

REVIEW COMMITTEE REPORT

October 5, 2014

CONFIDENTIAL

Submitted to the Dean, Faculty of Education

by:

***Dr. Cindy Prescott, Chair,
Dr. James McNinch,
Dr. Shelley Stagg Peterson,
Department of Language and Literacy Education Review Committee***

Preamble

Dean Frank initiated the external review of the Department of Language and Literacy Education. A site visit took place over the course of three days from September 16 – 19, 2014. Members of the External Review committee were:

Dr. James McNinch, University of Regina.

Dr. Shelley Stagg Peterson, Ontario Institute for the Study of Education (OISE), University of Toronto.

Dr. Cindy Prescott, Associate Dean, Graduate Studies, Faculty of Forestry, UBC.

The review committee met with the interim Vice Provost, Academic Affairs, and Academic Innovation (Hugh Brock), a representative from the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (Rachel Fernandez), the Dean, senior members of the Faculty Administration, the Department Head, faculty, staff, and students. The review committee was provided with the Self-Study report, the curriculum vitae of all faculty, terms of reference, and the response to the 2003 external review.

The following review addresses the specific areas covered in the terms of reference document provided to the review committee.

Executive Summary

The Department of Language and Literacy Education (LLED) in the Faculty of Education at the University of British Columbia is recognized as the top language and literacy education department nationally, and is widely recognized internationally for its programmatic expertise and research excellence. Although the Department's goals, objectives, and priorities align closely with those of UBC and the Faculty of Education, the department itself has not set priorities, directions or objectives for the next 5-year period. The newly installed Head of Department is in a good position to initiate the development of a strategic plan.

The strategic plan needs to make clear how this department sees itself functioning as a successful single unit and may include the integration of the Applied Language Studies in Education (ALSED) and Literacy Education (LITR) programs into one graduate program. Faculty renewal, essential across all program areas in LLED, but particularly in the areas of Modern and Indigenous languages, should be part of the strategic plan. The department needs to determine how it will focus resources to initiate and sustain the high quality of its priority core and innovative community and international programs. It may be necessary to reduce activities to ensure that faculty and staff resources are not overstretched. Any further growth in the number of initiatives and students will require additional staff.

LLED faculty members' outstanding research activity should be supported through activities such as mentoring of junior faculty and seed funding to allow faculty members to receive assistance from GA's in preparing grant proposals. The impact of

faculty research should also be highlighted on the Department website and narratives demonstrating their contributions to society should be shared with the VP Research and International Office.

When allocating space in the new building, the Department should consider the need for dedicated office space and/or readily accessible gathering space for graduate students and for bringing together students and faculty from the two graduate programs. Additionally, the purpose and contributions of certain centre's to student and faculty research and to the Department and the Faculty as a whole, should be reviewed in terms of future department funding and space allocation within the new building. The mandate of the Digital Literacy Centre needs to be reviewed in light of the now embedded nature of digital literacy across curricula.

The widespread use of administrative buy-outs (as opposed to service expectations) should be reconsidered when reviewing the practices for allocating workload in order to provide more graduate FTE's for faculty members, particularly those in the LITR program. Additionally, the needs or desires of graduate students to teach courses must be balanced against those of faculty members and sessionals, in the assignment of teaching loads. Workloads and expectations for the newly created tenure-track Instructor/Professor of Teaching rank need to be clarified, particularly what counts as "leadership" for the purposes of tenure and promotion.

Departmental Review
Department of Language and Literacy Education
Faculty of Education, UBC
Site Visit Date: September 16-18, 2014

Information gathered during the site visit was consistent with that compiled in the department's self-study. The self-study was thorough, honest and well-written and the details contained within it will not be repeated in this report.

I. Objectives, Priorities and Activities

- A. The unit's goals, objectives, and priorities. The relationship of these goals, objectives, and priorities to the Faculty of Education and UBC's strategic plans, strategies for ensuring alignment with the Faculty and University priorities and plans. What is the unit's strategic plan for the next 5-year period?

