

Final Assessment Report for the 2023-2024 Cyclical Review of the Policing and Public Safety Programs

INTRODUCTION

In accordance with Laurier’s Institutional Quality Assurance Procedures ([Policy 2.1](#)), this Final Assessment Report provides a summary of the cyclical program review process for the Policing and Public Safety undergraduate and graduate programs, prepared by the Quality Assurance Office, along with an identification of strengths of the programs under review authored by the Dean of the Faculty of Human and Social Sciences and the Associate Vice-President and Dean of the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies. All recommendations made by the external review committee in their report are listed, followed by a summary of the units’ response, and the decanal responses. Recommendations prioritized are listed in the Implementation Plan, with those not being prioritized for implementation noted as well.

The Final Assessment Report is reviewed and approved by the Provost and Vice-President: Academic. Following completion of the Final Assessment Report, it is approved by the Program Review Sub-Committee and Senate Academic Planning Committee. Approval dates are listed at the end of this report. Final Assessment Reports are submitted to Senate as part of an annual report on cyclical reviews, and to the Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance for information. Final Assessment Reports and Implementation Reports are posted on the public-facing page of the [Quality Assurance Office](#) website.

The Implementation Plan for the recommendations prioritized in the Final Assessment Report can be found at the end of this report. Units will submit their first Implementation Report two years following approval of the Final Assessment Report at Senate. The Implementation Report will include comments from the unit on actions taken toward the completion of recommendations, comments from the relevant Dean(s) related to the progress made, and comments from the Program Review Sub-Committee, which is responsible for approving the Implementation Report and deciding if further reports are required. The Implementation Report is submitted to the Senate Academic Planning Committee for information.

SUMMARY OF REVIEW PROCESS

This was the first cyclical program review for the BA in Policing (2016), BA in Public Safety (2020), Public Safety Graduate Diplomas (2018) and Master of Public Safety (2018) programs.

The Self-Study for the Policing and Public Safety programs was written by Dr. Scott Blandford, Program Coordinator, with input from faculty in the programs. The valuable contributions of the Online Program Manager in the unit to the cyclical program review process are also noted. In addition to the Self-Study (Volume I), the Programs also submitted a copy of faculty curricula vita (Volume II), a volume of course syllabi, and a list of

proposed external reviewers (Volume III). A draft of the Self-Study was reviewed by the Quality Assurance Office, Dean of the Faculty of Human and Social Sciences, and Associate Vice-President and Dean of the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies, prior to submission of the final version.

Following Laurier's IQAP, the external review committee for the review consisted of two external reviewers from outside the university, and one internal reviewer from Laurier but outside of the unit. The review committee was selected by the Program Review Sub-Committee on November 2, 2023, and a virtual external review, owing to the fact that all of the Policing and Public Safety programs are offered online, took place February 26-29, 2024.

The review committee consisted of **Dr. Judy Eaton** from Psychology Program at Wilfrid Laurier, **Dr. Gary Ellis** from the Justice Studies program at the University of Guelph-Humber and **Dr. Marc Nesca** from the Criminal Justice Program at Athabasca University. During the external review, the committee had met with the following individuals and groups:

- Dr. Trish McLaren, Associate Vice-President: Academic
- Dr. Bruce McKay, Dean of the Faculty of Human and Social Sciences
- Dr. Brent Wolfe, Associate Vice-President and Dean, Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies
- Dr. Scott Blandford, Policing and Public Safety Program Coordinator
- Policing and Public Safety faculty members
- Policing and Public Safety administrative staff
- Mr. Matt Thomas, Head of Collections and Acquisitions and Ms. H  l  ne LeBlanc, Liaison Librarian
- Policing and Public Safety undergraduate students
- Policing and Public Safety graduate students
- Policing and Public Safety program alumni
- Ms. Sally Heath, Manager: Academic Program Development and Review

The review committee submitted their completed report on March 28, 2024. The executive summary from the report, and its recommendations, are provided below.

EXTERNAL REVIEWERS' REPORT EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Under the auspices of the Wilfrid Laurier University ("the university") Quality Assurance Office, a cyclical review of two online undergraduate programs in Policing and Public Safety, and one graduate program in Public Safety was completed. The review committee consisted of three reviewers: two external and one internal. The review was conducted online between February 26 and 29, 2024. As all three programs are offered exclusively online, no on-site visits were conducted as part of this review.

