

## **INTERNAL REVIEW REPORT**

Master of Educational Technology (MET) Review  
Faculty of Education, UBC  
Site Visit Date: July 2 and 3, 2015

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***CONFIDENTIAL***

***Submitted to the Dean, Faculty of Education***

***by:***

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## Executive Summary

The MET site review conducted by external reviewers *Dr. Jennifer Jensen* and *Dr. Heather Kanuka*, and the UBC author of this report was guided the UBC review guidelines and other materials provided prior to, during and following the on-site review, and review of other public sources (e.g. UBC websites). This report contains findings and perspectives *not included* in the External Report; the external report is referenced at times to avoid unnecessary repetition.

UBC offers a range of educational programs off campus and on campus to meet its educational mandate that aim to meet the needs of different learners. The findings and recommendations in this report reflect assessment of the MET as an *applied, non-research, course-based degree* that aims to:

*“(a) offer an educational technology program and courses that will reach the widest possible audience while addressing the needs of K-12 and adult educators, not only in British Columbia but worldwide; b) To bring a diversity of cultural backgrounds and a richness of perspectives to bear on issues in educational technology; and c) To provide an opportunity for educators to network across national and regional boundaries.”* (MET Self-Study, 2015, p. 6)

## Strengths

The extensive expertise in online and distance learning of those who spurred the launch of the MET in 2002 to create the first 100% online UBC graduate program 12 years prior to UBC’s flexible learning initiative, forged the way for new UBC policies and structures that have assisted subsequent UBC online programs. Now in its 14th year, the MET has opportunities to build on its many strengths (see pp. 3-4) to grow the MET and its affiliated certificates, enhance their value, and strengthen the alignment and visibility of these programs within the Faculty of Education (FoE).

## Key Recommendations

- Create a trans-departmental, collaborative model of governance (*External Report: Executive Summary, D. 3, and I. A. 3*) with academic (curriculum) leadership provided by a tenure-stream faculty member (*External Report: Executive Summary, D. 2*) who has expertise in educational technology, and online and distance learning, and a committee structure that parallels other FoE units to support program administration, development and delivery.
- Develop a 5-year strategic plan that demonstrates the relationship of the MET to UBC and FoE strategic plans (*External Report, Executive Summary A.1, Section I. A. 1-2*)
- Revisit, develop and/or renew the MET goals, objectives, and curriculum (*External Report Executive Summary A.1, B.3, Section I.A.*)
- Review the MET human resource and infrastructure needs and roles in light of the new governance model, including moving instructional and website design and programming to the FoE Educational Technology Support centre to facilitate course development and delivery, and enhance MET alignment with the FoE.
- Reinvest surplus funds to provide support MET/Certificate program development and

sustainability.

- If support appears promising for future student research, build capacity for supervision (see *External Report Executive Summary, A.2*); if not, or in the meantime, explore other FoE research opportunities for MET students (see *Section III*).
- Assess and address factors limiting the number of MET international students to inform plans to grow international enrolment (see *Section III*).

## **I. Objectives, Priorities and Activities**

### **A. The MET's goals, objectives, and priorities.**

#### ***Review Findings:***

- While no graduate programs are named in the Faculty of Education (FoE) Strategic Plan and no direction is set for online, flexible or distance learning, materials provided during the review articulated the links between the MET, and the FoE and UBC strategic plans.
- Beyond the broad aims and objectives quoted on p. 2 of this report, and elsewhere in the Self Study report, no program learning outcomes are specified for students completing the MET.

#### ***Review Recommendations:***

- See *External Report, I. A. 1-3*. Governance is discussed further in *Section V.* of this report.
- Ensure program learning outcomes are published to guide curriculum development, and inform current and future, students and other interested parties, and contribute to program promotion.

### **B. The MET's current strengths and barriers to moving forward.**

#### ***Review Findings:***

##### *Strengths*

- The high proportion of tenure stream to non-stream faculty affiliated with the MET by course (34%), is a strength even though the rate of tenure stream faculty who are currently teaching may be lower. The different perspectives that the university, corporate and K-12 educators who generate and/or apply research bring to their course development and/or instructional roles are assets for the MET as an applied, non-research, course-based degree, and broaden the reach of the MET. Additional benefits of this instructional diversity are noted in the Self-Study report (p. 48).
- Faculty/instructor commitment to the MET and fulfilment of their roles; most are experienced online instructors.
- High annual, stable MET enrolment in the recent past.
- The breadth of methods used to promote the MET. Many students reportedly learn about the MET via 'word of mouth' and 'google searches'; however, a range of

methods are used to promote the MET (e.g. google ads, the program website, twitter (1000 followers), outreach, and print ads). Virtual methods are valuable for attracting students who are comfortable using technology and have an interest in educational technology.