Review Committee Findings:

- The goals, objectives, and priorities of the LLED Department align closely with University and Faculty of Education goals, as the Department clearly contributes, through teaching, research and community outreach activities, to undergraduate, graduate, and professional learning.
- The Department itself, however, has not set priorities, directions or objectives for the next 5-year period.

Review Committee Recommendations:

- As soon as possible, a strategic plan should be developed that outlines where the Department wishes to find itself in the future. A wish-list of new faculty positions should be reconsidered and embedded within this plan. In this process, it will be important to prioritize initiatives (e.g., the proposed reactivation of the Ed.D. in Educational Leadership in Literacy and programs responding to the many invitations to participate in international programs) in relation to available resources. The recent arrival of an experienced and congenial new Head of Department provides the ideal opportunity and impetus to forge ahead with this plan.
- B. The unit's current strengths and barriers to moving forward (where possible include comparison with equivalent units identified for benchmarking purposes). Strategies for maintaining and/or further improving the performance of the unit.

Review Committee Findings:

Strengths

Research Excellence

- LLED is the top language and literacy education department nationally, and is widely recognized internationally for its programmatic expertise.

- Recognition of the Department’s research excellence is evident in the awarding of a Canada Research Chair Tier 1 in 2000 and again in 2014.

Teaching and Learning

- Programs offered by LLED reach beyond the campus: provincially, nationally and internationally.
- The Department attracts top graduate students from around the world and provides substantial mentoring and other support, which has led to students’ success in major award competitions, and in their noteworthy record of peer-reviewed publications and conference presentations.
- The Department also contributes leadership to English academic support at Vantage College.

Community and International Engagement

- LLED faculty members have a strong connection to K-12 classroom teachers, adult literacy and community-based programs.
- LLED faculty members’ expertise and experience with English language teaching and cross-cultural education is critical within the Vancouver region.
- Through activities such as the joint Faculty of Arts/Faculty of Education Ritsumeikan Academic Exchange Program (which has been maintained for more than two decades), the TESL program, and the Centre for Research in Chinese Language & Literacy Education, the Department has longstanding experience in attracting international undergraduate and graduate students and in providing ongoing support for them. It should serve as a model for other units across the University.
- The Department has extensive and longstanding experience in entrepreneurial activities that respond to needs in local, provincial and international communities. Among the many examples of the Department’s innovative program delivery are an established Summer Drama Institute, community-based M.Ed. cohorts such as the West Kootenays Rural Teacher Education Program, the French Language and Global Studies program, and certificate programs in Teacher Librarian Education and Teaching English as a Second Language.
- The earnings from these activities contribute to student support.

Aboriginal Engagement

- Aboriginal education is embedded throughout the Department’s graduate course offerings. LLED faculty members were at the forefront of developing curriculum for a required B.Ed. course.
- Indigenous community engagement has increased dramatically in LLED in recent years through new faculty hires, as well as curricula, certificates, and programs that have been developed in collaboration with First Nation communities, Aboriginal organizations, such as the Aboriginal Head Start Association of British Columbia, and school districts.

Outstanding Work Environment

- There is a strong sense of allegiance and community among tenured and tenure-track faculty, sessional instructors, graduate students, and staff.

Barriers

- The current program divisions of ALSED and LITR may be hindering the development of a single vision for the department.
- Support staff members are clearly very competent, but their substantial workloads may inhibit future success of the department, particularly if faculty renewal plans go ahead.
- The lack of transparency related to the new building plans is inhibiting the ability to foresee future developments (e.g., drama education space, Digital Literacies Centre space)
- Graduate students do not currently have dedicated space for the informal discussions amongst each other and with faculty members that facilitate their development as emerging scholars.