As outlined in pertinent university policy (policy 2.1 Cyclical Review of Undergraduate and Graduate Academic Programs), program reviews occur on an eight-year cycle, and are intended to ensure pedagogical quality and

accountability to students. In service of these goals, the committee met with the Policing and Public Safety Program Coordinator, the Associate Vice-President: Academic, the Dean of the Faculty of Human and Social Sciences, library representatives, and the Associate Vice-President and Dean of Graduate and Post-Doctoral studies. The committee also had opportunity to meet with program faculty, including contract faculty, administrative support staff, and student groups. The latter included undergraduate students, graduate students, and alumni. Regrettably, the committee did not have opportunity to meet with representatives from the Education and Instructional Design group to better understand the logistical challenges of maintaining fully online programs.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND RESPONSES

The External Reviewers' Report included 14 recommendations to improve the quality of the Policing and Public Safety programs. All recommendations have been listed verbatim below, followed by a summary of the program's response, and responses from the Dean of the Faculty of Science and the Associate Vice-President and Dean of the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies.

Recommendation #1: Engage with 'Educational and Instructional Design' to update the various options for online delivery with a view to have a better connection with the instructors and other students; to include, where appropriate, online lectures, voice over PowerPoints and other modalities to better engage the students.

Unit Response: The program courses have incorporated the use of Zoom class meetings and sessions, but the majority of the courses were developed at a time when options such as online lectures and voice over PowerPoints were not as readily available. To begin to now incorporate these options into existing courses will require major edits for which we simply do not have the necessary resources (i.e. faculty and eLearning support). As new courses are developed, or major rewrites for existing courses permit, these options will be incorporated. It is important to note that as completely online, asynchronous courses, materials must be readily available in recorded format, and "live" delivery.

The programs continue to maintain websites that all program students have access to, to share information and connect with each other.

Dean of the Faculty of Human and Social Sciences: The Dean of FHSS supports the recommendation to incorporate elements within the courses that better engage students – and to do this for new course developments and for existing courses that come up for updating and revising.

Dean of the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies: The Unit response is a reasonable approach. Efforts to update and improve 1) connections between students and instructors and other students, and 2) online delivery will be incorporated as existing courses are revised and new courses are developed.

Recommendation #2: Examine various methods of online evaluation that will provide the student and instructor with timely and accurate feedback.

Unit Response: As courses are revised, we have been streamlining the number and type of written assignments, as well as providing choices on which assignments to complete (e.g., choose 1 of 4). This provides the students with a reduced workload and the ability to better manage their time, but also allows the instructors a dispersed workload, thereby allowing greater and more timely feedback. The reduction in course section sizes will also facilitate this. This also ties into the Recommendation #9 comments.

Dean of the Faculty of Human and Social Sciences: The Dean of FHSS supports the unit's response to this recommendation. The assessment workload (from both a student, and an instructor, perspective) appears to have increased over the years in new OC developments across many programs, and has become unmanageable. This recommendation will improve the user experience for all.

Dean of the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies: Providing students with options and balancing workload for both students and instructors (the latter to ensure timely feedback) is an entirely reasonable approach to online evaluation.

Recommendation #3: Either change the entrance requirements for the graduate diploma so that they are aligned with the entrance requirements of the graduate degree or remove the option of leveraging successful completion of the diploma for entrance into the Master's degree.

Unit Response: The option for admission to the Graduate Diploma was included for admission because there are many senior level public safety leaders who do not have an undergraduate degree, but through their cumulative work experience have developed many of the necessary skillsets that an undergraduate degree would give them. One of the goals of the Laurier Strategic Plan was to provide non-traditional pathways for individuals to complete a university degree and public safety has been severely underserved in Canadian post-secondary education programming. There did not exist a suitable undergraduate degree program in public safety that could be taken by these senior level public safety leaders, so the Grad. Diploma presented a viable pathway.

The recent creation of the BA – Public Safety (Advanced degree) and the soon to be available BA – Public Safety (4 yr. Degree) now present options for completion of an undergraduate degree in the discipline to prepare students for graduate level studies. As a result, the option to utilize the Alternate Admission process for applicants with only a college diploma or no post-secondary education has been removed.

Dean of the Faculty of Human and Social Sciences: The Dean of FHSS supports the use of the completed BA – Public Safety degrees as entry points into the Public Safety GDips and MPS program, thereby removing the college-only or no post-secondary education routes of entry into the GDips.