- Approximately 80% of students in the two MET-affiliated Certificate program transfer to the MET degree suggesting the Certificates are valuable for MET recruitment.
- Income exceeds expenses providing the potential for reinvestment to enhance the MET and affiliate Certificate programs.
- Established capacity to deliver the four courses and most of 16 elective courses in multiple sections each year to meet learner demand.
- Graduate (alumni) survey findings indicate they value of the program, and course evaluation data reviewed suggest overall satisfaction with the MET.
- Student loans and grants to present at conferences are offered to MET students and instructors. This is a valuable opportunity since students in UBC programs designed for working professionals are not eligible for scholarships or bursaries.
- A high proportion of the challenges noted in the self-study report and recognized as needing change, parallel issues identified by reviewers.

### *Barriers*

- Lack of an academic governance model and structure to optimize academic leadership, and program administration (*see Section I*).
- Lack of a faculty development process to grow knowledge and skills for effective online distance facilitation of learning. Investment in onboarding instructors who are new to facilitating online learning at a distance, coaching for improvement, and resources and other professional development and networking opportunities can benefit instructors and students, and increase the likelihood of positive program and course promotion.
- A plan for minor course updating and major redesign every 3-4 years was provided; however, there appears to be a lack of common understanding of these plans and some courses reviewed contain dated materials. Course authors receive a fee every 3-4 years for doing these updates. Closer academic or curricular oversight of the course revisions appears necessary to enhance accountability.
- International enrolment is low. Little appears to be known about the reasons for low international uptake by non-Canadians which may include tuition costs, lack of MET student access to UBC scholarships and bursaries, not meeting the Graduate and Post-Doctoral Studies academic requirements for admission, or other factors. Assessment of the factors facilitating successful MET completion, contributing to drop out (if applicable), and the barriers to application and admission would inform problem-solving and direct future promotional efforts to prospective international students.

### ***Review Recommendations:***

1. Build on the '[MET Learning Together](#)' (see Program Highlights) initiative for learners/alumni, expanding connections with alumni, and adding recent graduate

- profiles (e.g. for the FoE Year of Alumni, MET website), and consider other examples in *External Report* (p. 8).
2. Introduce (or amend) agreements for major course revisions to enhance accountability.
  3. Assess reasons for low international enrolment to inform future MET promotion outside Canada.

## **II. Scholarly and Professional Activities**

### ***Review Findings:***

- Refer to *External Report, II, findings* re tenure stream faculty and MET members' TLEF success.
- The MET is an applied non-research, course-based program with 34% of its faculty/instructors in tenured or tenure track appointments and the remainder in sessional or other appointments with primary responsibilities to teach only contracted MET courses rather than do research. This likely contributes to the overall MET metrics for scholarly participation. Non-tenure stream faculty who are often part-time may still be encouraged (e.g. by the FoE conference travel grants) to participate in scholarly and professional activities or wish to do so.
- Each of the four FoE departments have tenure stream faculty with educational technology expertise. Continuing growth in the use of educational technologies in education is expected, thus growing interest in educational technology. This may bring more tenure stream faculty with this specialization to the FoE who can contribute to the MET program.

### ***Review Recommendations:***

- Review expectations for scholarly work for non-tenure stream faculty and explore options for faculty development to build capacity to apply research evidence (if needed) to curriculum development and online and distance facilitation, and otherwise grow knowledge and skills.
- Continue to provide travel grants for sessional instructors to support their travel to deliver conference presentations.

## **III. Academic Programs, Teaching and Learning**

### ***Review Findings:***

- There is a high number of MET applications with 64-71% of applicants receiving offers of admission in the five years from 2009-2013 (Self-Study Report, 2015, p. 11) and new course registrations of 57-61% in the same period. These data suggest continuing strong interest in the program. The number of MET students was relatively stable in the 2-3 years up to 2013 with a slight (0.9%) drop evident between 2012 and 2013 attributed by those interviewed to the competitiveness of applicants and program concerns about uncontrolled growth.

- Thirty to 40 students are enrolled in the two graduate certificate programs (*Self-Study report, p. 1*), approximately 80% of whom reportedly ladder their certificate credits to the MET. The high transfer rate suggests that the Certificate largely serves as an opportunity to ‘test the waters’ since students prior experience of 100% online coursework upon admission may be low. Even if there are few Certificate graduates, the Certificate programs offer opportunities to meet different student needs, and enhance MET recruitment. If needs assessments do not support the development of new MET-affiliated Certificate and/or they are not justifiable for cost recovery reasons, energy may be better spent in creating ‘specialist’ opportunities or pathways within the MET.
- The apparent lack of preparation (onboarding) for MET instructors is a program risk as experience teaching face-to-face offers no guarantee of effective online facilitation of distance learning.
- Sample course evaluations and the additional narrative data in the Self-Study report provide some evidence of program quality; however, the variable response rates, aggregated data, and a recent change in the evaluation survey make interpretation more difficult. While trends suggest the MET provides valuable learning experiences for many, and some instructors have received very positive reviews, some concerns about instructor course visibility and presence, and timely and effective feedback on assessed work appear to warrant review.
- As noted in the Self-Study report, a process is needed for peer review to add data to inform professional development recommendations for MET instructors.
- A review of 5 course websites revealed no MET branding or common-look-feel (CFL) (e.g. in course outlines, website navigation) which could benefit the program, instructors and students.
- Like students in other UBC course-based master’s programs designed for working professionals, MET students are not eligible to apply for scholarships, bursaries and grants so other options would need to be explored to support research opportunities within the MET.

