



MEMO

Office of the Dean

October 30, 2015

TO: Blye Frank, Dean

FROM: Tom Sork, Senior Associate Dean, International
Mark Edwards, Assistant Dean, Professional Development and
Community Engagement

SUBJECT: Response to the Reports from the members of the Master of Educational
Technology (MET) External Program Review Team, received September 1, 2015

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the reports received from members of the MET External Program Review Team. You asked us to focus our response on errors of fact and errors of perception within the reports and to consult with the various MET stakeholder groups to receive their input in preparing our response.

Two reports were received. One was authored by Dr. Jennifer Jenson, Professor, Pedagogy and Technology at York University, and Dr. Heather Kanuka, Professor, Educational Policy Studies, University of Alberta. The second report was authored by Associate Professor Susan Stanton, Director, Rehabilitation Science Online Programs at UBC.

We appreciated the care with which all the reviewers engaged with the *Self-Study* and with the various MET-affiliated groups the Review Team met with during their on-campus visit July 2-3, 2015.

We were also pleased that literally all the recommendations made by the Team were directly linked to issues and concerns that we had identified in the *Self-Study*.

Our consultations involved meeting with the following groups:

- Senior leaders of CTLT
- Members of the MET Management and Budget Committee
- Members of the MET Advisory Committee
- MET instructors

Each of these groups received the *MET Self-Study* in April when it was sent to the Review Team, had an opportunity to meet with the Reviewers when they were on campus, and received copies of both Review Reports in advance of our meetings with them.

Following, then, is commentary on observations or perceptions from the review reports that we believe are either in error or based on an understanding of the MET program that is either partial or at odds with how the program was represented in the *Self Study*.

1. Nature of the MET and the expertise of MET instructors.

External Reviewers seemed to view the MET through the lens of a research-based graduate program rather than as a professional program. The *Self Study* does raise the possibility of adding a “research track” to the MET program, but at this point in its history, the MET is a professional program like other “course-based” master’s programs in the Faculty of Education. The Internal Reviewer observed on page 2 of her report that “The findings and recommendations in this report [the Internal Reviewer report] reflect assessment of the MET as an *applied, non-research, course-based degree....*”

If the perspective that is held of the MET is as a research-based degree, then concerns about number/proportion of tenure-track faculty and publication and research grant records of instructors would rightly influence an assessment of the program. If the perspective of the MET is as an applied or practice-oriented program, then the proportion of sessional to tenure-track instructors can be regarded as a strength. Many of the sessional instructors who teach in the MET bring to the program considerable professional expertise as well as research experience in the areas they are teaching, but not necessarily in educational technology.

Different categories of instructional appointments at UBC including research-track, instructor-track, sessional, adjunct, secondments each have different expectations about the types of scholarly work—if any—produced and the kind of experience that will be brought into teaching. The majority of MET instructors do not hold appointments where research, grants and publications are expectations. An unfortunate “implied hierarchy” among the various instructional and leadership roles in the MET seems inherent in the External Report and is something we wish to discourage.

We acknowledged in the *Self Study* the desire for more tenure-track faculty involvement and will continue to work with Heads to recruit faculty who have an interest in educational technology.

2. Marketing the MET.

As noted in the Internal Report, the External Report does not accurately reflect the variety of ways the MET program is marketed. Although it is true that in recent years the focus of MET marketing has been the domestic market, a variety of marketing approaches are used in the MET including print and google ads, fliers, conference presentations, and so on. The MET website remains an important marketing tool. There is certainly room for improvement in our international marketing efforts, but domestic marketing efforts are extensive and—judging by the sustained high numbers of applications and enrolments—effective. However, we agree that more “assertive marketing” of the MET is warranted and is especially important for attracting more international students.

3. Involvement of the Centre for Teaching, Learning and Technology (CTLT)

In the External Report (p. 7), the observation is made that “CTLT, for example, takes a sizeable portion of the MET budget, but there is a lack of transparency about which services they provide beyond uploading courses into the UBC Connect shell, and minimal instructor and student support in Connect.”

This statement is at best an error in perception. CTLT offers specific services to the MET program that have been spelled out from the beginning of the program. Substantial instructional design assistance continues to be offered to MET instructors when courses are designed or revised. Not all instructors avail themselves of the services available...but the expertise is there when needed. A Connect helpline is available for students and instructors.

4. Course revision process.

The observation is made on page 8 of the External Report that “...there appears to be no clear guidelines when courses ought to be redesigned....and no clear guidelines on what are considered minor revisions versus major revisions.”

