

School of Criminology and Criminal Justice Program Review College of Arts

Dean's Summary

Submitted by:

Dr. Jacqueline Nolte, Dean of the College of Arts

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School of Criminology and Criminal Justice Program Review

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The School of Criminology and Criminal Justice offers a Master of Arts Degree in Criminal Justice, a Bachelor of Arts (Criminal Justice) Degree, a Criminal Justice Diploma, an Extended Minor and Minor in Criminal Justice and Criminology courses for General Studies. Program content is currently delivered by 11 full-time faculty members and a range of sessional instructors. 70 sections are taught by regular faculty and 62 sections by sessional instructors.

In May 2016, External Program Review Committee (PRC) members conducted a two-day site visit. The PRC met with faculty, staff, current students, alumni, the Director of Criminology & Criminal Justice, the Criminology Program Advisor, the Director of Teaching and Learning, the AVP of Research, Engagement and Graduate Studies, the Senior Advisor of Indigenous Affairs, the Dean, the two Associate Deans of the College of Arts, the Research Analyst of Institutional Research & Planning, the AVP Institutional Research & Planning and the Vice Provost and Associate Vice-President. They also met with community members from Correctional Services Canada, Big Brothers and Big Sisters, the Ministry of Children and Family Development, the Abbotsford Police Department and the Combined Forces Special Enforcement Unit. The PRC also toured facilities on campus, and relevant areas of the UFV Library.

The PRC report stated that “[t]he curriculum of the current program reflects professional expectations and appropriate standards for university-level programs as defined by DQAB.” (p3) The PRC noted that “since the last external evaluation completed in October of 2010, the School of Criminology and Criminal Justice (SCCJ) has responded well to the pressures that they are under to accommodate a large number of students with limited resources” and that the program “serves *the undergraduate and graduate students well* and the program appears to be well received by the students we interviewed/met with, and the with community members we also met with.” (p4) As in the 2010 report, the Review Committee found that the undergraduate program aligns with the Strategic plan and “appears to be producing graduates who are both respected and competitive in the job market.”(p24) It noted, along with the recommendations below, that “the credentials and nomenclature [of the undergraduate program] meets or exceeds basic standards of post-secondary expectations for this type of program.”(p8)

One central recommendation was to query a need for the undergraduate program to have its own named degree (Bachelor of Criminal Justice) distinct from the BA, so as to align with similar programs across the country. However, in other parts of the report the PRC noted that the undergraduate program “was found to be of high quality,” that it offers “some unique courses ... which help to set it apart from some of the other programs across the country” and that “based on discussions with students, community members, and a review of a number of the course outlines, the undergraduate programming offered by the School was found to be: innovative, sound with respect to writing and critical reasoning skills, very strong with respect to research opportunities and field practicums, and excellent with regard to student engagement and satisfaction.” (p8) In discussing this recommendation with the Director of the School of Criminology and Criminal Justice, the Dean has approved the approach of opening up the existing program to accommodate a broader range of non-Criminology electives, in line with PRC recommendations to reduce the required number of criminology credits to half or less of the total program. (p13)

PROGRAM CURRICULUM, STANDARDS, AND DELIVERY

The PRC noted that “[o]verall, based on our review, the management structures, program design and delivery approach appear to be well defined and permit delivery of the quality of education necessary for the criminology and criminal justice students to attain the learning outcomes. Consistent with the institutional strategic plan, the program -- in subject matter, scope and learning outcomes -- offers an education of sufficient breadth and rigour to be comparable to similar programs at the proposed undergraduate degree level offered by recognized other provincial and national post-secondary institutions.”(p9)

