

School of Criminology and Criminal Justice Program Review

Faculty of Arts

Dean's Summary

Submitted by:
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Accepted by:
Senate in December 2010

**Program and Unit Review: School of Criminology and Criminal Justice
Dean's Summary Report**

Dr. Jacqueline Nolte, Dean of Arts

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The purpose of the Program and Unit Review is to focus on indicators of quality with respect to:

- i. Program Curriculum, Standards and Delivery (credential recognition; curriculum standards; program design; learning outcomes)
- ii. Program Administration (program delivery; related policies; resources including quality of faculty)
- iii. Enrolment, Retention and Student Success
- iv. Alignment with Strategic Plan, including community and Industry needs.

In accordance with Policy 210.15 Academic and Program Unit Reviews, the Dean of Arts provided the School of Criminology and Criminal Justice with a scope letter dated 31 October 2009. The School delivered its self study in June 2010 to the Dean of Arts. On 28th and 29th June, 2009, the External Review Committee visited the School of Criminology and Criminal Justice and met with university administrators, program faculty, staff, students and representatives from the community. The committee was provided with the School's Self Study, the university's Strategic Plan, curriculum vitae of faculty and staff plus material provided by Institutional Research. On August 8, 2010, the external reviewers delivered their assessment of the School of Criminology and Criminal Justice to UFV. In September, faculty and staff in the School reviewed the report and met over a three-day period to design the School's response to the external review. On October 26, 2010 the School provided its written response to the Dean of Arts.

What follows is a summary commenting on the conclusions of the review and providing recommendations emerging from the review.

Undergraduate Programs

The undergraduate programs offered by The School of Criminology and Criminal Justice were found to be of exceedingly high quality and were considered to "have few peers nationally". The undergraduate programming offered by the School was found to be innovative, sound with respect to writing and critical reasoning skills, excellent with respect to research opportunities and field practicums and excellent with regard to student engagement and satisfaction.

The Review Committee commended faculty for their teaching and research accomplishments, citing the granting of the RCMP Research Chair as a sign of the prestige of the School.

To further improve the programs, the committee suggested that there be a greater emphasis on the etiology of Crime, on social development and on issues of ethnicity and culture. These observations are related and pertain, as well, to the suggestions of the committee that the faculty complement of the School should better reflect a diversity of cultural experience and a range of theoretical vantage points beyond that of specializing primarily in crime-response as opposed to crime prevention. The Dean will work with the School to address these suggestions.

i) Program Curriculum, Standards and Delivery (credential recognition; curriculum standards; program design; learning outcomes)

The following recommendations were made to improve an already outstanding undergraduate program:

Recommendation 1: The committee suggested that more full-time faculty could be teaching introductory levels.

Action: The Dean of Arts will work with the Director to ensure that a high proportion of lower levels are taught by ongoing faculty. At the time of the site visit, the School had one vacancy and two faculty members on leave, thus exacerbating the situation.

Recommendation 2: The committee argued that there could be greater focus on the prevention of crime and on social development so as to counterbalance the strong emphasis on response to crime.

Action: The School has agreed to place greater emphasis on the prevention of crime throughout the curriculum. The Dean will request that the School submit course changes for Crim 151, Crim 105, Crim 100, Crim 103, Crim 210, Crim 265 and Crim 311 with respect to this shift in emphasis in course content. (Similar revisions will be requested of 700 level courses).

Recommendation 3: The committee recommended reducing the number of lower level sections that exist so as to add greater variety at the upper level.

Action: The School has undertaken to study the effects of reducing lower level sections to make way for upper level sections and will report to the Dean. In the interim, the department will adjust their course offerings allowing students greater choice with respect to a 200 level required Crim course and the Crim electives.

Recommendation 4: The committee recommended a greater breadth of theoretical perspectives in the delivery of course content, for example, evidence of approaches that focus on the etiology of crime.