Dean of the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies: The Unit has responded positively to this recommendation. I support the actions that have been taken. Ultimately, students should be better prepared for expectations associated with graduate level work.

Recommendation #4: Ensure that the Distance Education and Instructional Development unit of the University can commit the resources to quickly update course websites and materials to ensure that the materials are accurate and current.

Unit Response: In consultations with the eLearning Team, they indicate they now have a dedicated role to support revisions and are formalizing the process as a way to organize the revisions across the upcoming year. The program coordinator had developed a schedule for course reviews and updates, but a shortage of faculty, and other resources precluded implementation of that plan. Going forward, we will begin to implement the schedule to ensure courses remain as current as possible. With two new faculty hires starting July 1 and September 1, specific details will be developed in the fall term. Note that given the dynamic nature of the Public Safety field, complete currency is near impossible to obtain. However, this process, in conjunction with allowing CTF and faculty earlier access to their courses for minor updates should retain relative currency of the material.

Dean of the Faculty of Human and Social Sciences: It is imperative that the university's online learning teams are able to support the timely updating of course material, notably for courses in a field like Public Safety in which laws, policies, trends, etc., are constantly changing, and (to some extent) credibility of the course (etc.) is tied to currency. This can be streamlined by ensuring courses are designed in such a way, and mounted into the learning management system (MyLearningSpace) in such a way as to facilitate updating. The commitment on the part of FHSS and the Provost's office to have two new hires starting in Public Safety over the coming months will also help to keep these courses up to date.

Dean of the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies: The Unit describes efforts to ensure course material is current, with support of the eLearning Team and by allowing faculty and CTF earlier access to course material. These are positive steps in response to this recommendation, as are two new faculty hires.

Recommendation #5: Allow instructors earlier access to their courses to facilitate revisions and maintain currency.

Unit Response: This is a process coordinated by the eLearning team and beyond our control, but we will work with them to gain early access as much as possible. With the upcoming increase of two additional faculty members, the intention is to have one faculty member coordinate course reviews/updates, and work with subject matter experts (SMEs) and Instructional Designers. I have been advised that the Instructional Design team has allocated one person to focus on course updates, so we look forward to more timely course revisions. There are two currently underway at this time. We will continue to advocate for, and request, earlier access to course content, particularly for new instructors.

Dean of the Faculty of Human and Social Sciences: The start of each teaching term, and thus access to materials, is prescribed by the Collective Agreement, and it would not be prudent then for all instructors to be given early access to their course materials, as it would conceivably imply that these instructors should be doing work on the course outside of the period of time over which they are paid. The unit's response though does suggest a better direction, which is to have the full-time faculty (for which there will be two more start their appointments over the period from July 1st to September 1st 2024) keep a close eye on the courses and ensure they are updated when appropriate.

Dean of the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies: The Unit has responded positively to the recommendation by having regular faculty take the lead on coordinating course reviews to ensure material is current.

Recommendation #6: Review best practice standards regarding optimum class sizes for online professional courses.

Unit Response: Class sizes have already been reviewed and caps adjusted as follows:

All First-year courses (e.g., PD100) will be capped at 125;

All Second-year courses (e.g., SAFE210) will be capped at 100;

All Third-year courses (e.g., SAFE316) will be capped at 80;

All Fourth-year courses (e.g., PD401) will be capped at 50;

All MPS/GDip courses (e.g., SAFE600) will be capped at 35.

If/when the cap is reached, a second course section will be opened and (if necessary) the student numbers evenly distributed across both sections.

These numbers were selected in consultation with Sarah Erb and Trish Lovelock, taking into account the course content and methods of assessment. All of the PD/SAFE course follow the same structure and assessment types are fairly consistent - it is only the 'depth' of the assessments which changes which accounts for reducing the numbers each year.

Hopefully, this will alleviate some of the feeling of being overwhelmed by large class sizes.

