

McGill

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Local 4249

DATE: May 8, 2017

TO: Dr. Philip Smith
Associate Director, Cyclical Unit Reviews
Office of the Provost and Vice-Principal (Academic)

SUBJECT: Cyclical Review Committee Report

On behalf of the Department we would like to thank the Cyclical Review Committee for their generous time and commitment in evaluating our self-study documentation, for the multiple collegial meetings with the Chair and faculty members, and their thoughtful recommendations. We would also like to thank the committee for highlighting the Department's many achievements in spite of existing limited resources.

The response will focus on (a) correcting any misconceptions or errors, (b) the Department's agreement/disagreements with the recommendations, and (c) our plan in adhering to the Review Committee's recommendations.

Misconceptions and Errors

The Review Committee did a thoughtful and comprehensive review of our many programs and activities. There were only a few errors in their observations and interpretations of the documentations provided:

- The process of communication and/or filing of student grievances are clearly articulated in the two professional degree handbooks and are provided in the orientations for all incoming students.
- Although the committee noted that our website is "problematic and does not provide clear, easy access information about program requirements" we have attempted to increase the clarity and comprehensiveness of the Departmental website but administrative constraints have not permitted the completion of this project (3/6 support staff were either on maternity or paternity leave).

Advice and Recommendations

The Department agrees with most of the recommendations put forward by the Review Committee. However, as noted by the Review Committee, many of these recommendations have associated financial implications and the need for increased resources (hiring of additional academic and support staff), while others are tied to the University/Faculty funding and policies models, and recent union contractual agreements.

The Department is in strong agreement with most of the Committee's recommendations. These can be addressed as Student Recommendations, Support Staff Recommendations, Departmental/Faculty Recommendation and General Recommendations.

The Department remains in agreement with the following recommendations:

Student Recommendations

- the need to find increased funding for international students
- the need to find multi-year funding for graduate students
- the need to increase opportunities for graduate students to acquire teaching skills and experience

Support Staff Recommendations

- the overall need for increased support staff
- the specific need for increased assistance with respect to the administrative responsibilities for professional programs
- the need to reduce paper storage of administrative files and increased online storage of data
- the need to better track the job placements and successes of our graduates
- the need for additional space with respect to having a permanent lunch area for support staff

Departmental/Faculty Recommendations

- the reduction of graduate student/faculty supervision ratios
- the need for a faculty member to assume the administration of the M.Ed. program
- the need for decreased teaching loads for faculty administering professional and nonprofessional programs
- the need for a transparent way of rotating administrative positions among faculty members for 2- 3 year terms
- while the recommendation is that we reconsider the need for mid-level hires this is necessary to help support the administrative load in our professional programs
- the need for further outreach from our professional programs - especially to areas with indigenous populations

General Recommendations

- the need to develop more efficient strategies to promote self-care and well-being of students, staff and faculty

Departmental Action Plan

As previously noted, many of the recommendations are dependent upon increased University and Faculty financial resources, changes in the funding model used for our Department (which is primarily a graduate department), approval for both faculty and support staff hires, and additional physical facilities.

Student Concerns

Although the Department receives a number of DFWs and faculty members through their research grants provide some financial graduate student support, there is still a great need for further multi-year support for international and national students. In spite of the fact that many of

our graduate students receive prestigious national and provincial awards (typically after one or two years), the limited number of multi-year funding packages has often resulted in losing the best students to other universities. International students are at a further disadvantage in that they are ineligible for many provincial and national grants and fellowships due to residency requirements. Although we have had extensive discussions and support from GPS in helping to attract the best graduate students, and the Department has developed a small number of preferential multi-year recruitment packages, additional DFW and GEF funding is required. The Department is continuing to seek additional support from the University. A growing number of graduate students are dependent upon this funding for tuition and living expenses.

The number of undergraduate teaching opportunities for our graduate students is a growing problem and concern. This is restricted by the collective agreement and we are only allotted a limited number of opportunities to engage graduate students as instructors. Other models including allowing Teaching Assistants to provide an increased number of lectures are being explored. Our circumstances are unusual in that we are primarily a graduate Department, having a large number of graduate students with a small number of undergraduate courses, thus making opportunities to teach particularly limited.

