

ACADEMIC UNIT PLANNING (AUP) LAY SUMMARY DOCUMENT: ECONOMICS

Launch semester: Winter 2022.

Action Plan approval: Winter 2024.

The *Academic Unit Planning* (AUP) process began in the Winter Term of 2022. Because of the special circumstances affecting both the department (change of leadership and major changes in academic and administrative staff) and the University (the COVID-19 pandemic and the industrial action) during 2022 and 2023, the process required some extensions. Economics would like to express our gratitude to the review panelists, the Centre for Institutional Analysis and Planning (CIAP), and the Dean of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences (HSS) for their valuable participation, unwavering support, and constructive feedback throughout this process. A more detailed schedule of the overall process is provided below.

1. Self-Study Process

The Department engaged in a collaborative effort to complete the Self-Study process. To produce the Self-Study Report, the Self-Study Steering Committee (the Unit Head and Drs Gambin and Masoudi) in consultation with the rest of the unit's faculty and staff compiled input from the rest of the faculty, staff, and students (both current and former). CIAP further provided a standard statistical data package to support the planning process and administered a student survey. Additional statistical information on grading patterns was provided by the Office of the Registrar.

The main findings and messages of the Self-Study Report included:

- Maintaining the quality of teaching and research requires further resources and a strategy to attract support from the administration to replace necessary faculty and staff resources.
- Issues were identified with the Department's current programs: some related to resources, others needing strategic analysis and improved resource management.
- There might have been too much reliance on online teaching. There is some consensus, among students and faculty, that this seems to negatively impact the undergraduate program.
- It can be challenging for undergraduate and graduate students to complete their programs on time due to the limited availability of optional courses. The MA program is designed to be completed in one year, but the average completion time is over two years.
- Budget cuts have increased demands on remaining faculty and the burden of service and teaching is uneven, falling hardest on those present on campus. Faculty enjoy some flexibility about how to do their jobs and exceptions for health or other justified concerns must be considered but there remains a perception that workload distribution is not equitable.

2. Panel Review

The Review Panel consisted of Chair Dr. Russell Williams (Political Science, Memorial University (Panel Chair), Dr. Mark Stoddart (Sociology, Memorial University), Dr. Herb Emery (Economics, University of New Brunswick), and Dr. Talan İşcan (Economics, Dalhousie University). During May 8th-26th, 2023, the Panel met virtually with the AUP Coordinator, the Vice President Academic, the Dean of HSS, the Associate Vice President-Academic and Dean of Graduate Studies, the Head of the Department and other Economics Department staff, faculty members, per course instructors, program liaisons, and undergraduate and graduate students. The Panel also met the Jarislowsky Chair in Cultural and Economic Transformation. After reviewing the Self Study and the data provided by CIAP, the Panel held exit meetings with the Dean

of HSS, the Head of the Department, and a final general meeting with all members of the unit. The entire process was virtual, with no physical visit (although a virtual tour of the Department was available), which the Panel found challenging. There were also no opportunities for informal conversations with Department members, so interactions with some members of the unit were limited.

Some of the key recommendations made by the Panel were that the Department should:

- consider a retreat or strategic planning process and review its undergraduate program.
- regularly cycle each member through significant departmental committees.
- reassess on-line course delivery and reduce its use for required courses.
- coordinate (content, outcomes, assessments, and evaluation) introductory courses.
- promote further enrollment in the successful COOP program.
- ensure student access to faculty and the undergraduate program liaison for in-person advising.
- consider moving to a course-based model for completion of the Graduate Essay or offering a separate two-year stream or transitioning to a two-year program.
- discuss a balance between the needs of individual faculty and teaching and service requirements.
- foster a culture of on-campus activity.

The Panel further recommended that the Faculty of HSS

- assess the level of support provided to the Department's graduate program, since staff cutbacks mean that the graduate officer is now carrying an excessive administrative load.
- restore a second administrative support position for the Department.

3. Unit Response and Action Plan

The following are some of the key measures within our unit response to the panel report.

The Department:

- Is planning a strategic retreat.
- is revising courses and structures within the undergraduate program
- established a course coordination policy in 1000-level courses.
- will encourage the appointment of a new Unit Head, Graduate Officer, Undergraduate Program Director, and CO-OP Program Director in the next 2-3 years when current appointments expire.
- approved an online teaching policy in Summer 2023. Further assessment of the demand for and effects of introductory online courses is in progress.
- will survey students and collect more information about trends and student preferences.
- developed a proposal to update the M.A. program. An additional course will be developed in which students will complete their Essay requirement in a course-based setting.
- will try to improve the workload distribution and achieve an efficient and equitable balance between the needs of individual faculty members and teaching and service requirements.
- remains committed to conducting research that informs public policy issues; engaging with local and national media; and interfacing with the public.
- reassigned the role undergraduate program director role to a faculty member present on campus.
- developed the online courses policy that is resulting in greater in-person course offerings. In addition, the graduate orientation resumed in person, there is stricter enforcement of in-person office hours, and the undergraduate student society is being revived. Several social in-person events will also be planned for faculty and students.