Review Committee Recommendations:

- The strategic plan needs to make clear how the Department sees itself functioning successfully as a single unit. As part of the strategic plan, the Department needs to decide where it will focus its resources, and conversely, where it may need to reduce activities to ensure that resources are not overstretched.
- Dedicated office space and/or readily accessible gathering space for graduate students would facilitate collegial academic discourse, support and mentoring.
- Faculty renewal is essential at the Assistant Professor level across all program areas in LLED; the need is urgent in the areas of Modern and Indigenous languages.
- Logistical support (e.g., a stipend for graduate students to assist faculty with grant preparation) for faculty members to conceptualize and design their research proposals might stimulate a greater number of grant applications. Faculty members should also take greater advantage of the two grant facilitators in the Office of Graduate Programs and Research (OGPR).

II. Scholarly and professional activities

Review Committee Findings:

- Evidence from the site visit, together with reviewers' familiarity with Faculties of Education across Canada, confirms this Department's reputation as the strongest language and literacy department in the country. Scholars are strong individually, and together, LLED faculty make important and noteworthy contributions to scholarship in language and literacy as a whole.
- Faculty research shows considerable breadth and depth in the fields of language and literacy.
- Faculty have received an impressive number of awards and distinctions.

- Faculty have accessed external funding from a variety of sources, although there has been a decline in external funding for research activity since 2012.

Review Committee Recommendations:

- Given the emphasis on research by the newly installed UBC President, it would be timely for the Department to determine the causes for the decline in external funding for research activity since 2012 and formulate a plan to increase external funding support. Mentoring of junior faculty members, along with other forms of support for all faculty members (e.g., seed money for proposal development) might be included in this plan. The excellent new hires indicate that the Department will return to its previous levels of external funding.
- More information on impacts of faculty research, through the usual metrics and through narratives demonstrating their contributions to society, should be collected and shared widely (e.g., on the LLED website and with the VP Research and International Office).
- Given that digital literacy is now embedded throughout literacy research and is integral to modern education, it would be timely to review the purpose of the Digital Literacy Centre and how it contributes to research and teaching across the disciplines.
- Conversations about the contributions of all centres to faculty and graduate student research and to the goals and priorities of the Department are needed to guide allocation of space and resources in the new building.

III. Academic Programs, Teaching and Learning

A. Undergraduate education and or B.Ed. program and student learning

Review Committee Findings:

- LLED offers M.Ed., M.A., and Ph.D. programs in a wide range of areas, including literacy education, modern languages education, Indigenous language and literacy education, teaching English as a second language, and teacher-librarianship.
- LLED has substantial curricular and pedagogical commitments to the B.Ed. programs; with the highest number of tenure-track faculty members of all departments in the Faculty of Education teaching in the program.
- The Department is responsible for offering seven required courses in literacy and second language teaching and learning across the B.Ed. elementary and secondary programs, including a new course, Aboriginal Education in Canada.
- LLED has primary responsibility for the UBC-Ritsumeikan programs.
- LLED faculty members also make contributions to the UBC's Native Indian Teacher Education Program (NITEP).

Review Committee Recommendations:

- The Department is to be commended for its involvement in the B.Ed. program. Indeed, conversations about LLED faculty workloads may need to turn in the

direction of reducing faculty involvement in the B.Ed. program to some degree in order to ensure that course offerings meet student needs in the ALSED graduate program and to revise the LITR graduate course offerings in order to continue to attract students in the thesis-stream programs. An explanation and possible re-thinking of the relationship between “FTE calculations” and the number of graduate courses offered may also assist in achieving the optimal balance between undergraduate and graduate teaching throughout the Department

B. Graduate and postdoctoral education and training

Review Committee Findings:

