

Action Plan: Applied Planning

Date Self-Study was submitted to AQA: January 15, 2020

Date of External Review: April 1, 2020

The Action Plan, which follows the Self-Study and External Review, guides programs and departments as they:

- Follow-up on recommendations from the Self-Study and External Review;
- Develop realistic goals for improving or maintaining program quality;
- Determine the steps and resources required to reach those goals;
- Determine the people/groups responsible for each action;
- Establish a timeline (before the next program review cycle) within which these steps will occur.

The Action Plan, like all other aspects of a Langara Program Review, is faculty driven and Dean led. Faculty develop the Action Plan in close collaboration with the Division Chair and Dean. Once the Action Plan is ready for review, the Chair/Coordinator, Division Chair and Dean should schedule a meeting with the Provost.

Institutional Response

Congratulations and many thanks to the Department and Coordinator for this thoughtful and comprehensive Program Review and Action Plan. The Applied Planning Program was a College pioneer in the development and delivery of a highly regarded Post Degree Diploma. The Department clearly maintains a close and effective connection with employer groups and alumni, and continuously monitors and adapts their program as needed. The evidence of this is the continuing robustness of the program, success of program graduates, and positive responses from the External Review committee. The Self Study and Action Plan serve as an excellent framework for the Department continuing to thrive over the next five-seven years until the next review. Of particular note are recommendations on curriculum directions including: Indigenizing the Curriculum, adding options for special current topics, and maintaining currency in technical instruction. The Department is also to be commended for its' nimble and creative response to online delivery methods and intention to explore future opportunities that have become evident.

The Dean and VP Academic are committed to supporting the Department in achieving their Action Plan goals. In particular, the Dean and Division Chair look forward to reviewing proposals for curriculum development and flexible programming, and to providing support and advice to assist with successful implementation of plans.

Signed


Dean

June 8, 2020
Date

Signed


Interim Vice-President
Academic

June 8, 2020
Date

Recommendations from the Self-Study and External Review this Action Plan does NOT Address.

Recommendation	Self-Study or External Review (include p.#)	Rationale
Faculty professional development is referenced, including encouraging faculty to present at conferences and undertake occasional training. It is recommended that an annual faculty development plan be compiled, outlining the focus areas for ongoing development for the program's instructors. This document would seek to align skills development and training with identified areas for improvement within the program and could include training in Educational Technologies for the instructors, if this is an area the program seeks to expand.	External Review p.8	Langara Faculty professional development follows the Collective Agreement, and instructors with non-instructional duty time already are required to fill out an annual plan that includes their professional development plans.

Goal 1: Ensure learning outcomes align with employment market.

Academic Plan Priorities
2.2. Maintain enrolments to maximize student access and success
2.3. Continue to develop and refine external and internal student pathways
3.2 Expand awareness, acceptance, and inclusiveness of Aboriginal cultures within Langara
4.1. Position Langara as the school of choice for post-secondary international students in British Columbia
4.2. Increase intercultural supports for students, faculty, and staff
5.1. Create and strengthen programming that encompasses the cross-disciplinary nature of sustainability
5.2. Advocate and model sustainable practices

Recommendation	Self-Study (specify page #)	External Review (specify page #)
Explore learning outcomes to identify alignment with Academic Plan and make recommendations for indigenous education and internationalization, in consultation with Teaching and Curriculum Development Centre (TCDC). / <i>Consider making a connection with TCDC specialists in Indigenizing curricula to offer ways of integrating Indigenous perspectives and approaches mapped out and specified across the curriculum, building on what is already the practice in certain parts. This was noted by the review team as a valuable and essential element to contemporary planning practice in BC. It is also important to make this inclusion transparent (course descriptions, guest speakers, inclusion in core courses such as planning law) as a core and not marginal aspect of contemporary planning.</i> ¹	13	5
Undertake curriculum mapping with TCDC.	13	

¹ Please note that *italics* are used to denote feedback from the External Review.

