

## External Review of the School of Public Administration

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### External Review Committee

Kathy L. Brock, Queen's University, Committee Chair

Nancy Olewiler, Simon Fraser University

Sarah Morales, University of Victoria

### Executive Summary

The School of Public Administration is a well-resourced and well-functioning academic unit of which the University of Victoria should be proud. The recommendations are made with the intention of enhancing the unit's strengths and sustainability.

First, the priority recommendations are actionable and may be completed for the next review of the SPA in seven years. Second, the SPA is well-functioning with strong programming but there are minor albeit important tweaks that can be made during the strategic review and its implementation which may prevent those minor chaffing points from developing into serious points of contention, grievance or division in what is currently a collegial and respectful environment. While not all the suggestions might result in reforms, discussing them and their causes may resolve any potential points of tension moving forward.

### Recommendations

1. Build a robust data base by compiling and tracking comprehensive data that assesses the demand for, quality and sustainability of each program and their courses. Similarly, compile data that tracks the contribution of courses and programs to graduates' current employment and to career progression of alumni.
2. Consider expanding enrolment in the online MPA program if capacity and resources warrant and ensure that any technological or other barriers are addressed.
3. Undertake a study prior to developing microcredentials at the undergraduate and/or graduate level. The study should cover potential market demand, capacity within the department, sustainability or life cycles of such targeted programs, and trade-offs in terms of existing programs.
4. Within the review of the MPA program, assess the relationship of the thesis requirement to the learning objectives and competencies of the SPA and whether an experiential project such as a policy innovation lab or other research project might meet these objectives and allocate service/supervisory loads more efficiently and equitably than the thesis.
5. Assess whether traditional areas of public administration are underrepresented in its current course structure. This assessment should take place within the review of the MACD program.
6. Continue the ongoing strategic review process with its enumerated priorities and ensure

that courses explicitly link assessments and tasks to learning objectives and competencies in syllabi to render the goals transparent to students and future employers.

7. Consider creative means of staffing the Co-op Coordinator position either full- or part-time with time dedicated to facilitating student placements as well as to data collection to support the mandatory co-op elements in the MPA and the career progression of graduates.
8. Develop a fair and transparent and collegially designed system that outlines supervision and service roles of faculty.
9. [University administration] Support the School's plans for a full program review as it integrates into the FSS. University policies must reflect the differences between a professional school and regular academic departments and to ensure these are reflected in university policies. One example of this is the critical role that sessional instructors who are public administration professionals play in teaching.
10. Work with the University, other units offering Indigenous programs, and Indigenous community representatives to undertake a broadly-based consultation and careful review on preexisting programs, student demand and staffing and delivery structures. The review and its outcome should be used towards recruiting more Indigenous faculty; attracting a sustainable and sufficient flow of students; and building stronger community ties of the university to Indigenous communities.

#### Overall Takeaway:

The SPA has responded well to the suggestions made in the previous review and well-positioned to undertake the recommendations made here as part of its ongoing Strategic Review. We strongly encourage the Faculty of Social Sciences and the University of Victoria to continue supporting the work and life of the SPA given that it will continue to be an important link with the local community, Indigenous communities and governments, the provincial government, the federal government and the international community of public administration.