- LLED’s graduate programs are well-structured and delivered.
- At present there are limited online course offerings, though there is evidence that online courses are being developed. The site visit did not reveal this as a high priority for the Department, but various means of delivering courses should be considered in the strategic plan.
- Rates of and times to completion are within university norms, and graduates of this Department have taken up positions at leading universities across the country.
- Graduate students feel that they are well supported in academic preparation through workshops on proposal preparation, term-paper writing, thesis writing, and through study groups. Students expressed a need for additional mentoring opportunities that place an emphasis on community involvement and on preparation for related non-academic careers.
- Graduate students in the literacy program have limited opportunities for teaching.
- Both faculty and students have set up study groups. Students themselves have set up a Facebook page and graduate peer advisors funded through the Office of Graduate Programs and Research offer assistance throughout the graduate process.
- The program is well-administered and adheres closely to policies and procedures of the Faculty of Graduate and Post-doctoral Studies. The Associate Dean responsible for supporting faculty in student supervision (university-wide) is within the Department, and the Faculty has a highly regarded Associate Dean of Graduate Studies.

Review Committee Recommendations:

- The Department should re-examine the ALSED and LITR graduate programs to revitalize course offerings. In the process, the Department could consider the possibility of integrating the two programs in order to capitalize on the overlapping research, experience, interests, and expertise of faculty members and students in the two areas.
- The widespread use of administrative buy-outs should be reconsidered when reviewing the practices for allocating workload. Perhaps some buy-outs could be simply included in the service component of faculty members’ workloads. This might enable faculty members to teach more graduate courses, particularly in the LITR program.

- Consideration of the needs of graduate students, faculty members and sessional instructors should guide the assignment of teaching duties. This discussion should take place during the strategic planning process.
- Recognition of graduate students' achievements should extend beyond the winning of major awards, in keeping with the University's desire to demonstrate the impact of research to society. This appears to be a strength of the Department that should be celebrated.
- The Department should consider more closely aligning graduate student recruitment with the research interests of Department members. This would have a positive impact on research productivity.

IV. Faculty, Staff and other personnel matters

- A. **Faculty:** Extent and quality of diversity, strengths, areas of expertise, collaborations, demography and balance of the School/Department's faculty; Reflect upon aspects related to attracting and retaining faculty, workloads e.g. service and teaching loads, use of administrative credits (buyouts), use of sessional instructors; mentoring for leadership roles and career advancement.
- B. **Staff:** Effectiveness, productivity and balance of management and staff support, administrative processes and human resources.
- C. **Equity:** Performance of educational and employment equity (staff and faculty), and reflections on equity and diversity and issues for staff and faculty.

Review Committee Findings:

- The Department continues to attract the highest caliber of faculty. Dedicated and very competent staff support faculty, students and programs.
- The Department is currently understaffed in relation to the number of students in the TESL and Modern Languages programs.
- Although there is a rational distribution of responsibilities among the staff, all staff members appear to be operating at their maximum workload.
- The Department is a model for equity and diversity.

Review Committee Recommendations:

- Any further growth in the number of initiatives and students will require additional staff.
- Workloads and expectations for the newly created tenure-track Instructor/Professor of Teaching rank need to be clarified. There is some confusion about what counts as "leadership" (e.g., there are questions about whether research is considered for the purposes of tenure and promotion)
- The Department is fortunate to have many capable, experienced, and long-term sessional instructors, who feel very much a part of the Department. They bring real classroom experience and connect the Department with schools and institutes outside UBC. Elevated appreciation of their contributions (even as small as

having their pictures posted as course instructors on the Department webpage) would assist in ensuring their continued support and positive attitudes.

- D. **Interactions within the School/Department:** Reflection on interactions within the School/Department, including faculty and staff morale, and communications between faculty, staff and students.
- E. **Interactions outside the School/Department:** Reflect and evaluate the School/Department's interactions with other units within the University, particularly those in related disciplines, and with its external communities, including other post-secondary institutions, industry and the profession, as well as the School/Department's success in aboriginal and international engagement.

Review Committee Findings:

- Within the Department there is evidence of collaboration in research and teaching across the two graduate programs. It was surprising, and perhaps telling, however, that the review committee met separately with faculty members from the two graduate programs. With expertise in both literacy and language, the new Canada Research Chair promises to provide further impetus for collaboration across the two LLED graduate programs.
- There seems to be little interaction with other departments within the Faculty itself or with other Faculties at UBC.
- The site visit indicated that there is a supportive and collegial environment among faculty, sessional instructors, graduate students, and staff.