Administrative/Support Staff Concerns

The Department has experienced an unusually large support staff turnover due to maternity replacements and two program coordinators resignations. The Department, with strong support from the Dean and HR, is currently looking to replace the two support staff recent departures. The Department has received approval for hiring of another support staff position. Although this will help, the Department still believes we are understaffed in support staff positions in light of the many demands required by the two professional accredited programs, the increased number of doctoral students, new faculty hires, maternity leaves, and downloading of tasks to the Department. Increases in support staff would also help address issues related to record keeping, updating of our website, and enhanced communication with graduates as recommended by the Review Committee. There is also an increased need from support staff for help in administering the growing number of funded research projects.

Faculty Concerns

The Department, with approval from the University and Dean, is currently interviewing candidates and has made offers to hire 5 new faculty members (two of which are replacements for faculty retiring, two are in the area of indigenous psychology, and one in the area of mental health). One of these appointments is to be made at the Associate Professor level, another at the Professional level adding additional strength and research supervisory skills to our various programs. The Associate Professor candidate will be able to assume some administrative responsibility as Program Director in the near future and the Professional position candidate will assume the position as Clinic Director and Director of Clinical Training in the Counselling Psychology program.

As noted by the Review Committee we have an exceedingly high faculty-graduate student supervisory level. We believe that this will be unsustainable in the future. Although junior faculty will be to assume supervisory capabilities of some students they have been urged to gradually increase supervision and the development of their research labs. This need to continue to increase graduate student enrollment is based upon the University enrollment driven funding model. Although we teach a limited number of undergraduate courses, we primarily teach graduate courses in which enrollments must be capped (this is especially true for the two professional clinical training courses where clinical courses must have low faculty-student enrollments as per the professional accreditation standards). As previously noted, these professional programs also

require updating of multiple forms on an annual basis and often include the preparation of annual reports, self-study documents and site visits (the two professional programs are accredited by 5 clinical accrediting bodies, each of which having their own demands), thus necessitating additional support staff resources and significant faculty administrative responsibility.

The Department Chair and faculty recognize the need for sharing of administrative responsibilities. Nevertheless, these added substantial administrative responsibilities and increased time demands, on top of the required teaching and heavy graduate supervision (and often clinical supervision) and the continuation of one's research program require additional course releases otherwise faculty remain reluctant to assume these positions. This issue will be discussed with the Dean and more fully addressed at the Departmental retreat in the Fall.

The Department has developed a number of mechanisms to both maintain contact with current and former graduate students and to increase community outreach. The Department's electronic newsletter, *Dialogues*, is distributed to all current students and faculty as well as all graduates. This publication is coordinated by a volunteer research coordinator and several graduate students. As well, the School/Applied Child Psychology program has initiated an international School Psychology Institute (the second of which is scheduled for August 2017) that has been widely attended by clinicians throughout the province, other parts of Canada, the U.S., and Europe (again coordinated by graduate student volunteers). The Department also held a 5-session Effective Parenting series last Fall that was well attended by parents and educators from the community. Dr. Jake Burack and his graduate students frequently travel to Northern Quebec in order to provide clinical services for indigenous populations while Dr. Sue Lajoie continue to host international meetings. The Department is currently hiring two highly respected Indigenous Psychology researchers and it is expected that greater community outreach at a provincial, national and international level will occur.

General Concerns

On a general level we certainly support trying to find a healthy work-life balance for students, staff and faculty. The University offers a number of programs and the Department is seeking ways to increase communal experiences through student orientations, wine and cheese events, Bar-B-Qs, etc. However, it is important to note that well-being is directly tied to the heavy workplace demands and although the University offers wellness programs for staff, faculty and students, a better balance can only be achieved with increased resources and support.

The Department will discuss all of the Review Committee's recommendations and ways in which they can be implemented in much greater detail at their retreat in the Fall.

While the first recommendation by the Review Committee, "Perhaps the most important recommendation is to stay the course in what is a very impressive department that has been strong for some time and is doing well at handling generational turnover," there is little doubt that we require additional support from the Faculty and University. The benchmarking exercise against other leading national and international universities, as detailed in the self-study documentation, clearly shows we are among the strongest Departments in spite of the extremely limited available resources. In order for us to continue to maintain the high standards that we have attained additional resources are required.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeffrey L. Derevensky, Ph.D.
James McGill Professor and Chair