

Library and Information Technology Program Review

Faculty of Professional Studies

Dean's Summary

Submitted by:

Dr. Tracy Ryder Glass, Dean of the Faculty of Professional Studies

Accepted by:

Senate in June 2015

Academic Planning and Priorities Committee in May 2015

To: Dr. Eric Davis, Chair APPC

From: Tracy Ryder Glass, Dean, Faculty of Professional Studies

Date: February 19, 2015

Re: **Executive Summary** - Program Review of Library Information Technology programming

Based on the Report of the External Review Committee of the University of the Fraser Valley Library Information Technology Department programming (LibIT) my meeting with this Committee and the Response to the Report from the LibIT Academic Unit, I would like to make the following observations on the review of the LibIT programming.

Process

The Dean's scope letter was used as the basis for the conduct of the review of the LibIT Department. The general intent of the review was to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the LibIT programming, to ensure institutional learning outcomes are being addressed and to use the recommendations from the review to shape the vision of the LibIT programming over the next five years.

As part of the review process, the LibIT Department completed a self-study of their unit and this information was provided to the Review Team. The self-study report included information on the history of the LibIT Department, detailed descriptions of programming offered, description of the LibIT Department's administrative structure, data from surveys conducted with students and the external community on the effectiveness of the LibIT Department and the LibIT Department's own reflections on their challenges and opportunities. In addition, the External Review Committee (ERC) conducted a two-day site visit and met with a number of stakeholders including students, faculty, sessional instructors, staff, members of UFV's senior administration and members of the external community.

Overall, the site visit and subsequent review was quite positive. The ERC was extremely complementary of the faculty, staff, students, programming, and of UFV.

As the ERC states:

The ERC is "impressed with the sustained excellence of the LibIT Department's educational programs; the superior nature of student learning experiences and outcomes; the high level of student engagement; the exceptional quality of faculty teaching the active role of faculty in professional associations and conferences; the very high calibre of faculty collegiality within and beyond the unit; and the efficient implementation of a full online delivery mode of the Diploma

program to complement existing classroom instruction, paralleling the already online Post-Diploma Certificate program.”

Review Results

(a) Program Curriculum, Standards and Delivery

The ERC found that the “the curriculum and academic content of the two LibIT programs reflect appropriately what one would expect generally from a university program, and in particular from Canadian higher education for library and information technology.” The ERC went on to say that “the Diploma program curriculum exceeds the educational principles and competencies set out in Guidelines for the Education of Library Technicians, which was published in 2011 by the Canadian Library Association (CLA) to help learning institutions in planning and delivering such programs.”

The ERC was very impressed with the inclusion of a curriculum that delivers the required technical and organizational proficiencies as addressed in depth in the areas of “acquisitions, cataloguing and indexing, selection, circulation, reference, interlibrary loans, library programming, library promotion, technology skills, and workplace skills.”

The committee stated, that the “pedagogic methodologies and teaching strategies of the faculty are appropriate for graduates and employers and reflect best practices of university level pedagogy.”

Faculty Workload

A large proportion of the ERC report spoke to their concerns around faculty workload. While one can appreciate the amount of work that goes into preparing, delivering and assessing curriculum of a technological nature, the ERC stated that, “While a course load of 7 sections is the UFV norm, reflecting the teaching –focussed orientation of the university, seven sections per full-time member is still a huge pedagogical and knowledge commitment.” They went on to say that “The University mandated teaching load of seven sections by the current complement of three faculty members is significant. In 2014 they collectively taught sixteen sections over two terms, with sessional instructors delivering eight additional courses.” Their view is that 16 courses delivered by three full-time faculty over the course of two semesters, is too onerous and their suggestion is to hire two new faculty for curricular and program expansion to offset this. The Diploma and Certificate program combined, deliver 24 to 25 courses in the academic year. Of the 8 courses delivered by the sessional faculty, 5 of these courses were filled to cover release time for full time faculty, leaving 3 courses to be covered for the academic year.

While we are supportive of growth within the program and are not disagreeing with the ERC and its view that with growth we need to consider an increase in staffing, we have to exercise some caution in that this view did not come with the consideration of whether or not the program has the capacity (the breadth and number of courses required) to hire and provide a full workload to faculty. In fact, the ERC did highlight a concern around breadth of courses available to the current 3 full-time faculty.

