



PROGRESS REPORT
DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY
UNIVERSITY OF THE FRASER VALLEY
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INTRODUCTION

The Department of Psychology underwent a program review in 2019-2020 which involved a comprehensive self-study and an online site visit by an External Review Committee (ERC) consisting of two external reviewers (University of Victoria and Camosun College) and one UFV faculty member. Overall, the ERC report was very positive about the Psychology program and noted that we are well poised for further development. The ERC acknowledged that our department has a strong focus on student learning and that our curriculum incorporates the goals of the UFV 2025 Education Plan. The ERC also noted that the Psychology program meets all the UFV Institutional Learning Outcomes, while acknowledging that some areas could be enhanced; these are reflected in the Recommendations below. The ERC report included that our program meets the standards for both educational practice and accreditation at the undergraduate level in Psychology. The committee noted that the department has all the “right goals and approaches to helping undergraduates in psychology to be ready for the workforce at the BA level (e.g., human resources, police work, marketing) as well as preparing them for graduate school and thus professional work in the field.” (p4). The committee provided 8 Recommendations for the Psychology department which are addressed in the progress report below. The Department of Psychology would like to thank the External Review Committee for its thorough review and productive recommendations.

Following the Program Review in 2020, the department responded to each of the ERC’s recommendations with an Action Plan. Below we provide the Recommendations, our Action Plan response from 2020, and our progress on each item as of January 2024.

PROGRAM REVIEW RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Seek additional research and lab space for the department.

Action: The department’s response is that this has been requested for several years without success and this is a top priority for the department. The department has been asked to submit a space planning package to be sent to Campus Planning through the Dean this semester.

Progress: This was ranked as first in importance, and the department agrees! We have been requesting more space for several years. Since this review was conducted, we have been successful in getting a plan for a research and lab space approved and have been told we are ‘on the list’ when space becomes available. The room designated for us is currently occupied by TEP, so we will only see renovations on that space and eventual usage once TEP has moved to the Mission campus. The timeframe for when this might occur has been moved ahead several times now. Communication with the Dean’s office in December of 2023 indicates that the space “should” start to become available by August of 2024, however, we have not received confirmation that the space will be devoted to Psychology or that renovations and equipment requests will be accommodated.

The lack of space devoted to research and laboratory use is genuinely concerning to the department. As a growing department with many research active faculty, space is needed now more than ever. As articulated below (Recommendation #6), our faculty are conducting research and providing experiential opportunities for students in a multitude of ways. Without a devoted space to conduct

these activities, our ability to support research growth for students and faculty is a significant challenge.

2. Hire someone to teach counselling psychology, perhaps a local practitioner if a regular faculty member cannot be found.

Action: The department is in support of this but has had difficulty recruiting a clinical psychologist with clinical-counselling skills. Psychology had hoped to co-host a Counselling Masters in Psychology, a plan abandoned after years of unsuccessful attempts to recruit a clinician. The department will improve advising information to students to better explain the distinction between Counselling Masters programs and Psychology graduate school programs.

Progress: Counselling psychology courses are necessary for students intending to apply to a Master of Counselling program. We do have a sessional instructor who teaches one of the counselling prerequisite courses in every term. We are planning to have a second commonly required prerequisite course offered to students in 2024, also taught by a sessional instructor.

We should note that students who are interested in applied psychology can also take psychology courses in Psychological Assessment, Psychology of Health, Developmental Psychopathology, Fundamentals of Clinical Psychology, and Neuropsychology; all of which are offered several times each year. We also have an agreement with CYFS that psychology students can take their Trauma-Informed counselling course, which is offered once per year.

3. Increase the offerings of Psychology 202.

Action: The department has already begun to address this issue, and this current year offered 5 sections of 202 over the 3 terms, with most seats reserved for Psychology majors. With the help of IR, the department will determine if more seats are needed to serve program students.