Action: To provide various theoretical perspectives on human behaviour, the School currently requires that students take Psychology 101, Sociology 101 and 102, Crim 104 Sociological Explanations of Criminal and Deviant Behaviour, Crim 105 Psychological Explanations of Criminal and Deviant Behaviour, Crim 311 Multiculturalism, Conflict and Social Justice and Crim 335 Human Rights and Civil Liberties.

To ensure that students are able to conduct both qualitative and quantitative research, the School has made changes such that Crim 321 (previously designated a 400 level research course) will focus exclusively on qualitative research skills. This is a constructive decision with respect to introducing students to a breadth of theory and approaches toward research.

Recommendation 5: The committee recommended that the faculty complement reflect greater diversity, particularly in relation to the student demographic and the demographic of the Fraser Valley. The committee suggested that a recruiter be hired to assist the department with their next hires.

Action: The School is in the process of hiring two new faculty members and plans to satisfy this recommendation without compromising its commitment to hiring someone with excellent teaching skills. One of the postings states expressly that expertise in issues pertaining to Aboriginal and multi-cultural issues will be advantageous. The School will continue to advertise in all of the journals, periodicals, websites, and conferences that other Criminology and Criminal Justice programs use to advertise but will expand advertising to publications focused on Aboriginal and Indo-Canadian communities.

Recommendation 6: In line with the above, the committee recommended that issues of ethnicity and culture be integrated into the curriculum in a convincing manner. The review committee encouraged the School to reflect, in its course content, material relevant to Aboriginal, South and East Asian learners in the region.

Action: The School has agreed to place greater emphasis on Aboriginal, ethnic and cultural issues in all core Criminology courses. The Dean of Arts will request course revisions to this effect, for example, in relation to the courses suggested by the School, namely Crim 100, 101, 103, 105, 210, 211, 212, 215, 230, 310, 311, 410F, 415, 416, 418, 419, 450 (as well as in the MA curriculum).

Recommendation 7: The Committee encouraged the department to remain innovative in its curriculum offerings such that program scope could be broadened.

Action: Recently, the School recommended the Surrey Fire Chief as adjunct professor, thus providing students with access to an expert in public safety. A new course, Crim 435: Innovations in Canadian Public Safety will be offered.

ii) Program Administration (program delivery; related policies; resources)

Recommendation 1: The committee expressed concern regarding the strong reliance on sessionals teaching courses in the School.

Action: The School is in the process of hiring two full-time faculty and in 2011-12 will benefit from the return of two ongoing faculty who will be returning from extended leave.

Recommendation 2: The Committee expressed concern that grade distribution was on the high side. For example, currently, 53% of grades at the 400 level are A's. They recommended that the department head review and sign off on grade sheets prior to grades being submitted to the registrar's office.

Action: The Dean has asked the Director of the School to sign off on all grades prior to submission of grades to the registrar's office.

Recommendation 3: The Committee recommended reducing the length of the assessment form that placement supervisors are expected to complete.

Action: This has been done; the Dean will ask for a submission of this amended document.

Recommendation 4: The committee recommended that the institution grant more release time for research activities, while also making judicious use of 4th year BA students and graduate students as TA's.

Action: The issue of release time is a larger institutional issue; a task force of senior administrators has been established to examine ways in which research-active faculty can be further supported, particularly when research has direct benefit to students. The question of using graduate students in the classroom is also an institution-wide discussion but the Dean of Arts is in favour of this suggestion and will promote discussion on this issue.

iii) Enrolment, Retention and Student Success

Recommendation 1: The committee recommended a greater focus on recruiting international students to both enrich the student experience and as a source of revenue. In particular it recommended that UFV take a lead in developing cross-border programming due to its location to the US-Canada border.

Action: The School will seek assistance from the institution to build six more courses for online delivery over the next academic year (2011-2012). Currently only 3.8% of courses are delivered online. Such delivery will benefit international students. The School has had online students living in China, Japan, Australia, England, Switzerland, the U.S., Alberta, and British Columbia. The School is in the beginning stages of collaborating with academic institutions in China and India to develop and deliver undergraduate and graduate level programming. It is also planning to develop cross border programming with American institutions in Washington State.