Dean of the Faculty of Human and Social Sciences: The proposed caps, especially at the first and second year level, are inconsistent with enrolment caps in online (OC) courses in other WLU programs (e.g., Psychology) with similar assessment styles (enrolment caps in similarly-assessed Department of Psychology courses, for example, are substantially higher). Proposals for enrolment caps by year level, course type, etc., should be made alongside departmental proposals for the requirements (from an assessment, pedagogical, etc., perspective) within each course (by year level, type of course, etc.). It is a combination of learning outcomes, and workload (for students and instructors), that should dictate enrolment caps, and not just the year level of the course. The Dean of FHSS would like to see a more fulsome proposal on enrolment caps that considers multiple factors beyond year level, that elaborates on the unit's response that all PD/SAFE courses follow the same structure, and that it is the depth of assessments that vary.

Dean of the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies: For the MPS/GDip courses, a cap of 35 is equivalent to the average class size during the past few years, according to Table 3 in the Self-Study. Close monitoring of course evaluations and feedback from graduate students will help to determine if this is an appropriate cap that helps to create a positive graduate student experience.

Recommendation #7: Ensure that caps are set for the number of students in each course and that priority admission is given to students enrolled in the Policing and Public Safety Program.

Unit Response: See our response to the previous recommendation regarding new class size caps. Our Program Manager and Advisors will work to ensure that program students always have priority to course admissions – this can be accomplished with holds on seats. Courses do have filters in place for the first two weeks to allow our students to have first right of refusal, and we have implemented more emails (earlier) to remind students of upcoming registration in hopes they enroll quickly.

Dean of the Faculty of Human and Social Sciences: The Dean of FHSS supports the unit’s use of filters at the start of the registration period to ensure priority access of Policing / Public Safety students to their courses. Please also see the response to recommendation #6.

Dean of the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies: This appears to be a recommendation specific to the undergraduate program, but otherwise, please see response to Recommendation #6.

Recommendation #8: No new programs should be added until instructor workload issues, class sizes, and the ability of the Distance Education and Instructional Development unit to effectively support the programs are resolved.

Unit Response: Given that a member of the review committee came from a competitor institution that recently created a related program, it is possible to consider this recommendation as a possible conflict of interest. Nevertheless, at this time, there are no plans or desire to increase program/courses offerings until we have sufficient faculty and support staff in place, and all courses have been updated.

Dean of the Faculty of Human and Social Sciences: Given that a member of the review committee came from a competitor institution that recently created a related program (which was not known at the time that they were selected), it is possible to consider this recommendation as a possible conflict of interest. Nevertheless, at this time, there are no plans or desire to increase program/courses offerings until we have sufficient faculty and support staff in place, and all courses have been updated.

Dean of the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies: I agree with the Unit and Dean of FHSS that they are not currently in position to launch new programs etc.

Recommendation #9: Subject to academic freedom considerations, invigilated assessment procedures such as exams and quizzes should be added to the learning outcomes assessment process.

Unit Response: Many of the undergraduate program (albeit non policing/public safety) courses do utilize exams, and many (including policing/public safety) courses utilize online quizzes. At the graduate level, the strength of the program is the practitioner focus; therefore, each course utilizes a “capstone” project that allows the students to address a topic relevant to their current situation and develop realistic recommendations to positively contribute to their organizations or public safety in general. The program faculty does not believe that a highly structured exam will provide the same student experience. Additionally, given the dispersion of students

across Canada and even internationally, the administration of exams becomes extremely complex. At this time, the invigilation of exams, either remotely or in-person could present impediments for some students. We cannot use Respondus Monitor but you can use Respondus Lock Down which just locks down the browser (but you could technically still use a phone to cheat). The only way to do it would be a timed test, some other faculties with online courses still do in person exams which is not what our students are interested in especially those who live far away and cannot get to Brantford or Waterloo. We have a list of elective courses that do not have an exam which our students are appreciative of as it takes the stress away of coordinating that. We could do small quizzes to alleviate some of the marking but again it would need to be timed and it would take extra work, time and money to update the course. As a final comment, the integration of exams into current capstone-based courses would require major revisions that we simply do not have to capacity or resources to implement. Therefore, at this time, we are not prepared to implement this recommendation.

Dean of the Faculty of Human and Social Sciences: I strongly support the recommendation of the reviewers to incorporate proctored assessments.