Review Committee Recommendations:

- The Department should explore additional opportunities for collaboration with colleagues within the Department, and in other Departments and Faculties, including new innovative course offerings and research partnerships. The current SSHRC Partnership grant collaboration across the Faculty and in partnership with the BCTF, the Ministry of Education and the school districts could serve as a model for these new collaborative endeavours.
- The Department could make greater use of the Department website for showcasing the many contributions Department members (faculty, sessionals and students) make to society – locally, nationally and globally.

V. Governance, organization and administration

- A. **Quality and effectiveness of governance:** organizational structure, leadership, (e.g. diversity of leadership, opportunities for leadership) development and administration of the School/Department, and the relevant support systems both within the School/Department and available to it.

- B. Infrastructure and resources:** Quality and effectiveness of the physical and financial resources of the School/Department, including its space, teaching facilities, research facilities, equipment and financial base.

Review Committee Findings:

- A new Head of Department was hired in July, 2014, just prior to the site visit. Dr. Anthony Paré works with Deputy Head, Steven Talmy, who has served in this position for two years. Given their competent and congenial leadership abilities, the Department's past leadership issues appear to have been resolved.
- Department staff, while few, has now been in place for a sufficient time to provide the necessary administrative support.
- Faculty and staff will move into a new building in July, 2016. This should alleviate many of the concerns regarding the current space, but there is much uncertainty as to how space will be allocated in the new building.
- It is not clear that the Department is being adequately recompensed for running the Ritsumeikan program.
- Faculty members, sessional instructors and graduate students are invited to and participate in monthly Department meetings. The site visit provided evidence that all members of the Department feel that they are kept well-informed and engage in decision-making within the Department.

Review Committee Recommendations:

- Faculty members need to receive more information on the facilities that will be available to them in the new building. Transparent discussions are needed regarding space for centers and special programs such as drama. Consideration should be given to the need for graduate student space in the new building.
- The distribution of Ritsumeikan costs and revenues should be re-examined.

- C. Recommendations from previous review:** Quality and effectiveness of implementation of the recommendations of the previous external review.

- D. Future plans:** Comment on the School/Department's strategic plans for the future.

Review Committee Findings:

- The Department has gone to reasonable lengths to implement recommendations of the previous external review, including hiring 12-month lecturers and tenure-track Instructor/Professors of Teaching, establishing graduate student fellowships, and engaging in numerous local, provincial and international entrepreneurial activities.
- The Department has provided reasonable rationales for deciding not to implement some recommendations and has outlined activities that are being initiated to address other recommendations.

Review Committee Recommendations:

- Given that the need to clarify the roles of Departmental centres has reappeared in the 2014 external review, action on this recommendation should be taken.

Other advice: Other issues, which the Review Committee would like to raise (if applicable), as appropriate, relative to the general purpose of this review.

Review Committee Findings:

- There has not been a review of this department for 12 years. At the time of the gathering of the data for the writing of the self-study during the last academic year, there appeared to be a high level of tension and frustration in the department and allegations of opaque decision-making, low-morale, and lack of support and collegiality.
- It is important to note that, during the site visit, the review committee found no evidence of such discord. On the contrary, faculty, students, and support staff were enthusiastic about moving forward, 'turning the page' so to speak on the past. This is surely a sign of departmental health and resiliency.

Review Committee Recommendations:

- The review committee commends this Department for its impressive scholarly accomplishments and recommends that the Department celebrate and build on its considerable strengths. It has been innovative, entrepreneurial and collaborative with local, national, and international initiatives in both teaching and program delivery, as well as in research and dissemination. Engaging in a strategic planning exercise should produce a renewed sense of direction and vigour, particularly as the process of faculty renewal continues over the next 5 years.