

Ongoing Improvement Progress Report

Instructions and Report Template

As part of the protocols outlined in Western's Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP), to facilitate the continuous improvement of academic programs between review cycles, in connection with the Final Assessment Report (FAR) and Implementation Plan, a monitoring process will include an Ongoing Improvement Progress Report. The outcomes of this report will be considered as part of the program's next cyclical review.

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the operationalization of the implementation plan following a Cyclical Program Review (or the review of a New Program). This should include a brief summary of actions taken by the Program and the Dean's Office since the completion of the review (usually about three years), as well as an update on the stage of implementation for all applicable items. These include:

- whether the action item(s) are in progress, complete or no longer applicable (with a brief explanation);
- the timelines of each item and how they are progressing or expected to progress, particularly if they are diverting from original timelines in the FAR and Implementation Plan, and;
- a short description of any other program developments and improvements that have taken place following the review.
- For new programs only, an evaluation of the initial administration and resourcing of the program.


The following report template has been created for the program to report on progress made regarding recommendations presented in the Implementation Plan, and any other relevant program developments and enhancements.

- The program will complete the template and submit it to the faculty Dean's Office for sign-off.
- The program will then submit the completed Ongoing Improvement and Progress Report to the Office of Academic Quality and Enhancement (OAQE). Reports are due by June 30.
 - The OAQE will present all Ongoing Improvement and Progress Reports to SUPR-U/G for approval. Approvals, or any follow-up questions/concerns, will be communicated to the program and Dean's Office by the OAQE.
 - It should be noted that as per the requirements of the province's Quality Council, progress reports will be posted on the [reports page](#) of the OAQE website.

Ongoing Improvement Progress Report

Geology/Geophysics, MSc, PhD / Faculty of Science

Program	Geology/Geophysics, MSc, PhD	Faculty / Affiliated University College	Faculty of Science
Approval Dates of the Review	SUPR-G: October 19, 2020 SCAPA: October 28, 2020 Senate: November 13, 2020	Year of the Next Review	2027-2028
Link to the Programs Final Assessment Report (FAR)	https://www.uwo.ca/pvp/vpacademic/iqap/academic_programs/iqap_reports/sciencegrad/2020%20Geology%20Geophysics%20Program%20Review.pdf		
If applicable, submission of follow-up report(s)	Submitted to SGPS on September 30, 2022 (emailed with this form)		

	Name	Signature	Date
Program Chair/Director	Robert Shcherbakov		2023/06/15
Dean (or delegate)	Elizabeth Webb		

Progress Update on the Implementation Plan

Recommendation #1	Proposed Action and Follow-up	Responsibility	Timeline
Funding amounts, sources, and terms should be clearly communicated to students by letter.	The Program will develop a Funding Letter and establish processes for its preparation and communication to students.	Graduate Committee	Fall 2020; New Funding Letter to be included in 2021 admissions process
<p>Recommendation Implemented</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Partially</p> <p>If no, or partially, is implementation on schedule with the timeline? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p>			
<p>Progress</p> <p><i>We performed revisions of the offer letters to reflect the amounts and sources of funding. However, this has several constraints on our ability to provide the exact amounts in the offer letters. Typically, the GTA rates and tuition fees are announced in April after most of the letters are sent out, so we provide approximate amounts based on the previous year values in the offer. The minimum base funding compensation that we offer to all incoming MSc and PhD students depends on the budget allocation from our Faculty and this is again known only at the end of the spring term. As a result, the funding model for the next academic year is only finalized during the summer term. But we provide the minimum funding levels based on the previous year, and state that this may change. Another issue that was raised by the students is related the way the tuition fees are paid. Currently, the arriving student have to pay the tuition fee early in September, whereas the first stipend they receive arrives only at the end of September. So, this creates additional stressful situation for incoming students, especially international students as some of them do not have sufficient funds to cover the tuition fees. We changed the wording in the offer letters to emphasize this so that students are not surprised. We also decided to pay students the</i></p>			

WGRS portion of their stipends at the beginning of each term instead of evenly distributed over a year. We equally added that the Office of the Registrar sets the tuition paying schedule, and that should it be helpful to students, they may contact the Registrar's Office about making alternate payment arrangements.

In summary, we provide as much information in the offer letters as we can and typically revise the offer letters each year. In cases where there is the possibility of slight adjustments, we make that clear in the letter as well. We also use the Mercury system to keep students updated about their compensation packages (with the exception of a hiatus in 2022 because of a staff change).