Another factor to consider is the unfortunate situation the program had been in prior to this review. Due to unforeseen circumstances, the faculty complement was reduced to approximately 1.5 people. Completing work outside of the classroom became challenging as the tasks fell to the same people time and time again. With this coming academic year, the Department will for the first time in 2 ½ years, be at its full staffing complement.

Student Resources

The committee felt strongly that the “material resources and facilities available to support student learning and the key learning objectives of the two LibIT programs are adequate.” However, the committee felt there is room for improvement and suggests improved resources such as “a new student lab and access to more classroom space and larger classrooms. In particular, better technologically equipped classrooms and better resourced, “Student Resource Room.”

This coming Fall, the LibIT Student Resource Room will be relocating to C Building (where the faculty and staff now reside) so as to be situated closer to the faculty and staff. This move will also see upgrades to the existing resources and computer technology that currently exists in the resource room in A Building.

School of Business integration

The committee is also supportive of the suggestion of the LibIT Department joining the School of Business. As the ERC states, “such an arrangement would provide teaching and research collaborations across information and communication technology instruction, as well as shared teaching infrastructure, for example, video-streaming enabled classrooms.”

This integration would also serve to expand the scope of advising and administrative assistance that currently exists within the Department.

Development of an Undergraduate Degree

The LibIT Department’s diploma program is one of two in British Columbia where students have the choice of specializing based on three areas of practice (two courses each). The Post-Diploma Certificate program is unique in the Province and offered online making it accessible to anyone in Canada.

Based on the strong reputation of the program, and given the respect for the program across the Province, the ERC supports the idea of moving forward with the development of an undergraduate degree program.

With the integration of the Department into the School of Business, and with the move of the Computer Information Systems degree programming back in to the fold of the Faculty of Professional Studies this Fall, there is a great opportunity for collaboration around a degree in Information Systems.

Certificate Program

The Post-Diploma Certificate is currently run jointly as between the LibIT Department and Continuing Education. The ERC supports the recommendation of the LibIT Department to bring the administration and funding of the Certificate Program into the LibIT Department.

(b) Program Administration

The ERC were extremely impressed with the Department Assistant, Noreen Dragani, stating, “the current Instructional Assistant support staff member is exceptional. Her personal knowledge, experience, and commitment to the departmental programs are commendable and ensure that students benefit from a supportive and caring learning environment.”

In referring to the feedback provided by students in the student satisfaction survey, it was commented, “Noreen Dragani should be cloned, so that every university program can be as well coordinated.”

However, similar to the LibIT faculty complement, it is the view of the ERC that the Department is under resourced and that “additional administrative support be added to the complement to better advise students and meet the needs as a result of growth. “

While we once again recognize the needs that accompany potential growth, one thing that was not shared with the ERC was the development of the new central advising model. With this new model in place, some of the pressure currently experienced by advisors in a Department such as LibIT, will be alleviated.

As mentioned previously, the ERC is supportive of the idea of the LibIT Department integrating within the School of Business. With this integration, also comes the sharing of resources, including those of an administrative and advising nature.

From a support perspective, the ERC was complementary to our Library team and referred to the resources and service to support the learning objectives and outcomes of the two LibIT programs, as “excellent.”

However, the ERC also emphasized the need for greater technical support of the Department around updating software, electronic classroom access, and better online/video conferencing resources.

Proposals have been made at an institution wide level for priority in creating electronic based classrooms and video conferencing facilities.

(c) Alignment with Community and Industry Needs

The ERC emphasized the reputation of the LibIT Department to be one of respect by industry and professional bodies, including library associations. As the ERC states, “UFV continues to offer one of Canada’s most well-respected diploma programs for library and information technology.” In fact, the

ERC indicated that it is common knowledge that many of the libraries in the lower mainland require their staff to complete this program prior to hiring.

Students interviewed by the ERC commented on their preparedness for the work force. This was evidenced by the fact that approximately 30% of graduates last year achieved employment in non-library workplaces demonstrating the transferability of the skills learned in the diploma program.

To build a stronger relationship with the field, and to ensure industry currency with the curriculum, the ERC recommends reviving the Program Advisory Committee.