Recommendation 2: Senior Administration at UFV asked the review committee to examine the issue of retention, an issue flagged in the School's self-study as an area of concern due to the attrition rate being slightly more than 40% for first year students. The review committee noted that high attrition rates are not unique to UFV and that some Statistics Canada studies show dropout rates of more than 40% for university students. Reviewers noted that key factors influencing retention are "typically exogenous to the program and, more often, are related to student demographics or university-wide considerations such as the availability of financial aid or student services". The School was commended for attempting to reduce dropout rates, namely by retaining a reasonably low student-faculty ratio, maintaining a high level of student-faculty contact and providing intensive feedback on performance. Students who complete the program generally rate the program highly on its ability to engage students. Reviewers recommended that greater use be made of senior undergraduate students as mentors.

Action: The School will introduce senior undergraduate mentors. The School holds a mandatory orientation for all incoming Crim students. The School will add to its small group sessions, the presence of 4th year students to provide advice and encouragement. The School also plans on establishing a list of willing 3rd and 4th year students who are interested in acting as mentors for 1st and 2nd year students and for students who are at-risk.

To further address issues of retention, the School will redesign its website to build a vibrant online community for students, faculty, and staff. The School will establish a Facebook group for Crim students and the Director will use twitter to update students. Faculty blogs will also be introduced as

a means of engaging students. The website will be used a space where students can meet online to discuss and learn about issues of importance to them.

The School continues to cluster courses at the Mission and Chilliwack campuses to increase enrolments and to develop a student presence. The School has moved to direct entry to encourage students to continue into their 3rd year and will monitor the situation closely to ensure that enough 300-level sections are offered to meet demand. Crim 129: Academic and Professional Development will continue to be offered in an effort to help with retention of students and to increase student success in the undergraduate years.

iv) Alignment with Strategic Plan, including community and Industry needs.

Recommendation 1: The Review committee found the undergraduate programs to be aligned with the Strategic Plan and to be producing graduates who are both respected and competitive in the job market. The committee did warn the School, nevertheless, to not rest on its laurels and to critically assess what key elements of its program to retain and where to seek future possibilities for change.

Action: The School will continue its excellent partnerships with a wide range of government, criminal justice agencies, and the community. It will also maintain partnerships with universities and colleges in delivering non-profit development courses. The School has partnered with outstanding professionals in the field to create practicum experiences for students in the area of compliance and enforcement. Many Criminal Justice students are focused on working with immigrants. The School has established a practicum placement with a registered non-profit agency offering a wide range of services and programs to the culturally diverse communities of the lower mainland. For those students planning on attending law school and looking for legal advocacy experience, the School is now placing practicum students with an organization providing legal services for prisoner. For students wanting to work in the area of compliance and enforcement, the School is looking to create a practicum opportunity with the Commercial Vehicle Safety and Enforcement -- Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure.

Graduate Program

The Review committee suggested that the Graduate program requires considerable rethinking with respect to who, exactly, is the target audience and what specific skills they need. They expressed serious concerns about the low numbers of applicants and lack of focus of the graduate program.

Recommendation 1: The committee recommended that to assess the ultimate demand for a professional master's program, a small market survey be conducted, targeting potential applicants. The survey could help identify the potential size of the market and the particular skills or course content that would attract students. They acknowledged that the survey might reveal that the market for a full-cost, Master's professional program in criminology or criminal justice may not be viable but declared suspension of the program premature for two reasons, namely the need to assess personnel and the structure and delivery model.

Action: The School has agreed to work Institutional Research and MarCom to develop a short market survey designed to identify the demand for our MA in Criminal Justice, determine the depth of potential applicants, the suitability of the program for potential students and the criminal justice system, and the best program delivery models.

The School has defined the purpose of its MA in Criminal Justice as providing 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 is designed to produce critical thinkers and leaders with a solid foundation in criminal justice, social justice, and community justice. The program 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. Its target audience remains individuals from the criminal justice system and related fields who seek, or occupy, leadership positions, and graduates from criminology and criminal justice undergraduate programs.