Recommendations and Actions

1. In addition to too many sessionals being used to deliver lower division courses, we recommend that the School establish a norm that all faculty must teach at all levels and that the School consider offering more guidance for sessional faculty.
ACTION: Done.
2. Recruit and hire new full-time/tenure track faculty from outside of the Simon Fraser University (SFU) pool.
ACTION: In process.
3. Recommend that all future hires require a completed PhD on job postings.
ACTION: Agreed and in process.
4. Greater focus on the prevention of crime and on social development to counterbalance the strong emphasis on response to crime.
ACTION: Department argues this is already reflected in all courses as the preferred approach is prevention and that, in addition, a specific course on prevention is offered regularly. Faculty and staff are involved in several community development projects. See the School’s response to the External Review. (p2)
5. Reduce the number of required CRIM credits.
ACTION: Done. Criminology and Criminal Justice credits now constitute 62 of the 120 credits in the degree.
6. Recommend a greater breadth of theoretical perspectives in the delivery of course content. Specifically, consider collapsing CRIM 104 and CRIM 105 into one Advanced Theory course and ensure that CRIM 100 includes a general overview of theory.
ACTION: The School argues that sociological and psychological explanations of crime are too vast to be compressed into one course and that this is in line with most other programs, which effectively offer three theory courses to UFV’s two theory courses. The Dean will continue to discuss this, particularly in light of the possibility of the required breadth courses Soc 101 and Psych 102 being pre and/or co-requisites for the new Advanced Theory course.
7. Recommend removing the STAT 104 requirement to open an opportunity for another elective course.
ACTION: Under discussion; the Dean’s office is not in favour of this recommendation.
8. Recommend that the School move to create space for at least three more open electives at the lower level – one elective in each of the first four semesters.
ACTION: Done. The elective credits will now be completely open for students to choose from Crim and non-Crim courses.
9. Recommend the School and the University consider phasing out the Diploma option to reduce the drain on tight/limited resources, to be more reflective on a university

environment, and to minimize extra administrative demands.

ACTION: The PRC did not take into account the growing demand for the Diploma over the past two years. In fall 2015, 46 students applied to the Diploma program and 37 were admitted. In 2016, 106 students applied and 42 were admitted. The Dean's office will track the number of students who graduate from these two cohorts before accepting this recommendation. More specifically, the Dean's office will track the number of Diploma grads who enter the workforce rather than simply register in the degree upon completion as the latter entry route restricts the structure of the degree.

PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION

The PRC was critical of what appeared to be little effort to coordinate the teaching of certain basic skills (e.g., in writing papers and referencing sources) early enough in the program.

Recommendations and Actions

1. Recommend that a sessional sub-committee be struck that includes possible members from outside the School.
ACTION: The Dean will work with the Director on the formation of this committee
2. Recommend that the School establish a norm that all faculty teach at all levels
ACTION: Done.
3. Consider introducing an annual career fair.
ACTION: Planning underway.
4. Recommend that the School deliver more of its undergraduate courses online.
ACTION: Done.
5. Recommend that the School consider reviewing and bolstering/encouraging faculty to present at conferences and attend workshops.
ACTION: Done.
6. Recommend that the School address the concerns about grade inflation.
ACTION: Done. The Director now reviews all grades prior to submission to the Registrar.

ENROLLMENT, RETENTION, AND STUDENT SUCCESS

The PRC noted that "[b]ased on our review of the available material, the School would appear to meet and even exceed the university with respect to strong enrolment, retention and in particular with student success." (p23) It also noted that "fill rates per class are considered exceptional with an average fill rate of around 110%." (p8)

Recommendations and Actions

1. Recommend a greater attempt to broaden provincial, national, and international student base. In particular, it was recommended that UFV take a lead in developing cross-border programming.
ACTION: Some movement is evident in this regard with the School exploring a partnership with Yunna Police College in China. The Dean will continue to encourage such collaboration and focus beyond an exclusively regional pool of students.
2. Recommend that the School work towards creating a more intellectual/social environment

for the students. This could involve, for example, talks (by academics or practitioners) or structured panels on topical issues.

ACTION: The first annual public forum has already been held and faculty-student seminars are currently being planned.

GRADUATE PROGRAM

The PRC raised some interesting challenges with respect to the graduate program. They note that “[u]nlike the undergraduate program, the graduate program does not appear to be aligned with the university’s strategic plan. We would encourage the university administration to question why it is investing in graduate programming when its clearly stated goal is to provide the best undergraduate education in the country. The justification offered in the SEM Plan that graduate programs might enrich the undergraduate experience seems tenuous....” (p24) This challenge is one that pertains to UFV as a whole and not only this graduate program. Notably, the graduate program does align with the UFV Strategic Research Plan but there could be better links with the strategic plan. More specifically, the PRC notes that there “seems to be little if any attempt to use the Masters program to enhance the undergraduate program as required by the SEM Plan.” (p26) These links with SEM can be strengthened, particularly in relation to including grad students in delivering seminars and mentoring undergraduates.