(d) Enrolment, Retention and Student Success

The ERC was satisfied with the LibIT programming enrolment, retention and student success. The program successfully graduated a record 43 students this past year and enrolment stays strong at 220 students in the combined programs. Graduate employment rates are high (96%) and with a 40% increase in enrolment over the last 5 years the ERC comments that, "the department has in place effective strategies for student recruitment."

Recommendations

In response to the recommendations made by the ERC, the LibIT Academic Unit collaboratively produced a response and action plan (Attachment 4).

In summary, the recommendations of the ERC and the actions to follow include the following:

1. Continuation of the two LibIT Programs
Ongoing
2. Continuation of LibIT as an autonomous academic unit for curricular and teaching purposes
Ongoing
3. Addition of two FTE teaching faculty, for curricular and program expansion to meet increased student demand and to address growing complexity of job market for library and information technology skills
Requires more discussion, identification of budgetary feasibility in addition to workload capacity/feasibility
4. Addition of one FTE administrative support staff for student educational advising
Ongoing as per UFV wide central advising and School of Business integration
5. Information technology infrastructure be substantially modernized and strengthened for both classroom and online delivery
Dependent upon existing and future institutional infrastructure priorities and initiatives
6. Provision of more, larger and better technologically equipped classrooms
Dependent upon existing and future institutional infrastructure priorities and initiatives

7. Provision of dedicated up-to-date computer lab
Dependent upon existing and future institutional infrastructure priorities and initiatives
8. Provision of larger and better equipped student Resource Room (with student photocopier)
Ongoing with renovations/move occurring in summer 2015
9. More functional online/video conferencing 'centre'
Dependent upon existing and future institutional infrastructure priorities and initiatives
10. Departmental office and student space to be consolidated into one physical location including permanent accommodation for Instructional Assistant adjacent to faculty offices
In progress
11. Establish regularized cycle of comprehensive program review
Ongoing as per UFV institutional policy
12. Complete ongoing comprehensive reviews of both LibIT programs separate from the Departmental review
Ongoing as per UFV institutional policy
13. Develop strategic plan
Ongoing (retreat in the Spring 2015)
14. Update course syllabi (i.e., Official Course Outlines)
Ongoing (as per UEC process)
15. Review curriculum (i.e., Diploma Program Renewal Committee)
Ongoing as per annual review of curriculum
16. Review learning outcomes with view to retaining essential learning objectives and foundational skills courses for paraprofessional practice in library and information technology
Ongoing as per annual review of curriculum
17. Regularize meetings of Program Advisory Committee
In process of recruiting committee members
18. Expand practicum options [including more co-op opportunities]
Requires further discussion with career centre
19. Continue external consultancies in order to strengthen liaison with professionals in the field
Ongoing
20. Enhance Diploma and Certificate Programs with content/courses on emerging topics such as social media
Ongoing (new courses in process of development)
21. Develop Continuing Studies courses into 3 credits each
Requires further discussion with Continuing Education

22. Develop undergraduate degree program that ladders from Diploma Program
Requires further discussion with School of Business
23. Explore departmental unit renaming in view of changing information management environment.
Ongoing. More discussion to occur following integration with the School of Business
24. Investigate feasibility of closer association with UFV School of Business
Discussions are ongoing; projected to occur in the 2016-2017 academic year
25. Support cross-faculty and collaborative initiatives i.e. development of team-taught courses between LibIT and the School of Business
Discussions are ongoing. Potential course delivery in Fall 2016
26. Provision of increased financial support [for] research time [“urgently required”]
Dependent upon existing and future institutional infrastructure priorities and initiatives;
current release time given
27. Bring administration and funding of the cost-recovery Certificate Program into the LibIT Department from Continuing Studies
See item 21 above
28. Increase FTE support for sessional lesson planning and course development
Dependent upon Department resources
29. Implement longer advance times for sessional teaching assignments
Dependent upon section enrolments on final course cancellation dates
30. Provide faculty assistance in résumé-writing clinic for students
Consultation with career centre required
31. Develop mechanisms for attracting Indigenous and international students and students with disabilities
Ongoing discussions with Faculty
32. Use examples of student success to market to the larger community
Ongoing. Examples are currently being used
33. Provision of UFV day care facility
Dependent upon existing and future institutional infrastructure priorities and initiatives

I look forward to supporting the LibIT Department as we move forward together with the action plan.