Next Steps (if applicable)

NA

Additional Comments

If applicable

Recommendation #2	Proposed Action and Follow-up	Responsibility	Timeline
The Graduate Committee should review the short course offerings in the department to ensure that the academic goals are being met and whether delivery in the form of a short course is optimal.	The Graduate Committee will conduct a thorough review of the short courses offered by the Department to ensure that they meet the criteria for learning outcomes. The offering of short courses can be minimized to only courses that deliver a specialized content required by our graduate programs.	Graduate Committee	Fall 2020; Course modifications incorporated for Fall 2021.

Recommendation Implemented

Yes No Partially

If no, or partially, is implementation on schedule with the timeline? Yes No

Progress

We performed such a review. Currently, the Department does not offer short-courses on a regular basis. In the past, some short courses were offered to attract students, researchers or government employees from different institutions outside Western. We also would like to clarify that some concerns expressed by graduate students were addressed to short courses offered by the Planetary Science collaborative program, i.e., they do not fall under our graduate programs in Geology and Geophysics. We are aware that graduate students prefer to have regular courses so typically the short course offerings are kept at minimum in the Department. However, we offer three field courses GL9601Y, GP9509, GL9600. They are cross listed with the corresponding undergraduate courses and offer student field experience needed in Earth Sciences. Field courses are also required for students enrolled in our course-based MSc programs in Geology and Geophysics.

Next Steps (if applicable)

NA

Additional Comments

NA

Recommendation #3	Proposed Action and Follow-up	Responsibility	Timeline
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<p>Consideration should be given to making the Seminar Course a full year and expanding the scope as suggested by the graduate students.</p>	<p>The Graduate Committee will review of the format of the Seminar Course, in relation to graduate student feedback, to ensure that it optimally meets the learning outcomes.</p>	<p>Graduate Committee</p>	<p>Fall 2020; Course modifications incorporated for Fall 2021</p>
<p>Recommendation Implemented</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Partially</p> <p>If no, or partially, is implementation on schedule with the timeline? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p>			
<p>Progress</p> <p><i>After internal deliberations and consultations with instructors, we decided not to extend the Graduate Seminar course (GL/GP9580, GL/GP9680) to a full year, as a full-year format presents timetabling issues for other courses for both students and instructor (e.g. some of our students arrive half way through the academic year). Instead, we moved it to the winter term to allow students extra time to formulate their research proposals and serve all arriving students. The current format of the course accomplishes several objectives that help students to improve and develop: 1) strong research skills, ii) ability to present information orally, iii) familiarity with grant and research proposal writing, and iv) scientific learning skills through teamwork exercises. The main goal of this course is for the students to be able to formulate and write their thesis proposals for their MSc or PhD programs. This course also helps students with finding resources on how to write such proposals, how to write their scientific publications, and how to present in public either at a peer conference or at a work interview. The graduate committee and the past and current instructors think that this can be accomplished during one term and there is no need to extend it over two terms.</i></p>			
<p>Next Steps (if applicable)</p> <p>NA</p>			

Additional Comments*If applicable*

Recommendation #4	Proposed Action and Follow-up	Responsibility	Timeline
The Graduate Committee should review the viability of the J.D./M.Sc. Law and Geology/Geophysics program and discuss strategies to enhance visibility and strengthen the program.	The Graduate Committee will work with Dr. Elizabeth Steyn, Cassels Brock Fellow in Mining and Finance Law (Western Faculty of Law) to determine the best method to promote the joint J.D./M.Sc. program during the Fall of 2020.	Graduate Committee	Fall 2020; incorporated for Fall 2021.

Recommendation Implemented

Yes No Partially

If no, or partially, is implementation on schedule with the timeline? Yes No

Progress

We agree that this requires our attention to enhance and strengthen the program. We think that the program has a strong potential and its development will benefit both our programs. The new Chair, Prof. Desmond Moser, has begun connecting with Mining Finance and Law Professor Elizabeth Steyn to explore visibility and growth strategies for this program going forward.

Next Steps (if applicable)

The new Chair, Prof. Desmond Moser, has begun connecting with Mining Finance and Law Professor Elizabeth Steyn to explore visibility and growth strategies for this program going forward.

Additional Comments

If applicable

Note: The total number of expandable text boxes will be dependent on the number of prioritized recommendations appearing in the program's most recent Final Assessment Report (FAR).

Continuous Program Enhancement

We are planning to expand offering of our course-based MSc program by implementing several changes to the existing program and developing a vigorous advertising campaign to attract more students into the program.