consistent concerns heard was that there were insufficient offerings of graduate-level courses to fulfill the needs to the existing MSc. students. The reviewers "*strongly recommend that the Department consider some sort of re-allocation of teaching resources from the UG to the graduate level in order to optimize the quality of the graduate education as well as the graduate student experience.*"

**Response:** As noted earlier, the Graduate Program Committee is in the process of developing new courses at the graduate level in each of the four cognate areas of the

program and ensuring that these courses are included in faculty workloads. The restructuring of the KPE undergraduate curriculum as well as discussions with the Program Coordinator of Health Sciences on ways of streamlining similar courses in both programs, will reduce inefficiencies while at the same time maintaining the quality of the undergraduate program and optimizing the quality of the graduate program.

**Recommendation #4:** *"We recommend that the Department determine where its priorities truly lie (e.g. to keep the focus on the undergraduate experience versus development of a competitive graduate program) in order to be able to allocate resources in the most appropriate fashion to meet the Department's goals."*

**Response:** As mentioned, the Priorities and Planning Committee will bring forward a new mission statement and strategic plan to appropriately allocate resources across the undergraduate and graduate programs, recognizing the need to ensure adequate staffing of the graduate-level courses. Of importance, the Department is committed to providing students with a high quality program at all levels.

## **RESPONSE TO SUGGESTIONS**

**Suggestion #1:** The reviewers *"suggest that learning outcomes, and their connection to program and course requirements, be expressed more clearly to students in program summaries, course syllabi, etc."*

**Response:** The Department agrees that this is necessary and will implement a plan to introduce the program level outcomes within each course and within the program outlines. Laurier's Centre for Teaching Innovation and Excellence offers training in this area and the Department will encourage faculty members to attend, as appropriate. With the Department currently redesigning the undergraduate curriculum, it is an ideal time for program level outcomes to be incorporated into all courses.

**Suggestion #2:** The reviewers implicitly suggest *"the need to add clinical practice guidelines, ethical and professional training to the program"* with respect to the certification requirements of the College of Kinesiologists of Ontario".

**Response:** The Department is cognizant of the requirements of the College of Kinesiologists of Ontario and is committed to ensuring that all KPE graduates have the opportunity to meet the certification requirements. There are several potential ways for the Department to incorporate such guidelines and training into the curriculum, which are currently being discussed and evaluated. The Department presently requires students to complete leadership volunteer hours with various community groups, many of which already require

some professionalism training. The Department will investigate ways of providing this training, whether it is in collaboration with other units on campus, such as Community Service Learning or Co-operative Education, by mounting in-house alternatives, or by restructuring the leadership requirements.

**Suggestion #3:** *“There is considerable reliance on CAS instructors; approximately 50% of the curriculum is taught by non-FTEs”*

**Response:** While it is true that approximately 50% of the entire KPE curriculum is taught by non-FTEs, it is important to note that it is the activity/practicum courses at the first and third year level that are taught primarily by CAS instructors. In the previous academic year, 100% of activity/practicum courses were taught by CAS, but this was the case for only 22% of regular courses (i.e., 78% of regular courses were taught by FTEs). Other Kinesiology/Physical Education programs in Ontario that offer activity/practicum courses also heavily utilize part-time employees to manage such offerings. The Department considers the fact that 78% of the regular courses are taught by FTEs to be quite good.

As noted in the review, there is considerable value and importance in offering undergraduate activity/practicum courses. The Department agrees that this is a valuable aspect of the program and it will be continued. There is a strong rationale for continuing the practice of hiring community experts in sport and physical activity to teach the activity/practicum courses, as opposed to full-time faculty, who often do not have the appropriate certifications to offer such courses. Nevertheless, a review of these offerings with a view to current student needs is ongoing, and a means by which these important offerings can be revised, updated and perhaps offered with a more efficient distribution of resources is something that the Priorities and Planning Committee will be addressing over the next year.

**Suggestion #4:** The reviewers highlighted the difficulty that undergraduate students have in meeting breadth requirements for the BSc degree. *“The reviewers suggest that this issue needs to be addressed in joint discussions with the Dean of Science and chairs of KPE, Biology and Psychology”*.

**Response:** Over the next year, the Department aims to address this need by seeking to find alternatives to the upper-year breadth requirements for the BSc degree. In addition, the chair of KPE will continue to have discussions with Biology and Psychology, and the Dean of Science, to find solutions to the problem of space within upper-year Science courses.

**Suggestion #5:** The reviewers "Suggest administering course evaluations for graduate courses in the future".

**Response:** Unfortunately, the reviewers were not provided with the course evaluations for the graduate level courses, in particular the statistics course, KP 620. Some courses, such as the Directed Studies courses, may not have utilized course evaluations, since these courses often only have one or two students enrolled and the evaluation would therefore be able to identify the individual. Others ((KP 601/611; seminar course) are not graded. The Department will endeavour to insure that all graduate-level courses make use of course evaluations as of Fall 2013.

### **ADDITIONAL COMMENTS**

Overall the Department is pleased that the reviewers have affirmed the quality and overall strengths of our undergraduate and graduate programs and the quality of our students, faculty and staff. We are working on addressing those issues raised by the reviewers to further improve our programs.

## **Part 2: Executive Response (graduate and undergraduate deans)**

### **a. Identification of Program Strengths:**

BA/BSc Program: This is a well established, high demand program that admits a limited cohort of approximately 150 very strong first year students every year. The cutoff average for admission to the program is consistently in the mid-80s and is the highest of any undergraduate program in the Faculty of Science. The program has a practice of sectioning its first and fourth year courses so as to keep the class sizes small. This is clearly a strength in terms of student engagement and student-faculty interaction and it contributes to the high level of student satisfaction with the program. However, this is a resource intensive mode of operation that will not be sustainable going forward.