Recommendation 2: The committee expressed concern that the MA was little more than a year five beyond the undergraduate degree. Since the program has begun to admit students who have come through its own undergraduate program, the committee has recommended that thought be given to how to manage a program that has students with no criminology at all and students with four years of prior training in criminology as the current model seems to serve neither constituency well.

Action: The Dean is in support of most of the suggested course changes to the MA (see below) and the suggestion of introducing an Honours program that will allow interested students to further enhance the skill set required for successful acceptance into and completion of graduate studies. By offering an Honours program, UFV will be better positioned to compete for students who might transfer into Honours programs elsewhere. Adding an Honours program will offer a career path focusing on academia to those students who do not wish to enter immediately into the criminal justice system, but who wish to continue their studies at the graduate level. The School has recommended the following changes that will be submitted to the Graduate Studies Committee for approval:

- a) Crim 745: Human Resource Administration and Crim 730: Ethical and Legal issues in Criminal Justice will no longer be electives but will be mandatory courses in the program.
- b) Crim 715: Advanced Research Methods and Crim 725: Evaluation Research will be combined into one course Crim 785: Methods of Research and Evaluation. This course will provide students with the ability to read, understand, and critically analyse academic texts, policies, and program evaluations. This course will also teach students the necessary research and evaluations skills to design and carry out their own evaluations and research. This opens up space for the addition of a new course.
- c) A new course will be added to the program, Crim 765: Crime and Intelligence Analysis for Crime Reduction. This will provide students with a foundation of key skills to use the techniques of crime analysis to derive practical responses to crime, situational crime prevention, and to

identify responses to crime that are most likely to be implemented. The course will give students an understanding of intelligence analysis and the use of software, data sources, informants, and observations to draw linkages across events, people, places, and times to determine offence patterns and relationships among offenders.

- d) Crim 750: Directed Studies will be replaced with Crim 775: Contemporary Initiatives in Criminal Justice. This course will examine and analyze current critical issues in the criminal justice system affecting the administration and application of justice, public policy, and recent social developments. Students will be challenged to understand various methods of addressing current issues and innovations in criminal justice systems.
- e) The School recommends no longer offering Crim 720: Community Development, Justice Initiatives, and Governance in Criminal Justice, but will incorporate the material from this course into Crim 700, Crim 705, Crim 710, Crim 730, and Crim 775.
- f) The School recommends that Crim 755: Selected Topics in Criminal Justice always include at least two options for students and that the choices include options in criminal justice management, international affairs, financial accounting, and conflict resolution.

Recommendation 3: The committee identified problems with the structure and delivery model and expressed concern at the rate and time of completion under the current model. As noted, students appear to progress well during the course-work phase of the program but when they encounter the major paper/thesis component, their progress slows considerably. The committee argued that many, if not most, MA programs in Canada are course-based, with the thesis becoming the minority option. For most of the students, the MA will likely be a terminal degree and for those intending to pursue doctoral programs this would not impede their studies as most North American Criminology/Criminal Justice graduate programs accept students with course-based masters' programs. The committee suggested that the program still offer a thesis-like experience, in the form of a capstone project. The committee was assured that writing, analytical and research requirements in the current MA would remain adequate in that course instructors generally ask students to write 30-35 page papers per course.

Action: The Dean, VP Research and Graduate Studies and the School support the idea of changing the requirements of the major paper to make it more like a capstone paper or an advanced directed studies paper. This, and other changes to the program, will be submitted to the Graduate Studies Committee for approval. The papers will be due on the same date and graded by a specified date so that all students in the cohort will complete their degree in the same semester.

Recommendation 4: The review committee recommended assessing whether the School has the required personnel to deliver the graduate program. The committee recommended broadening the range of individuals on supervisory committees, which could include extra- departmental supervisors as "seconds."