***Review Recommendations:***

1. If viability is confirmed by an updated environmental scan and needs assessment, consider expanding Certificate options to meet the needs of corporate and indigenous learners.
2. While, or if no research option is available in the MET, explore opportunities for MET students wanting to grow their research knowledge and participation to transfer to thesis-based Faculty of Education Master’s and/or PhD programs.
3. Consider using common templates (e.g. course outline/syllabus, common-look-feel (CLF) courses in Connect websites), to assist course leaders and instructors in meeting program expectations, enhance MET and Certificate learners’ online, distance experience, and contribute to the positive promotion of the MET.

## IV. Faculty, Staff and Other Personnel Matters

### *Review Findings:*

#### A. Faculty

- The current mix of tenure stream and non-tenure stream faculty is desirable for a cost recovery program. It brings many benefits for the program and students as noted earlier, enhances options for course to instructor 'fit' and creates flexibility that can facilitate program delivery while optimizing student learning.
- The per student 'MET instructor' payment process does occur elsewhere on campus and compensates instructors relative to the number of students which enables workload-based payment. Despite this, the differences between other UBC sessional and 'MET instructor' payment formulas are a concern to some MET instructors particularly in the early years of teaching. This is not easily resolved.
- A process is needed for peer review and formal review of course and instructor evaluations to guide development of performance expectations, and decisions about mentorship and faculty development needs.
- Further to *Section II*, a review of teaching contracts of non-tenure stream faculty would be necessary to determine whether greater participation in research and other scholarly and professional activities is an expectation and is feasible given contract requirements.

#### B. Staff:

- Most FoE operational support for the MET is provided by personnel in the office for Professional Development and Community Engagement ([PDCE](#)) which also supports all programs in the FoE, and collaborates with educators off campus to provide educational events. A full-time, experienced Senior Program Assistant almost spends 100% of his time providing essential MET admissions and student support. Marketing for the MET is also managed through the PDCE office.
- Just prior to the review the vacant MET manager role was filled by a part-time (50%) person experienced in online and distance learning who oversees day-to-day MET operations. She is located in the FoE Office of Graduate Programs and Research (OGPR).
- Help desk support for learners is currently provided by CTLT staff, and they also provide some instructor support services.

#### C. Equity:

- The current state of gender equity reflects historical hires, and recent changes. Between 2011-12 and 2014-2015 the proportion of female instructors increased from 29.3 to 52% reflecting more gender equity among current instructors (MET, Self-Study report, 2015). Since hiring is based on seniority, workload negotiations, competing obligations, experience and competence, and 'program or course delivery' needs\* it is expected that the 'mix' could well vary year to year. [\* e.g. need to run courses to cover costs, and the expectation that graduate programs will run courses students need to complete to graduate].
- At the time of the review 3 of 7 administrative and support staff were women.

- Members of the Program Advisory and Management and Budget Committees appear less diverse; however, membership is based on type of role, and past appointment and hiring decisions are likely to have influenced composition.
- No concerns about gender or cultural diversity concerns were expressed.

#### **D. Interactions within the MET Program:**

- Notwithstanding the tensions associated with concerns of a vocal minority (as noted on p. 14 of the *External Report*) faculty and staff appeared comfortable with one another, were collegial, and communicated with ease during the review.

#### **E. Interactions outside the School/Department:**

- Despite the apparent administrative complexity, the long history of collaboration and teamwork between FoE and CTLT appears to have been effective in delivering the program at a time of high student growth (*see Section V*).
- Based on personnel interviewed, the relationships between the MET ‘members’ and others, appear supportive and bring more opportunities for increasing collaboration rather than risks.
- The MET self-study report refers to two cohorts from Jamaica and the indicates development of a possible future relationship between the MET and a university in India; however, interactions with participants were not assessed.