Progress: This change had been started at the time of the review. We have continued offering 5 sections of 202 per year (only 1 in the summer semester). This has more than met the need of students who want to take the psychology major or honours program. However, with this barrier removed, the numbers of psychology majors and honours students have been steadily increasing, which has created other downstream challenges. First, the increase in 202 completions has put significant pressure on our upper-level courses, leading to substantial waitlists. Second, we are seeing an increase in students interested in directed studies and our honours program. Given that faculty supervise these students 'off the side of their desk,' this has created workload challenges for faculty (see also below Recommendation #6).

4. Begin the development of a Masters program.

Action: The department notes that a Masters is of little use to Psychology students without its leading directly into a PhD program and that if the reviewers meant a Counselling Masters programs that these are generally housed in Education or Counselling departments. The department is more interested in

looking into innovative applied credentials that would benefit students in their careers, e.g., micro credentials that might require additional hiring.

Progress: Our department remains uncertain regarding this recommendation but are under the impression that the committee is referring to a Master in Counselling Psychology program. Most recently, the department was a consultant to other departments (ADED & CYFS) who were interested in developing a Master in Counselling Psychology at UFV. Like the earlier attempt to envision this program, this plan never made it beyond the intent stage, as some of the faculty involved retired and there was little to no administrative support. Our department believes that a Master in Counselling Psychology would be an excellent addition to UFV's graduate studies, and our students frequently ask us if this program will be developed. A group of ADED, CYFS, and TEP might be the best way forward.

If the degree recommended here is a Master of Arts (or Science) in Psychology, that would first need to be conceived so it would fit under the UFV mandate as well as be of demonstrated utility to students in finding careers. Most Masters degrees in psychology lead directly into Ph.D. programs. There is a small movement across Canada to develop stand-alone Masters in areas such as developmental, methods and statistics, and forensic psychology, but it would take a detailed analysis to determine if that would be suitable for UFV and our region.

At present, it seems premature to look at developing a Masters program when we have not yet been able to obtain sufficient support for our Honours Program. While the demand for Honours and Directed Study advisors is increasing steadily, we have not yet received adequate workload support and have not been able to expand into our proposed research and lab space.

5. Find ways to increase the population of international students.

Action: The department is open to increasing offerings that appeal to international students with a view to supporting their success. The department will work on study abroad opportunities and draw on faculty who have international connections.

Progress: While International recruitment is generally the responsibility of UFV International and administration, the Psychology department does participate in Fraser Valley India, and we are open to new initiatives with respect to increasing international students and study abroad programs. We have recently had discussions with UFV International and the Dean of Arts regarding a collaboration with Jindal Global University in India with the aims of bringing students to Canada and potentially developing an exchange program where our domestic students can study for a year in India. In addition, faculty members in our department have approached UFV International to discuss the potential of an exchange with students in Italy. The department has also considered looking into career options in the home countries of our international students; knowing the requirements in those countries may help us to better understand the specific needs of students who plan to return to work in their home country after their time at UFV.

In terms of international student enrolments in our department, we feel that we are doing well at present. We had relatively high enrolment rates in the 2019-20 academic year, followed by substantial

decline in the 2020-2022 years. These declines are reflective of the circumstances around the COVID-19 pandemic. Many students were unable to travel to Canada and many were uncertain about the future and consequently were not enrolling in our courses. This pattern is consistent with the overall decline of international students at UFV during the pandemic years. Since that time, our international enrolments have returned to almost pre-pandemic rates, and we anticipate this growth to continue for the foreseeable future. However, it is difficult to anticipate how the Federal Government's recent cap on international students might impact our enrolments. Please see the table below for specific enrolment rates per academic year.

