The APRC is impressed with this Department’s growth since its last review and applauds its aggressive targets of increasing the intake of both undergraduate and graduate students. In addition, the Department aims to increase its research intensity and provide broader research options. Overall the APRC recognized the high quality of the Departments research and academic endeavours and identifies the growth in both the scope of its research and the number of graduate students as areas requiring the focused attention of the department in order to remain competitive.

The Department does a very good job at educating and training undergraduate and graduate students. The undergraduate programs appear to be robust from a curricular perspective, providing students with a comprehensive education in the fundamental areas of physics as well as appropriate introductions to modern physics. The range of course offerings and laboratories is also appropriate. The co-op program is strong with practicas which engage students.

The graduate program which has grown substantially over the past seven years has developed a strong brand, with graduates of the program in key academic positions across Canada. The APRC is pleased that all the graduate areas are in the process of reviewing and modernizing the graduate curricula. The graduate program attracts a strong applicant pool resulting in high quality graduates, with very good success rates when applying for external fellowships upon graduation. Graduate students expressed satisfaction with the program.

The high energy physics and astronomy groups are world class and successfully leverage local resources, such as the Tri-University Meson Facility and the Herzberg Institute of Astrophysics. The extremely valuable interactions with outside organizations are a key to the success for the strongest groups in the department. The APRC suggests that other areas such as medical, condensed matter and ocean physics make an effort to emulate the approach which has successfully raised the visibility, impact and stature of the other concentrations. Medical physics and condensed matter physics as new initiatives have been developing well, but need strengthening to become viable. The role of the relatively small ocean physics group, especially given the University’s focus in earth and ocean science, needs to be clarified.

The APRC sees space and additional funds for graduate students as major challenges for the Department to translate the envisioned growth into reality. The APRC would like to the department and the university as a whole look carefully at improving student recruitment and student tracking at every level.

While the Department does a very good job at education and training undergraduate students, the APRC suggests that the Department give attention to advising as well as program structure at the undergraduate level. The Provost shares the APRC concerns about recruitment and retention and in 2008 conducted a review of UVic’s strengths and vulnerabilities. The result was a strategic document focused on increasing recruitment and retention success. In addition, UVic’s Institute for Planning and Analysis now provides department heads and deans with regular tracking reports on recruitment and retention.

The Department with the support of the Dean has taken all recommendations made by the APRC under serious consideration. The undergraduate curriculum in physics will be reviewed including consideration of 2nd to 3rd year transitions and scope for “advanced placement” testing. The Department will work closely with the Faculty of Science to expand recruitment from high schools and from 1st year science
programs. With respect to the graduate program, the Department has initiated a detailed and complete review of the program including, monitoring and implementing practices to reduce completion times, finding ways of expanding funding resources, and review of minimum course load.

The Dean supports initiatives to attract and recruit a senior medical physicist and increase the number of faculty in medical physics as these are high priorities for the Department. Clarifying the relationship between the School of Earth and Ocean Sciences and the ocean physics group has been an ongoing process for groups.

Operational recommendations have also been acted upon by the Department. The graduate secretary position is now a full time position, a more systematic approach to advising is being considered, and the Mentoring and Equity Committee will be charged in the upcoming year with the new task of reviewing the manner in which all aspects of equity and mentoring are addressed by the department.

Further, the University has made progress recently on increasing resources for graduate student support by providing increased funding for TAships. The Department and Dean are working with the university on attributing more space for the department and on the electrical supply for the Elliott Building.

The Provost is pleased that the Department is working diligently on the APRC’s recommendations and commends the Department on a successful review.