Laurier's KPE program is one of the few in Ontario that still has activity courses as part of the degree requirements. The program reviewers considered this to be a very positive attribute as it makes the program attractive to those students considering a teaching career and helps to distinguish the Laurier program from its competitors in nearby universities. Other significant strengths are the inclusion of a community service learning experience as part of the degree requirements and the opportunities that are provided for undergraduate research projects.

The strength of the undergraduate program is a direct result of the strength of the faculty and staff within the KPE Department. The reviewers had high praise for the high level of research activity among the full-time faculty as evidenced by their scholarly output in peer-reviewed journals and by their success in obtaining Tri-Council and other research funding. The department is also fortunate to have an excellent group of skilled and dedicated laboratory instructors.

M.Sc. Program: This program has research-active faculty who have attracted very good applicants, most of whom have accepted their offers. The number of students has ranged from 6 at the program's inception in 2006 to a peak of 35 in 2011. There were 30 students enrolled in fall, 2013, indicating some unmet capacity. The applicant pool for the master's degree is likely to be enhanced when the new doctoral program in Kinesiology is approved for funding by the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities. Approval has been granted by the Quality Council. Many students in science programs look for opportunities to proceed from a master's to doctoral degree at the same institution. One concern is the growing proportion of students who petition to study part-time after they are admitted to this full-time program: 8 of 30 in 2013.

**b. Opportunities for Program Improvement and Enhancement:**

BA/BSc Program: The program has been operating very successfully for many years. However, its success has been due in large part to a mode of operation that will not be sustainable into the future. It has operated as a closed program that limits its enrolment, does little service teaching, and restricts the ability of students to transfer in from other programs. This, plus the practice of offering many of its courses in multiple small sections, creates a strong feeling of camaraderie among the students, which is one of the great strengths of the program. But unfortunately this is a very expensive way to operate. Limiting enrolment and limiting service teaching restricts revenue and small classes increase costs. Some restructuring of the program will be required in order to achieve greater efficiency, particularly if a new PhD program is introduced. This restructuring is already in progress under the leadership of the new Department Chair.

Program improvement and enhancement requires that the KPE Department engage in a curriculum redesign and a strategic planning exercise to review its priorities for the next several years. Among other things, the curriculum redesign should examine the way activity courses are offered, the practice of offering many courses in small sections, the appropriate mix of CAS and full-time instructors, and the need to free up full-time faculty teaching capacity for graduate courses. As pointed out by the reviewers, it should also look at issues such as the exposure of students to clinical practice and the program's breadth requirements. The strategic planning exercise should examine questions of enrolment levels, service teaching, and greater cooperation with Biology and Health Sciences Departments in the delivery of certain courses. The University is likely to move to a new

budget model in which these issues will have a more direct impact on the finances of individual departments.

The challenge for the program will be to make some necessary changes for the sake of greater efficiency while preserving the excellence in undergraduate education for which it is very well known.

M.Sc. Program: The program has been working on additional course offerings to satisfy student demand in this multidisciplinary area of study. A Movement Disorder course, a course in Health across the Lifespan, and an Instrumentation methods course are being planned. However, no new courses have yet passed Graduate Faculty Council. No "twinned" courses are planned and restrictions will be placed on directed studies courses so that students do not delay time to completion with additional projects aside from their thesis research.

The most significant opportunity for program enhancement will be the ability to offer the new doctoral program.

**c. Prioritization of Recommendations Approved for Implementation:**

BA/BSc Program: The external reviewers' strongest recommendation was to explore alternate means to enhance the undergraduate experience and to free up valuable teaching workload that could be assigned either to undergraduate or graduate curriculum. In the Implementation Plan below, this will be part of both the curriculum review and the strategic planning exercise. The reviewers' other recommendations regarding clinical practice guidelines, the appropriate mix of CAS and full-time instructors, and cooperation with other departments are important and should also be incorporated into the overall curriculum review and strategic planning.

M.Sc. Program: The structure of the reviewers' commentary makes it challenging to identify recommendations. The one direct recommendation related to the graduate program is to make more extensive use of teaching assistants to lead tutorials and seminars in order to free up faculty for classroom teaching. This will either require an increased graduate enrolment or some restructuring of the undergraduate curriculum. When the new doctoral program is offered, this will help by providing students who will be able to teach undergraduate courses when they are offered as posting exempt positions under the Contract Academic Staff Collective Agreement.

**d. Personnel Issues (confidential and if applicable)**

n/a

**Part 3: Implementation Plan**

Recommendation to be Implemented	Responsibility for Implementation	Completion Date
Conduct a curriculum review that includes examination of class sectioning practices and reallocation of some teaching capacity from undergraduate to graduate level.	Department Chair and departmental Priorities and Planning Committee	End of 2014-15 academic year
Carry out a Strategic Planning exercise in order to be able to allocate resources appropriately to meet the Department's goals.	Department Chair and departmental Priorities and Planning Committee	End of 2014-15 academic year
Revise course syllabi to incorporate details of learning outcome expectations.	KPE instructors	Start of 2014-15 academic year
Additional graduate teaching assistantships.	Program with assistance of FGPS to enhance recruitment	Continuing
More graduate courses; fewer twinned courses.	Program with assistance of FGPS, GFC.	Continuing
Consider the reason for relatively high numbers of students petitioning to study part-time, and consider developing a part-time program.	Program with assistance of FGPS	Next admission cycle
Follow up on ideas to rename the degree to a Master of Human Kinetics to capture range of research interests among faculty and students.	Program with assistance of FGPS	2014 academic year