Academic Year	Number of Enrolled International Students	% International Students
2019-20	205	9.0
2020-21	114	5.5
2021-22	136	6.3
2022-23	171	8.2

6. Foster more experiential learning.

Action: The department has already started to address this. However, it requires either the return of its lab to enable this work or the provision of a new one. Plans include developing more Honours and directed study research opportunities with the new faculty (also requires space to conduct the research). A new workload model is required to accommodate supervision of increasing numbers of Honours and directed studies students. More research space will enable the delivery of the hands-on neuroanatomy component of the second-year brain and behaviour course as a tutorial. The department plans to improve data analysis skills at all years (e.g., providing workshops on R Software to Honours students; having students analyze raw data in lower and upper level statistics courses both by hand and using statistical software; providing opportunities for students to conduct qualitative research interviews and data analysis) and it is working with the Arts practicum coordinator on finding psychology practicum opportunities that faculty are able to supervise in the fall or winter.

Progress: The psychology department fosters experiential learning via 1) hands-on pedagogy, and 2) student research training.

Hands on/ Applied Pedagogy:

Psychology courses at the upper and lower-level feature hands on and applied pedagogy. At the lower-level students conduct "lab" activities with themselves as the participant, for example completing a visual signal detection task, a memory test, or a personality test. Our research methods course involves students designing their own study and seeing it to completion through data collection and analyses. One of our lower-level courses specifically engages students with a hands-on brain dissection lab. At the upper level, applied activities become more complex, for example, manipulating clinical case examples,

creating persuasive memes based on principles of social psychology or learning interview techniques through applied experience. Additionally, our faculty regularly facilitate guest lectures and presentations for psychology students. For example, instructors host naloxone training, presentations from the BC Schizophrenia Society, talks by Indigenous methodologists, and guest lectures from local practitioners. Finally, our assessment structures may also include experiential learning, for example, opportunities for oral examinations, assignments that ask for application of psychological constructs to students' own lives, and land-based activities.

Importantly, our courses provide hands on research training. Our methods courses (110, 202, 301, 311) are organized around experiential learning. In these courses students are given the opportunity to design, carry out, and write up original research projects. Through in-class research projects, in 202 and 311 and other courses, students have opportunity to experience not just the role of the researcher, but also the role of the participant in psychological studies. We have also implemented a statistical training session in the honours seminar course to ensure that students are fully prepared to complete data analyses for their individual research projects.

Student Research Training:

Our psychology faculty provide invaluable experiential learning opportunities for students through our honours program, directed study supervision, and volunteer research training.

Honours Program

In our honours program, supervisors support students to carry out their own independent research from start to finish. This includes, for example, developing research questions, preregistrations, applying for research ethics approval, applying for student research funding, recruiting participants, generating data, analyzing data, writing up fundings, and presenting research publicly. Honours supervisors also commit to supporting students through graduate school applications, helping them to identify potential supervisors, write letters of intent, and provide letters of reference. Because honours research is an essential prerequisite for students hoping to pursue graduate work in psychology, we view the honours program as foundational to the ethical functioning of our department.

Directed Study Supervision and Volunteer Research Training

Our faculty also provide experiential learning opportunities to students through directed study supervision and volunteer research training. Students in these roles are supported to explore their own psychological interests and to participate in ongoing lab projects. For example, students may have the opportunity to conduct neuropsychological testing, analyze fMRI data, develop virtual reality studies, collect biological samples for hormone analysis, develop survey questionnaires, participate in collaborative replication initiatives, identify gaps in current literature, or analyze focus group data.

Our students' research has been accepted for presentations at a variety of conferences including the Western Canadian Conference on Undergraduate Research and Psychology (CURP), Northwest Cognition and Memory (NOWCAM) and Connecting Minds. Along with faculty supervisors, our students have also published their research in journals such as the *Canadian Journal of Children's Rights*. Our honours cohort are successful in graduate school applications, with recent placements at the University of Victoria, University of British Columbia Okanagan, Acadia University, the University of Calgary, and the University of Manitoba. Additionally, our students regularly participate in UFV's student research day,

where they have received awards including the Indigenous Student Research Award (2023), Social Sciences Award (2023) and Student Speaker (2023).