#### ***Review Recommendations:***

1. Identify the optimal mix of tenure stream, lecturer and other (e.g. sessional, adjunct, contract) instructors for each course team to lead and inform course development that will enable achievement of the learning and program outcomes, and ensure sufficient instructors are available to deliver needed courses.
2. Explore opportunities for more indigenous courses in the MET (*External Report, E.2, p. 15*)
3. Appoint a MET Academic Director from a FoE Department (per p. 1 of this report).
4. Recommendations related to the above findings are *the External Report: # 1, 3, and 5* on p. 14, and D. 1, p. 15 and E. 1.

## **V. Governance, Organization and Administration**

### **A. Quality and effectiveness of governance:**

- The governance of the MET is unique in that it has representation from the FoE four academic departments but no departmental home. Oversight is provided by the Senior Associate Dean, International, with PDCE oversight provided by the PDCE Assistant Dean. Both are recognized for their experience related to online learning with one receiving off campus recognition. A Senior Graduate Advisor in the OGPR represents the MET on the Faculty of Education Graduate Curriculum Advisory Committee (GCAC) before curriculum changes move on for FoE and subsequent UBC approvals.



- The MET Advisory and Management and Budget Committees are chaired by the Senior Associate Dean, International and normally meet three and two time a year respectively. The Advisory Committee oversees academic aspects such as admissions, curriculum, staffing, and educational quality. Membership includes all four FoE departments, the Senior Associate Director of Flexible Learning in CTLT, the MET Academic Advisor, and three ex officio members from the PDCE and one from the OGPR. Financial and management oversight is provided by the Management and Budget Committee, with membership comprising the Dean or designate, AVP Academic (or designate), the CTLT Director and Senior Associate Director of Flexible Learning, the Teacher Education Office and Continuing Studies, and the same ex officio members as the Advisory Committee.
- The current governance model with multiple participants and no academic home is atypical relative to other campus programs making it difficult for those outside the MET to understand how it works. This may inadvertently marginalize the program creating future risk.

#### **B. Infrastructure and resources:**

- As noted in the *External Report, section V.B. paragraph 1*, the absence of physical space for online instructors to connect is common. The self-study report noted that most instructors have office space where they work as well as computers and internet access, and the FoE is currently exploring office options for instructors on campus who do not have other space. MET instructor meetings do occur although participation is reportedly low. Enhancing opportunities for virtual participation in meetings and peer review for example (*see Section III*) may help build community among off and on campus instructors, and lead to greater online networking for exchange and faculty development.
- The ‘cost recovery’ MET generates annual surpluses which have the potential to be reinvested to support ongoing program development.
- At the inception of the MET, the utilization of technology in education was in its infancy, and more expertise in educational technology existed among the many staff in the Centre for Distance and Technology (DET) as a part of UBC Continuing Studies, than in UBC Faculties. When DET was dissolved many of the staff transferred to the Centre for Teaching, Learning and technology (CTLT), and provided project coordination, instructor and student support, and instructional design services for developing online programs across campus including the MET. Few faculty were teaching online and few had the knowledge and skills to facilitate learning effectively online. It was within this context that the CTLT – Faculty of Education partnership began, and it is clear that the expertise the collaboration brought to the MET has contributed much to its success financially, and to the positive feedback from learners and graduates which has driven enrolment growth.
- Current CTLT services include project management, instructional and graphic design, web programming and ‘help desk’ support for students. In 2013-14 and 2014-15 CTLT provided support to 25 and 22 MET courses/course sections respectively. As a MET partner, CTLT also receives overhead payment from the MET surplus. While some CTLT staff also teach courses; payment for their teaching is included in the costs for MET instruction.

- Since 2002, the Faculty of Education's Educational Technology Support (ETS) has expanded and now provides support for instructional design, the integration of learning technologies, and curriculum as well as professional development ([ETS homepage, 2015](#)). In the four years from 2011 to 2015 the number of 100% online courses in the FoE rose to 3112 representing a 55% increase. This suggests that the online course development and support services for the MET could be moved from CTLT to the ETS with the necessary increases in personnel, resources and space (*see also External Report, V. B. paragraph 2*). Growing expertise among course team leads/instructors may also enable more participation in these activities **if** this proves to be cost effective (e.g. with course website designs that do not require labour intensive revisions, and can be more seamlessly transitioned from term to term). The feasibility, timing and implications of a move to ETS for non-ETS related CTLT activities needs to be carefully considered.

***Review Recommendations:***

1. Change the MET governance to a trans-departmental model (*External Report Key Recommendation: Section D. 3, and p. 1 of this report*).
2. Appoint an academic director from one of the four departments as detailed earlier.
3. Utilize ETS to support course development and delivery for the MET, as occurs with other FoE programs. (*External Report Key Recommendation: Section D. 1 and this report*).
4. Reinvest surplus funds to benefit the MET (*see External Report, V. B. 5*).

**C. Recommendations from previous review:**

This review is the first review for the MET.

**D. Future plans:**

No additional comments on the *last paragraph* of the *External Report*, p. 17.