

Final Assessment Report
Submitted by SUPR-G to SCAPA

Program:	Planetary Science Collaborative Graduate Program	
Degrees Offered:	MSc and Ph.D.	
Approved Fields:	MSc in Geology (Planetary Science) or Geophysics (Planetary Science) PhD in Geology (Planetary Science) or Geophysics (Planetary Science) MSc in Physics (Planetary Science) PhD in Physics (Planetary Science) MSc in Astronomy (Planetary Science) PhD in Astronomy (Planetary Science)	
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Date of Site Visit:	June 2, 2014	
Evaluation:	<i>Conditional with report due September 2016</i>	
Approved by:	<i>SUPR-G on February 23, 2015</i> <i>SCAPA on March 4, 2015</i>	

Executive Summary

Planetary science incorporates and synthesizes the disciplines of Astronomy, Biology, Chemistry, Earth Sciences, Geography, Physics and many other related subject areas. The recognition of this discipline is relatively recent – planetary science in its modern form is less than 60 years old, and the field is rapidly evolving. Planetary science research focuses on understanding the formation and development of planets and planetary systems, with particular emphasis on our own solar system.

The objective of the collaborative graduate program is to provide significant value-added educational exposure to the broad area of planetary science to students at Western involved in thesis research covered under the rubric of planetary science. This is accomplished by ensuring the student is exposed to areas of planetary science research outside of their home department, thereby integrating them into the Western planetary science research community. This is specifically done through graduate student attendance and participation in a planetary science journal seminar series, a common introductory planetary science graduate short course and mandatory attendance at planetary science colloquia given by external visiting speakers. Additionally, a suite of more specialized planetary science graduate courses are available to provide interested students with a more formal background in the sub-disciplines most germane to their own research communities.

All of these components of the Planetary Science Collaborative Graduate Program bring graduate students in the program more deeply into the interdisciplinary community of planetary science researchers, fundamentally adding to their experience above and beyond what the home programs alone offer.

Significant Strengths of Program:

- Integrated into a leading center of Planetary research in Canada.
- Strong demand: The program ranks among the top five worldwide in terms of number of students. It attracts top caliber students, who hold major scholarships, including Trillium, NSERC, and Vanier Canada Graduate Scholarships.
- Interdisciplinary collaborative program that spans several Western departments.

Opportunities for improvement & Enhancement:

Recommendations for implementation:	Responsibility	Resources	Timeline
Extension of program to engineering	PS graduate coordinator, CPSX director, Dean of Engineering	None	December 2015
Diversification of thesis supervisors	PS graduate coordinator	None	Ongoing
Coordinate with host programs to produce clearly articulated degree requirements for students	PS graduate coordinator, Associate Dean (Grad Programs)	consultation with host programs	September 2015
Harmonization of course weights between different host programs	PS graduate coordinator, Associate Dean (Grad Programs)	consultation with host programs	September 2015
Define a plan for long-term financial stability of the program	PS graduate coordinator, Associate Dean (Grad Programs), Dean	budgetary	January 2016
Academic Director	Dean of Science	None	September 2015