Areas of Concern:

Our department is concerned about the sustainability of the activities described above. One of the biggest constraints to maintenance and growth of experiential learning opportunities is faculty time. In particular, the student research training described above requires extensive faculty support. As prior departmental reviews have noted, this work is not included in teaching allocations and is done “off the side” of faculty desks. The current release structure proposed (1 release/ 8 honours students) is so unattractive that only one supervisor has “signed on”. Our honours subcommittee is currently engaged in logging the hours spent per honours student- from project conception through to publication and letters of recommendation- and hope to use this data to renegotiate a release agreement that more accurately represents the time faculty dedicate to experiential student research training.

As noted previously, the other significant constraint limiting our ability to grow experiential student learning is the lack of physical research space. While we are hopeful that we will be provided with lab space to continue this experiential work, our faculty are unable to expand current research or apply for future grants, given the significant delays and ongoing uncertainty regarding these resources that we have experienced thus far.

7. Include sessional instructors more in emails and meetings.

Action: In the past year, the department head has been working on increasing the mentorship for sessional instructors. This includes making sure the general department emails on teaching topics and planning of upcoming semesters are sent to sessional instructors, providing content and feedback on course outlines, and supporting the development and teaching of online courses with video meetings with some sessional instructors. As sessionals are not compensated for time spent attending department meetings, it will be made clear that attendance at the meeting is not a job requirement. They will be invited to participate in the Psychology Journal Club.

Progress: The department continues to keep sessional instructors updated on issues related to teaching, opportunities to get involved and important department topics. Likewise, the department head continues to mentor sessional instructors by supporting them with their course delivery methods, preparing course outlines and dealing with concerns that arise. Sessional instructors are invited to attend our department meetings on an ongoing basis; however, attendance is typically very low. Despite the low turnout, we will continue to include sessional instructors in correspondence, meeting invitations and minutes as well as departmental activities.

8. Collaborate more with community-based researchers and organizations.

Action: The department agrees and several of the new faculty were hired with this direction in mind.

Progress: With the recent hiring of several new research active faculty, we have made considerable progress towards this recommendation. Faculty are fostering connections with a variety of community-based organizations and through these relationships students are gaining invaluable experiences.

Several faculty members invite guest speakers to their classes to provide alternative perspectives and in-depth information about diverse topics. Some examples of such speakers include: an Indigenous methodologist, BC Schizophrenia Society, Looking Glass Foundation and Tipping Point. These speakers greatly enhance student engagement and learning. Faculty also promote volunteerism in our students and have connected students with local organizations such as: Elder College, Streams Foundation, Big Brothers & Big Sisters, Abbotsford Foodbank, Archway Services, Chilliwack Youth Health, Cyrus Center Chilliwack, Compassionate Neighborhood Health Partners Society, Friends Without Borders and Oxford Senior Care Home.

Faculty members are also involved in several community-based collaborations both locally and further abroad. One member, in collaboration with CHASI, is working on a partnership with the City of Abbotsford examining pathways out of homelessness. Others are involved with CERA and recently hosted a community-based day of information and activities for seniors and other members of the public. Faculty also collaborate with Chilliwack Elder College and Mission Lifetime Learning to promote education and opportunities for seniors in the community. Faculty have established relationships with Fraser Health and Vancouver Coastal Health which included supporting student research. Other faculty members have engaged in creating relationships with local schools and will be hosting a community event for parents and children to engage in literacy-based activities; this event has been organized by a faculty leader and student volunteers. Faculty have established ongoing collaborations with institutions such as The Hospital for Sick Children, Vanderbilt University Medical Center, and Cincinnati Children's Hospital, examining the decision-making processes of healthcare teams in neonatal healthcare. Faculty and students have also conducted replication studies as part of the Collaborative Replication and Education Project (CREP) which is a global project aimed at addressing the replication crisis within psychology.

