



Psychology Final Assessment Report

Faculty / Affiliated University College	Faculty of Social Science
Degrees Offered	BA; BA dual degree with Ivey; BSc
Modules Reviewed	HSp in Psychology (BA); HSp in Psychology/HSp Business Administration (BA); HSp in Developmental Cognitive Neuroscience (BA); HSp in Psychology (BSc); HSp in Animal Behaviour (BSc); Major in Psychology (BA or BSc)
External Consultant	Richard Eibach, Associate Chair Undergraduate, Department of Psychology, University of Waterloo
Internal Reviewers	Tracy Isaacs, Associate Dean (Academic), Arts and Humanities
Date of Site Visit	Monday, March 19, 2018
Evaluation	Good Quality
Approval Dates	SUPR-U: June 6, 2018 SCAPA: Senate:

Executive Summary

Because of a late cancellation, there was just one external consultant for this review, Richard Eibach, Department of Psychology, University of Waterloo. As the Associate Chair Undergraduate of his Department, Dr. Eibach had good insight into undergraduate programming – both in terms of curriculum content and delivery – appropriate to the discipline and the times. The site visit took place on Monday, March 19, 2018, with Dr. Eibach and internal reviewer Dr. Tracy Isaacs (Arts and Humanities) present at all meetings. During the site visit the external consultant met with John Doerksen, Vice-Provost (Academic Programs) and Karen Campbell, Vice-Provost (Academic Planning, Policy and Faculty; Dean of the Faculty of Social Science; Associate Dean, Academic and Undergraduate Services, Faculty of Social Science; the Chair and Associate Chair (Undergraduate Affairs), Psychology; Associate Chief Librarian, Western Libraries; faculty members; undergraduate students; members of the Undergraduate Affairs Committee and staff in the Department including the Administrative Officer; Undergraduate Program Advisor and the Undergraduate Coordinator.

The external consultant provided a positive report acknowledging strong curriculum in all the programs under review, programs that contribute to Western’s strategic priorities and mission to “promote excellence and innovation in teaching and learning” and “teach transferable knowledge.” The program offers undergraduates opportunities for advanced training in research methods, data analysis and the acquisition of information literacy skills. He notes exceptionally accomplished full-time faculty members and an active research environment in which undergrads can get involved. According to the external’s report, the curriculum has clear and appropriate requirements and learning outcomes that meet the Undergraduate Degree Level Expectations and satisfy the APA’s guidelines for the discipline. Further, the curriculum reflects the current state of the discipline, enables students to contribute to new knowledge, and allows them to develop autonomy, professional capacity, and skills such as time management, proper citation practices, and to develop academic integrity. Instructors incorporate innovative projects, such as a third-year course project in which students develop a PSA video and the history of psychology course in which students interview past graduates of the program. The modes of delivery, primarily but not exclusively through on campus instruction, are deemed effective and appropriate to the learning outcomes, as are the teaching methods and assessment tools.

The external consultant considers the human resources available to the program adequate for providing effective support. He points out some issues with the physical space where the admin offices are located. These issues are acknowledged by both the department and the office of the dean and within the budget and planning process both have requested funding to support renovations. Library resources and support, IT infrastructure, and lab resources and access are deemed effective for the support of student learning. As is expected, larger class sizes in first and second year yield to smaller classes on more focused topics in third and fourth year, enabling more interaction and discussion.

Student feedback indicates high satisfaction and appreciation for the opportunities to gain research training, especially in the honors thesis course, and also as research assistants.

Significant Strengths of the Program

The external consultant identified several strengths in particular including: (1) opportunities, including CEL opportunities, for students to apply their knowledge; (2) excellent one-on-one mentorship and skills consolidation in the HSP fourth year honors thesis, providing what he terms “an exceptional capstone experience”; (3) excellent support for students from the full-time Psychology Program Advisor; (4) access to and opportunities to research-intensive training working with full-time faculty members on their original research projects.

Suggestions for Improvement & Enhancement

The external reviewer had several suggestions for the program enhancement. First, student feedback indicates a desire for more transparency concerning practical applications. The department has developed a checklist of transferable skills already. The external consultant suggests that the department flag courses in which the content and assignments focus on practical applications. This would help students identify those courses. Second, some students in the HSP indicated confusion about how to integrate data analysis with their methods training. The external consultant suggests could be addressed either by updating the sequencing and structure of the offerings or integrating methods and data analysis into one course for the HSP students as is currently the case in the major module (in 2820E). The departmental response indicates that this possibility is being explored at an upcoming retreat. The external endorses the idea, now under consideration by the department, of expanding the half course (0.5 credit) 3800F/G (a third-year data analysis course) into a full year course (1.0 credit). He also raised the issue of writing skills. The Dean’s Office response indicates that this has been identified as a broader concern that is provoking a Faculty-wide discussion and the possible implementation of a first year writing course requirement for Social Science students.

The external consultant’s primary recommendation is: “keep up the good work.” Having said that, there are some recommendations. One such, hiring an Indigenous Scholar, will be considered as part of a larger discussion of the department’s Academic Strategic Plan at a May retreat. None of the recommendations or suggestions seem absolutely necessary for program sustainability, but below the non-thesis capstone option for the HSP and a comment on the proposed name change to differentiate the BSc are included.

Recommendations Required for Program Sustainability

Recommendation	Responsibility
Careful consideration of the non-thesis option capstone option for HSp students before making changes; experiment with alternatives such as CEL	Department
Retain “Psychology” in the revised BSc degree’s name in order to avoid potential confusion	Department