Right now, students can graduate from the Policing / Public Safety programs without ever writing a proctored assessment, and thus we have no real way of knowing who did the work the student has handed in. I'm sure many students complete their work with a high degree of integrity – but we have no way to know this. There are robust, existential, concerns, for programs, instructors, students, employers, and others, when the identity of the individual who claims to have learned a certain knowledge base, or developed a certain set of skills, or developed other competencies, cannot be known. Proctored assessments can include quizzes / tests / final exams, etc., but they can also be built into capstone projects as well. There are testing centres distributed across Canada, and in the rare-ish cases when testing centres aren't in close proximity for the student, Laurier has mechanisms to authenticate proctors that are identified by the student (e.g., a trustworthy individual in the community – a teacher, a member of the clergy, many other examples). In my meeting with the reviewers, the need to incorporate proctored assessments was considered a top priority – and I concur.

Dean of the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies: Clearly, there is a strong divergence of viewpoints regarding this Recommendation. At the graduate level, I can certainly understand the practical and applied value of capstone projects to graduate students, especially those that are working professionals, but perhaps there can be some re-consideration of also including proctored assessment given the strong arguments made by the external reviewers (and the Dean of FHSS).

Recommendation #10: That a comprehensive staffing review be done to ensure that there is sufficient faculty to properly service the courses. This review should consider limited term appointments as well as faculty wellness, succession planning, the number of full-time dedicated faculty and the workload of the coordinator of the programs.

Unit Response: The program has just added one new PTP faculty member, starting July 1, and a 2-year LTA faculty member has been hired to start September 1. The increase in administrative staff now allows the program to manage student recruitment, admissions, and advising which has improved efficacy across those areas. An internal review of the faculty strength compared to other programs within the FHSS has identified that the policing and public safety programs are understaffed. The following enrollment to faculty ratio, and the

dependence upon CTF instructors provides greater insight into the current workload faced by program and faculty:

Enrolments/FT Faculty	<u>18/19</u>	<u>19/20</u>	<u>20/21</u>	<u>21/22</u>	<u>22/23</u>
Community Health	177	176	196	195	225
Criminology	528	593	697	588	561
Game Design	149	150	104	82	96
Leadership	596	559	777	820	673
Public Safety	2138	1252	1101	1255	1203
Psychology	255	287	305	237	209

% of Sections Taught by CTF	<u>18/19</u>	<u>19/20</u>	<u>20/21</u>	<u>21/22</u>	<u>22/23</u>
Community Health		38%	41%	54%	43%
Criminology		41%	45%	52%	64%
Game Design		47%	21%	67%	33%
Leadership		38%	47%	58%	52%
Public Safety		58%	56%	69%	78%
Psychology		32%	27%	33%	43%

Dean of the Faculty of Human and Social Sciences: A professional teaching position / tenure track hire has started as of July 1st, and a 2-year LTA will start effective September 1st. This will have a noticeable impact on the ratio of course registrations per full-time faculty member. The program has also hired three net new staff in the past 1+ years, and augmented one role to manager over that period, all in support of the advising and recruitment efforts of the program.

Recommendation #11: That Educational and Instructional Support provide dedicated support service staff to the Policing and Public Safety programs. They should be a dedicated resource to work with faculty and admin support in the Police and Public Safety Programs and the library.

Unit Response: The programs agree with this recommendation, but implementing it is not within our control. We have been advised that eLearning will work collaboratively with faculty on revisions to ensure timely implementation and we will continue to work with the eLearning team to ensure that faculty and students in the Policing and Public Safety programs are supported. The Library process to load course readings into ARES is particularly onerous for instructors to update materials, so a review of that process may prove beneficial. As noted during an internal review of the challenges in maintaining course materials, the following issues/recommendations were identified:

1. Library services are tasked to provide assigned readings into ARES and these items are usually embedded last minute. We need a way to communicate the ARES listings per assigned faculty previous to the beginning of the course.
2. Library services often do not have the most recent (read most recent edition of a text and/or chapter therefrom, updated journal article, etc. and are thus reliant – often at literally the last minute – upon the professor assigned to the course to provide texts, journal articles, etc. in order to have said most

recent edition made ADOA compliant. Note that this can cause some disruptions to the reading list and/or to the student who may be searching for a chapter and/or article that is not yet mounted in ARES. In short, we have had to send – via courier – boxes of books that contain the most recent edition of a text, journal, etc. in order to complete the reading list for my course(s). There must be a better way.