Despite this question regarding Strategic alignment, the PRC note that “[o]verall, the Masters’ program provides students with the knowledge and skills to understand and assess organizations and evidence-based policies for the purpose of contributing to the development of a more effective, efficient, and innovative criminal justice system. The program also provides students with applied learning, the ability to pursue further education at the doctoral level, and an excellent opportunity for networking with other criminal justice professionals.” (p 27) These observations provide opportunities to strengthen the teaching and mentoring skills provided by professionals in the field who serve as sessionals in the program as well as guest lecturers. The AVP Research, Engagement and Graduate and Studies and the Dean of Arts will work with the Director in this regard.

The PRC also notes that “[a]lthough the MA program would appear to fit and meet the needs of those individuals working in some capacity within the criminal justice system, especially within the fertile area of Abbotsford where there is a rich and diverse pool of criminal justice and public safety and related services, we observed and heard a number of challenges” (p25) and that “in 2012, program intake was suspended due to low enrolment. Hence, given that students take it as a ‘cohort’ and pass through the program as an intact group, it could easily be offered every other year.” (p25) The program needs to begin targeting more line staff and early mid-managers associated with the criminal justice system in the valley. The AVP Research, Engagement and Graduate and Studies and the Dean of Arts will work with the Director on recruitment materials and strategies.

The central recommendation related to graduate programming was that “even though we heard that the MA program is a source of pride for the School ...we also strongly recommend that the Graduate program undergo considerable rethinking with respect to exactly who the intended target audience is, and what specific skills they need.” (p 26-27)

Recommendations and Actions

1. Recommend that an objective and independent market survey/study be undertaken with

the goal of determining if a workable model is desirable over the long-term.

ACTION: A market analysis will be conducted in 2017/18. (Note that in 2015/16 the intake was 16 and in 2016/17 it was 15 with no deficit accumulated in relation to these intakes.)

2. Recommend that the School possibly consider exploring alternate methods of program delivery.

ACTION: These alternate models of delivery will be explored concurrent with the current model of delivery. The Program Development Office and Teaching and Learning will be called upon to assist in this regard.

3. Recommend that the School not compromise its unique delivery model (i.e., the scheduling and cohort aspects of the program) by creating a hybrid cohort of work-experienced students with recent graduates of the undergraduate program.

ACTION: It is interesting to note that this seems to contradict an earlier concern with this particular mode of delivery but if the spirit of this recommendation is to preserve the professional focus of the program, the Dean of Arts and the AVP Research will continue to review applications over the next year to ensure that the hybrid cohort be of professional students with recent graduates of the undergraduate program who have some professional experience post BA.

FACULTY

The PRC notes that “[o]verall, the School has a comparatively young faculty cohort who are exceptional instructors and most of whom are engaged in a range of scholarly and community service. This is considered to be consistent with university expectations.” (p29) However it also notes that “[i]n line with 2010 program review recommendation, “the committee recommends that the faculty complement reflect greater diversity. This is most notable in comparison to the diversity of the student body and the demographics of the Fraser Valley.” (p29)

Recommendations and Actions

1. Recommend that the faculty complement reflect greater diversity. Specifically, the School is encouraged to reflect in its choice of faculty and course content a diversity that reflect the Aboriginal, South and East Asian populations in the region.
ACTION: The Dean and the Director agree with this recommendation.
2. Possibly consider hiring a recruiter to assist the School in searching beyond the usual pool of SFU graduates who tend to share similar theoretical perspectives.
ACTION: This will be considered.
3. Provide a new tenure track full-time position.
ACTION: Agreed – in process.
4. Recommend that the University revisit how they might be able to be more accommodating and supportive of faculty research and professional development activities.
ACTION: While funding models for PD and research releases remain fixed, the Dean and Associate Dean of Faculty will work with faculty to discuss individual workload plans to identify how professional development and research can be best supported.