Additional Recommendations:

Although the department had a Psychology Student Society, it should be revived and developed.

More information could be provided about pathways from the program courses to careers in applied, academic and professional psychology. Some institutions have a faculty member who guides and facilitates their Student Psychology Societies to provide direction and support in their activities.

Action: The department thinks both points are very important and has put plans in place to address them. It has a department liaison to the Student Psychology Association (SPA) but a combination of student graduation and Covid restrictions left the SPA non-functional this year. As soon as the university is back to normal operations, it will assist students in reviving the SPA and support them in their activities.

Progress: Over the past two years, the Student Psychology Association (SPA) has made progress in restarting following the pandemic. The SPA has gained an active group of members, established governance, and have registered with SUS as a formal student organization. The SPA has been active in organizing student activities and they host regular events and meetings in our psychology student space. In addition, the department has hosted several information events as a means of providing students with information regarding career paths in psychology; we also post important graduate program information on our student blackboard site. One of our newer faculty members is a member of the Canadian Psychological Association (CPA) and they have taken on the role as liaison to the SPA to help students navigate the various career paths in psychology.

Indigenization of Psychology Curriculum

Though this issue was not one of the recommendations made by the External Review Committee (ERC), we would like the opportunity to respond to one final point. The ERC noted:

” The beginnings of indigenization in Psyc 101 are a positive development, as is participation in the Indigenous Academic Success Cohort, where support for indigenous students is present and can be further developed. This could be further enhanced through the continued indigenization of psychology curriculum by recognizing indigenous knowledge systems in the discipline of psychology, by making use of indigenous-oriented teaching processes, and by inviting elders and other knowledge keepers to participate in teaching and learning psychology.” (P.12)

Progress: Since the time of this review, the psychology department has made concerted efforts to include Indigenous perspectives and address settler colonialism in our curriculum. Several faculty members have invited Indigenous speakers as guests into their classrooms and have included content and work by Indigenous authors. We have also worked to design assessments that are varied in nature and allow for self-reflective practice. In addition, we are going through the process of revising our official course outlines and have made effort to include Indigenous content, work by Indigenous authors, and to provide diverse methods of delivery and assessments for many of our courses. We are working to develop specific content to be included in our introductory courses (Psychology 101 & 102). Given that these foundational courses are taught by many instructors (including sessional instructors), we would like to ensure that students have a relatively uniform experience. To accomplish this, one of our faculty members has offered to develop a set of Indigenous content that can be included for anyone who is teaching the course. This content development will commence in Fall 2024 with the aim to have content implemented in our Introductory course offerings by January 2025.

SUMMARY

The Department of Psychology has made significant progress on most of the recommendations provided by the ERC. We are actively trying to secure laboratory/research space to better support our students and faculty research. We have hired a sessional instructor who is able to teach two counselling

psychology courses and we have found that our increase in offerings of Psychology 202 has reduced barriers for students in our program. We are seeing an increase in international students in our program and are engaged in participating in international collaborations. Our ability to offer more experiential learning is somewhat limited by our lack of space and workload issues, but nonetheless faculty are striving to include such experiences both in and outside the classroom. Sessional instructors are kept apprised of departmental issues and are invited to take part in department activities and meetings. Faculty are engaged with a variety of community organizations as a means of improving student experience and as collaborative research partnerships. We have also worked to Indigenize our curriculum; we see this as an ongoing practice that we have committed to as a department. Overall, we feel that we have been successful in our progress on each of these recommendations. While we have not addressed all the recommendations fully, we feel that some of are out of our control or are not realistic currently. For example, we have been requesting additional space for quite some time and will continue to do so; while we can continue to make our plea, ultimately, we do not have control over the limited space at UFV. Further, while a master's degree in counselling would benefit UFV and our students, we are not able to develop or offer this program as it lies outside of psychology faculty expertise. Despite these limitations, the Psychology Department has made significant progress and continues to strive to offer excellent undergraduate education.