3. Sector-specific Whitepapers and/or Technical Journals are often limited by subscription and/or paywalls, and these are often imperative for new research and/or technical instructions for software use and cannot be duplicated. Several times we have overcome this with blanket software licensing, but sometimes “new versions” and/or “plug-ins” occur that assist in the analyses of data/intelligence for course purpose that cannot be “library -based.” This, too, requires resolution.
4. IF a course is taught by a part-timer, oftentimes said instructor does not have access to the materials to update the course materials in time for the first week of classes, causing overtime and/or compensatory issues for updating courses. In short, the library must also be part of this discussion for the assigned part-time instructor.
5. A “buffer” agreement should be negotiated with the Library that allows for the posting of the first week of readings – where and when required – in order to avoid “lag time” in reading for the students. This should be an option open to every instructor to avoid potentially serious delays for the students in accessing materials.
6. We would suggest that full-time faculty of the Public Safety Programs have an annual and/or term meeting with Library services via Zoom in order to make sure that materials are up-to-date every time said course is offered. As I have noted on many occasions, the technology-based courses change more often than other “theory-based” courses, and these must have up-to-date materials for obvious reasons.
7. We will continue to work towards resolving these issues.

Dean of the Faculty of Human and Social Sciences: These issues are beyond the control of the Dean of FHSS, but the Dean has been regularly raising these concerns to our Online Learning team.

Dean of the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies: Some regular, ongoing discussion directly with Library services may be in order to try and resolve some of these issues (e.g., as suggested for item #6).

Recommendation #12: Every effort should be made to have faculty instructing in the program who have a doctorate.

Unit Response: All of the position posting advertisements request a minimum of a graduate degree in the discipline, with the preference for a doctorate degree. The challenge is that public safety is an emerging discipline and there are very few applicants with the preferred doctorate degree. As a professional, practitioner-based graduate program, the strength of the program lies in the combination of instructor practical experience in the field and the required (minimum) academic credential. Preference has always been given to applicants with the combined practical experience and a completed doctorate, but given the rarity of this combination, we

sometimes struggle to find suitable candidates. The faculty continuously search for prospective applicants and encourage them to apply, but the candidate pool is, sometimes, shallow.

Dean of the Faculty of Human and Social Sciences: An instructor with a doctorate with significant lived experience in applying the subject matter would be ideal, if available, but in the absence of that combination of qualifications, a graduate degree with years of experience as a practitioner of that subject matter is equally appropriate and equally (and highly) valuable to the students in these programs.

Dean of the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies: I agree with the comment provided by the Dean of FHSS. Furthermore, all persons that teach at the graduate level are required to hold Graduate Faculty Status and, generally, if the department / program advocates for a non-tenure track, experienced practitioner with a master's degree to teach a graduate course, the FGPS tends to approve the nomination. These individuals would typically hold 'Special' Graduate Faculty Status. See: <https://lauriercloud.sharepoint.com/sites/faculty-of-graduate-and-postdoctoral-studies/responsibilities/Pages/graduate-faculty-status.aspx>.

Recommendation #13: Efforts to identify causes of student attrition rates and exploration of options to enhance student retention.

Unit Response: Support staff are currently working on a retention report to delve into the issue of retention. They have started a spreadsheet where they are tracking how many students are staying as of 2022 (felt the after COVID boom was a good place to start), and then for the newer students who were never talked to by the previous partnership, they are doing a term over term spreadsheet to see how many are staying after their first term / year. It is very basic right now as it is still in development. We are also connecting with the students via our academic advisors once they receive their offer. This way they gain a connection to the university and someone they can reach out too. We have found it very positive and have gotten 100% registered in classes since starting this in Fall 2023. We do expect a bit lower retention for professional programs as opposed to high school entry programs as they are working professionals and once started it may no longer be relevant to career goals. We are also seeing a drop of students due to financial reasons (not all of our programs are supported by OSAP (All part-time programs are not supported by OSAP, so everything except the BAPS 4 year and the BA Policing/Crim are unsupported) and therefore if it is no longer being paid for by their organization, they are leaving the program. With the development of the new full BA Public Safety, this will open us up to qualifying for OSAP and therefore we hope this will help.

Support staff have also implemented new onboarding procedures for incoming students in hopes that creating a positive relationship as soon as they start will result in better retention. We are partnering with the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies for an orientation offered each term for our students which will include an introduction to services available and then a program specific orientation with the coordinator/advisor.

We have one full time continuing Advisor and one limited term contract Advisor; in order to continue supporting our students with the level of service we are providing, which is already resulting in better term over term retention, we need to ensure the limited contract becomes full time continuing going forward.

