

## **External Review of the Department of Economics**

April 2026

### External Review Committee

Hashmat Khan, Carleton University, Committee Chair

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### Executive Summary

This report is based on a three-day virtual visit to the Department of Economics on April 22, 23, and 24, 2026. We met with the Chair, Associate Chair, faculty members, LTA/sessional instructors, staff, undergraduate and graduate students, alumni, the Dean (Faculty of Social Sciences), the Dean (Graduate Studies), the AVP (Research), and the AVP (Academic Programs). Prior to the visit, we had access to the Department's Self-Study, along with two appendices containing course outlines and faculty members' CVs, and the Executive Summary of the previous review (2019). During the visit, we requested additional information related to faculty members' years of service and a video recording of the departmental space; both items were generously provided during our visit. The Self-Study provided the departmental history and a comprehensive description of all the academic programs, program changes, major learning objectives and outcomes, the quality of the student experience and outcomes, the quality of research and scholarly activities, the availability of resources and infrastructure, and the department's future directions and strategic priorities. Complementing the Self-Study, the visit provided us with an in-depth perspective on the undergraduate and graduate programs. We wish to thank everyone who took the time to meet with us and share their perspectives on a variety of matters pertinent to our review.

The backdrop to our review is shaped by a sharp decline in international student enrolment due to external factors affecting the Canadian university sector. The Enrolment-Equivalent Terms (EETs) decreased from 517.5 in 2020 to 126 in 2024. One of the two major concerns highlighted in the 2019 review was the stress on undergraduate teaching created by the growth in international student enrolment. The Department had a very high average student-to-faculty ratio during the 2010s—the highest in the Faculty and one of the highest across the university—creating significant teaching pressures and placing considerable stress on program delivery and the quality of the student learning experience. In our view, with the decline in international enrolment, a favourable enrolment-quality trade-off has emerged for the Department within a resource-constrained environment, which has adequately addressed this concern. The student-to-faculty ratios of 18.6 for undergraduate programs and 1.9 for graduate programs are now in line with those of other units in the Faculty of Social Sciences. With the reliance on sessional instruction reduced, regular faculty members now deliver 75 percent of undergraduate EETs (up from 49 percent) and teach all graduate courses. With load factors returning to more normal levels in recent years, faculty members have had greater opportunity to think proactively about quality improvements to the curriculum and program modifications, governance reform to improve curriculum delivery, enrolment management, and student support. Indeed, the Department has implemented most of the recommendations from the previous review.

### **Recommendations**

1. Improving communication to support administrative staff in producing departmental reports.

2. Addressing co-op placement bottlenecks by strengthening partnerships with the private sector possibly tied to enhanced alumni engagement to create additional co-op opportunities.
3. Adopting an investment perspective by considering strategic top-ups to funding packages for outstanding applicants.
4. The Department considers, as a strategic priority, developing an alternative doctoral program in which students receive advanced training in applying existing economic knowledge to practical policy and industry problems rather than primarily producing new knowledge or theories.
5. Increase program flexibility by offering selected courses online during the summer term.
6. Review the computational economics component of the BSc program.
7. A review of course assessments and curriculum design in an era of AI.
8. Implementing a simple, standardized TA management system that establishes clear performance expectations and incorporates appropriate incentives to enhance TA engagement, quality, commitment, and improving the matching of TA skills to course needs.
9. Creating a dedicated meeting and study space for undergraduate students within the Department to further encourage collaboration, engagement, and a sense of belonging.
10. Faculty members consider enhancing their research time by making use of the provisions of the existing Provost's course release policy.
11. To the extent that access to research seed funding can help rejuvenate scholarly activity and increase publication output, we recommend making greater use of the research seed-funding supports already available at the University.
12. Establishing stable and predictable financial support for the [Alumni] Council to strengthen alumni engagement.