There has always been a general principle applied in the MET that courses should be revised every 4-5 years and a schedule is maintained of when courses were last revised and when the next revision is expected. In a few cases, we have approved “early” revision requests when course content was found to be outdated or the course design needed to be improved. The MET Manager maintains the revision schedule and opens conversations with course developers and CTLT in advance of when a major revision is scheduled.

We agree that greater clarity is needed on the difference between major and minor revisions since lack of clarity has led to confusion.

5. Role of the MET-affiliated graduate certificate programs.

The perception that the two certificate programs represent a “lost opportunity” is not supported by the data we have. The certificates are designed for professionals who do not require or desire a master’s degree.

Since the inception of the program, we have had 156 graduate certificate students that have either graduated or “laddered” into the MET program.

Of these 156 students:

32.1% (50 students) earned the certificate without laddering

38.5% (60 students) earned the certificate and then laddered into the MET

29.4% (46 students) laddered into the MET before earning the certificate

So 32.1% graduated without laddering and 67.9% laddered into the MET. It seems to us that the certificates are performing the function they were designed for and are also entry points into the MET for a significant number of certificate students. We could, no doubt, do a better job of marketing the certificate programs.

6. Growth in the number of online courses and enrollments in the Faculty of Education.

On page 10 of the Internal Report, reference is made to growth in the development of fully online courses. The reviewer confuses the number of online courses with the number of course enrolments (see chart of p. 46 of the *Self-Study*). This is a simple misunderstanding of the data presented in the *Self Study* which represents growth in online course enrolments between 2011-2015.

7. Financial and academic oversight of the MET.

On page 7 of the External Report, the reviewers assert that the MET “...lacks the financial and academic oversight that are common in other graduate programs.” The academic oversight of the MET is certainly different from the oversight provided to programs based in departments, but the financial oversight has always been detailed and transparent to the responsible committees and leaders. Every year since it was founded, a detailed accounting of MET finances—revenue, expenses, surpluses—has been provided to the MET Management and Budget Committee including the Dean and Director of Finance. This level of financial accountability is, in fact, rarely found in other graduate programs in the Faculty of Education.

The perception that the MET lacks conventional academic oversight may be accounted for, in part, by the unique governance structure that was established and partly by a failure to fully communicate how that governance structure operates. These are both

issues that will be important to take up as conversations continue about an appropriate governance model for the MET and other programs that span departmental boundaries.

On page 14, of the External Report there is also an assertion that “At present, a non-TS [tenure-stream] faculty in PDCE oversees the MET program.” Although the Assistant Dean who supervises the MET operations staff in PDCE holds a non-TS appointment, overall responsibility for oversight of the MET program continues to rest with a Senior Associate Dean who is a tenured professor with expertise and experience in developing and managing online graduate programs.

8. Gender balance in the MET program.

The MET *Self Study* includes a gender analysis of the MET instructional staff and provides listings of the names and positions of those who serve in both operational and governance roles. Page 14 of the External Review Report contains a recommendation that reads “Break up the ‘old boys network’ that has been making programmatic, financial and leadership decisions for far too long.” Although it is true that males hold the majority of defined leadership and operational roles in the MET program, women have always served in important roles in the MET including MET Manager, MET Marketing, members of the MET Management and Budget Committee, and MET Advisory Committee. Most of the roles in MET governance are based on the non-MET positions held or are appointments made by departments.

We need to continue to be mindful of the general continuing gender imbalance in technology-related positions at UBC—including the MET—and continue efforts to recruit more women into MET leadership and instructional positions, but a review of the membership of the two primary MET governance committees as well as the MET operations staff suggests that women play important roles in all aspects of MET operations and governance. The report from the Internal Reviewer includes clarifying observations about gender equity in the MET on pages 7 and 8 including the final comment that “No concerns about gender or cultural diversity concerns were expressed” (p. 8).

9. Intellectual property (IP) policy.

On page 2 of the External Report, Recommendation #4 is that a policy for Intellectual Property (IPP) should be created to clarify ownership of course material. In fact UBC has such a policy (Policy 81) that was recently revised. We take this recommendation to mean that the existence and implications of Policy 81 for those who develop and revise MET courses should be clearly communicated.

10. Use of communication technologies in the MET.

On page 3 of the External Report, Recommendation #1 under “Teaching, Pedagogy & Courses” states: The MET program should integrate diverse communication technologies, both synchronous and asynchronous, into the MET program. In fact, the

MET program always does this, but possibly not to the extent expected by the reviewers. We take this as an invitation to take a close look at the range of communication technologies currently embedded in the MET curriculum and to ensure that a suitable range of diverse technologies is incorporated into the curriculum as new courses are developed and existing courses are revised.