Dean of the Faculty of Human and Social Sciences: There has been significant progress at the institutional level, thanks to our Institutional Research team, to build out highly detailed retention reports. These have not

been previously available, but when finalized will greatly support the retention tracking efforts of the Policing / Public Safety programs.

Dean of the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies: As mentioned by the Unit, online orientation is now taking place before the start of every term where graduate students of online/remote programs learn about supports, services, and resources available to them and they also have opportunity to meet with representatives of their program. I'll remind the Unit that the ASPIRE program supports graduate students with skills training and professionalization through our campus partners (see: <https://students.wlu.ca/academics/graduate-and-postdoctoral-studies/aspire/index.html>).

Recommendation #14: Explore options to streamline the course revision process so that instructors can better accommodate dynamic content in this field.

Unit Response: Instructors are continually reviewing course content while teaching and updating broken hyperlinks or readings no longer available while the course is in progress. These quick fixes are then permanently implemented after the course ends. When minor/major edits/updates are identified, the Program Coordinator works with the instructor, or identifies an SME, and initiates the current process with the eLearning team. Again, as noted previously there are capacity and resource issues beyond our control, but the faculty and administrative staff work diligently to keep the content current. It is critical to note that the field of public safety is very dynamic; legislation can change overnight and dramatically change the course content.

Dean of the Faculty of Human and Social Sciences: The Dean of FHSS regularly raises concerns about the course revision process to the Online Learning team, relevant to the Policing / Public Safety programs, as well as for all other FHSS programs that rely on online asynchronous courses.

PROGRAM STRENGTHS

Dean of the Faculty of Human and Social Sciences: The Policing and Public Safety programs are excellent programs with many strengths. The faculty should be complimented for offering programs which are highly market aligned – the faculty stay on top of changes in policy, legislation, etc., and revise their courses as quickly as possible, to keep them current and thus maintain that market alignment. The programs do a great job of attracting mid-career professionals looking to upskill, as well as a growing number of students pursuing these programs (GDips, MPS) straight out of their undergraduate studies. The advanced placement option (e.g., 2+2), which recognizes previously completed college credentials, accelerates the completion of the undergraduate degrees, and is highly valuable to adult learners who have taken non-traditional paths to get to a university level education. Overall, these are excellent programs.

Dean of the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies: At the graduate level, online offering of the GDip and MPS programs provide working professionals accessible opportunity to enhance their credentials. This is a major area of growth for master's programs and is reflected in the rapid increase in enrolment. Much credit goes to the small number of very dedicated faculty for delivering a high-quality, attractive graduate program to meet the demand.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT AND ENHANCEMENT

Dean of the Faculty of Human and Social Sciences: I see two major areas for improvement – one within the sphere of influence of the program, and one that isn't.

Under the control of the program is the need to implement proctored assessments in a sizeable fraction of their courses. Without proctored assessments, it is impossible to know who completed the work that is being submitted, and without knowing that, there are existential concerns. For example, a student's transcript represents the knowledge, skills, and other competencies they purportedly learned / mastered / etc. during their degree – but without knowing who did the work – what value does that transcript have to employers, or admissions committees for future post-secondary undertakings? What perceived loss of value is there for the hardworking, resilient, persevering student, who openly questions the academic integrity of their peers in courses with all unproctored assessments, which casts an unfortunate shadow on their own sense of accomplishment and pride for completing their degree with high integrity? What is the morale of the instructor in the course, who has no idea if the registered student, or someone contracted on their behalf, or a generative AI chatbot, is responsible for the work?

Not under the control of the program, are the barriers to updating online courses – the Online Learning office needs to put processes in place to expedite online course updates, that may include rethinking how courses are designed and mounted into the Learning Management System in the first place.

Dean of the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies: I agree with the Dean of FHSS. Further consideration of proctored assessments is warranted for reasons listed. Secondly, continued seeking of means to efficiently and consistently ensure course material is current should be a priority to maintain the excellent quality, and reputation, of the graduate program.

SIGNATURES

Dr. Heidi Northwood

September 16, 2024



APPROVAL DATES

Approved by Program Review Sub-Committee: October 24, 2024

Approved by Senate Academic Planning Committee: January 9, 2025

Submitted to Senate (for information): March 4, 2025

Implementation Report Due Date: March 4, 2027

RECOMMENDATIONS PRIORITIZED FOR IMPLEMENTATION AND ACTION PLAN

The following Implementation Plan was created by the Dean of the Faculty of Human and Social Sciences and the Associate Vice-President and Dean of the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies as part of the Decanal Response.