Action: The School will expand its list of potential instructors to include faculty from other departments at UFV and experts in the field. The rationale for these decisions will be forwarded to

the University's Graduate Studies Committee. The School has recommended program changes that will obviate the bottleneck of supervision due to the institution of a capstone project as opposed to a major paper. The institution of a capstone project will mean that a senior and a second supervisor will only be required for those who opt for the major paper as opposed to the course-based option. To complete their major paper, a student will work directly with one faculty member approved by the School's Graduate Program Committee. In addition to submitting the paper, all students will present their work orally to their cohort and an external reviewer. It is recommended that one external reviewer be selected by the School's Graduate Programs Committee who would review all of the papers to ensure that they meet academic standards. The external reviewer would also attend the oral presentations, which would be open to the public. The external supervisor will hold a PhD, but need not be a faculty member of the School of Criminology and Criminal Justice. A student's supervisor could be a faculty member from another department at UFV or a recognized expert from the field. This decision will rest with the School's Graduate Program Committee and a rationale for the selection will be forwarded to the University's Graduate Studies Committee to ensure that all policies and regulations are followed.

Recommendation 5: The committee raised questions about the current mode of delivery of the program and recommended that the School might want to consider exploring alternate methods of program delivery.

Action: The School remains firmly committed to the cohort model and current method of delivery. It is expected that the program changes mentioned above will build demand and, over time, lead to the possible delivery of more than one cohort, perhaps using an online or blended model of delivery. The School, in cooperation with the Dean and International Education, is experimenting currently with a different model of delivery that will allow international students to bridge into the program by their doing a one semester abroad bridging program, which entails UFV faculty delivering two weeks on intense delivery of Crim 700 and Crim 705 at the beginning and end of the semester, on site at the international venue.

Recommendation 6: The review committee expressed reservations about ways in which the graduate program is being managed. They argued that there is a more than typical amount of supervision and direction from the office of the Associate Vice-President of Research and Graduate Studies in the day-to-day running of the program and that there needs to be more clarity in the differing roles of the department and the office of the AVP. The committee recommended that it be the responsibility of the department or program to assess the acceptability of the content of theses and dissertations and that it be the responsibility of the AVP to ensure that due process is followed during the assessment procedure.

Action: The School recommends maintaining current GPA requirements, the application and interview process, and the structure by which it recommends applicants for acceptance and the University's Graduate Studies Committee approves applicants. However, in line with the recommendations made by the external reviewers, the School recommends that all decisions related to student supervision, composition of committees, the selection of major paper topics, acceptance

of major paper proposals, and the selection of the external reviewer rest with the School of Criminology and Criminal Justice's Graduate Program Committee. The University's Graduate Studies Committee would receive a written explanation for each decision to ensure that the School complies with all policies and regulations. The Dean of Arts suggests that as a transition, the School would report all decisions pertaining to supervision arrangements, committee composition and external reviewers that the Graduate Studies Committee may advise the School where problems might exist and that, as a matter of course, the School submit a report to the Graduate Studies Committee twice a year with respect to these arrangements, thus allowing peer review of this program that is still in its early years.

Recommendation 7: In the event of students opting for the major paper, the review committee suggested that student acceptance into the program needs to be informed by equitable workload distribution. They recommended pre-assigning students to faculty members and that administration consider assigning credit for successful supervision.

Action: The Dean will undertake to work with the School and GSC to ensure that overcommitted faculty do not assume additional supervisory work that might compromise student graduation and that different faculty be pre-assigned to incoming students.

Recommendation 8: The Review committee has recommended that the School consider dividing the administrative workload between graduate and undergraduate chairs, as is convention in other Criminology Programs. Besides distributing the workload, these positions would offer valuable administrative experience for faculty.

Action: The School currently has a five-course release for the chair of the undergraduate program and a two-course release for the chair of the graduate program. The process to date has been that the Director determines whether he/she wants to fulfill both responsibilities. The current Director is comfortable fulfilling both responsibilities and the School's faculty and staff has agreed to continue to leave this decision to the Director. Prior to following up on this recommendation, the Dean will reassess the situation after the implementation of program changes to the Graduate Program.