Recommendation to be Implemented	Responsibility for Implementation	Responsibility for Resourcing (if applicable)	Anticipated Completion Date	Additional Notes
Recommendation #1: Engage with 'Educational and Instructional Design' to update the various options for online delivery with a view to have a better connection with the instructors and other students; to include, where appropriate, online lectures, voice over PowerPoints and other modalities to better engage the students.	Program	Online Learning (if part of the Online Learning funded developments / updates); FHSS (if not funded by Online Learning)	Ongoing	
Recommendation #2: Examine various methods of online evaluation that will provide the student and instructor with timely and accurate feedback.	Program	n/a	Ongoing	Recommend speaking to the office of Teaching Excellence and Innovation for guidance
Recommendation #3: Either change the entrance requirements for the graduate diploma so that they are aligned with the entrance requirements of the graduate degree or remove the option of leveraging successful completion of the diploma for entrance into the Master's degree.	Program	n/a	Fall 2024	May require Senate approval, which may impact timeline

Recommendation #4: Ensure that the Distance Education and Instructional Development unit of the University can commit the resources to quickly update course websites and materials to ensure that the materials are accurate and current.	Online Learning + office of Teaching Excellence and Innovation	Online Learning + office of Teaching Excellence and Innovation	Ongoing	Out of scope for FHSS, so cannot comment on date to implement
Recommendation #5: Allow instructors earlier access to their courses to facilitate revisions and maintain currency.	Program (via full-time faculty members, not CTF)	n/a	Ongoing, but to begin right away with support of new full-time faculty hires	To allow CTF earlier access to their courses would require a change to the Collective Agreement
Recommendation #6: Review best practice standards regarding optimum class sizes for online professional courses.	Program, in consultation with the Dean of FHSS office	n/a	Fall 2024	
Recommendation #7: Ensure that caps are set for the number of students in each course and that priority admission is given to students enrolled in the Policing and Public Safety Program.	Program, in consultation with the Dean of FHSS office	n/a	Fall 2024	
Recommendation #8: No new programs should be added until instructor workload issues, class sizes, and the ability of the Distance Education and Instructional Development unit to effectively support the programs are resolved.	Program, in consultation with the Dean of FHSS office	n/a	n/a	The program will continue to update courses to maintain currency, as they currently do.

<p>Recommendation #9: Subject to academic freedom considerations, invigilated assessment procedures such as exams and quizzes should be added to the learning outcomes assessment process.</p>	<p>Program, in consultation with the Dean of FHSS office</p>	<p>n/a</p>	<p>Fall 2024</p>	<p>Recommend consulting with the office of Teaching Excellence and Innovation, as well as the office that supports final exam scheduling and proctoring for in-person exams.</p>
<p>Recommendation #10: That a comprehensive staffing review be done to ensure that there is sufficient faculty to properly service the courses. This review should consider limited term appointments as well as faculty wellness, succession planning, the number of full-time dedicated faculty and the workload of the coordinator of the programs.</p>	<p>Program, in consultation with the Dean of FHSS office</p>	<p>n/a</p>	<p>Spring 2025</p>	
<p>Recommendation #11: That Educational and Instructional Support provide dedicated support service staff to the Policing and Public Safety programs. They should be a dedicated resource to work with faculty and admin support in the Police and Public Safety Programs and the library.</p>	<p>Teaching Excellence and Innovation</p>		<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>This recommendation is beyond the control of FHSS.</p>
<p>Recommendation #12: Every effort should be made to have faculty instructing in the program who have a doctorate.</p>	<p>Program</p>	<p>n/a</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>This is a “pipeline” issue – until more practitioners with appropriate experience</p>

				in the Public Safety discipline have doctorates, this recommendation cannot be implemented.
Recommendation #13: Efforts to identify causes of student attrition rates and exploration of options to enhance student retention.	Program; Institutional Research; office of Student Success	n/a	Ongoing (with need to develop reports by December 2024)	
Recommendation #14: Explore options to streamline the course revision process so that instructors can better accommodate dynamic content in this field.	Program; office of Teaching Excellence and innovation / Online Learning office	n/a	Ongoing	