Original: Department Chair; cc: Division Chair, Dean, Provost & VPA, Director, AQA

Recommendation	Self-Study (specify page #)	External Review (specify page #)
Continue conversations with Director of Indigenous Education to explore opportunities to build planning capacity in indigenous communities.	13	
Consult with the Program Advisory Group to review the currency of computer applications in planning currently and identify potential changes. / <i>We wish to offer as a principle that offering students more comfort and expertise with a small set of core technology applications, including GIS, AutoCAD, a spreadsheet software, a presentation software, and a report-writing software, may be more important than exposure to a wide array of new packages.</i>	13	5
Survey alumnae to assess the applicability and gaps in skills they learned in the program compared to the skills they use regularly in their job.	13	
Review strong emphasis on technical skills and identify opportunities to increase focus on softer skills identified by employers, such as writing presentations, designing graphics and engaging community.	13	
Continue to monitor program learning outcomes for currency and relevancy.	13	
<i>Careful consideration and articulation of the one-day special topics courses offered throughout the program could ensure that those one-day courses that actually deliver essential skills for entry-level planning positions (such as plan checking, a skills-based introduction to AutoCAD) are moved into the core of the program, reserving “special topics” for their intended offering of new or hot ideas, brought to students by guest instructors</i>		5
<i>One size can never fit all, and within a small cohort like APPL, there should be structured opportunities for students to “rewind” one and “fast forward” another course, without penalty. Examples could be students who may benefit from APPL 4110, Introduction to Planning, as a full-semester course; those who seek to learn about the City of Vancouver-specific planning law context within APPL 5140, or those who need more time in that course due to a non-Canadian background; those who need an introduction to AutoCAD before entering APPL 5210.</i>		5
<i>Some fine-tuning and specific articulation of learning objectives in each of the lab-based courses could help students to clearly differentiate these courses from one another, articulate these courses from one to the next, and facilitate students’ efforts to connect theory and practice through these courses.</i>		5

Recommendation	Self-Study (specify page #)	External Review (specify page #)
<p><i>APPL 5340, the Major Project course, offers a great opportunity for advanced experiential learning and professional training. This course could be more tailored in order to ensure students are taking this opportunity to design and execute a professional project with real-world planning relevance. The relationship with external mentors, offered in this course, is an exciting part of this opportunity that should be elevated in importance and given structure and recognition.</i></p>		5

Planned Actions	Led by	Begin on	Anticipated Completion	Notes
Work with TCDC to indigenize and internationalize the APPLcurriculum.	Coordinator	September 1, 2020	August 30, 2021	This will also include faculty engagement and review of program and course learning outcomes and content.
Undertake curriculum mapping.	Coordinator	September 1, 2020	March 31, 2021	As above. Also, with a specific focus on computer based courses to assess for currency and relevancy.
Continue conversations with Director of Indigenous Education to explore opportunities to build planning capacity in indigenous communities.	Coordinator	January 1, 2021	December 31, 2021	This may involve exploring a different credential focussed specifically to indigenous communities with different admission criteria, for example.
Explore focussing APPL 5340 Major Project on a real-world planning project.	Coordinator	January 1, 2021	April 30, 2021	This would be a significant change from the original intent of the course.
Explore including annual Special Topics courses into the curriculum.	Coordinator	January 2021	April 2021	Several special topics classes are offered every year to support core courses. This detracts from the option to focus specifically on hot topics in planning which was the original intent of the special topics classes.

Resources Required

Students, alumnae, faculty and the external review all support the need for additional Special Topics courses to expand the program learning opportunities. It will enable the program to support several “core” Special Topics courses offered every year and have 5 Special Topics courses focussed on hot topics in the field of planning. Once the reviews and planning in this area are complete, APPL is requesting consideration to add 2 additional 1 credit Special Topics classes to the Applied Planning curriculum.

Goal 2: Ensure program is diverse and inclusive through outreach and admissions.

Academic Plan Priorities
1.2. Advance the application of innovative technologies that support learning and teaching
2.1. Strengthen and develop student support systems
2.2. Maintain enrolments to maximize student access and success
3.1. Increase recruitment, retention, and graduation of Aboriginal students
3.2. Expand awareness, acceptance, and inclusiveness of Aboriginal cultures within Langara
3.3. Strengthen partnerships with Aboriginal community
4.1. Position Langara as the school of choice for post-secondary international students in British Columbia
4.2. Increase intercultural supports for students, faculty, and staff
4.3. Provide international learning opportunities, both on campus and abroad for students and faculty

Recommendation	Self-Study (specify page #)	External Review (specify page #)
<p><i>The program should consider the implications for program delivery and content should the ratio of international to domestic students change over time. In particular, possibilities may exist for planning practice to improve with a more fulsome exchange with planning practices internationally and international students may bring value to the classroom with their diversity... A richer mix could provide continued enrollment into the program and sustain diversity within the curriculum and student body, which was a highly valued feature according to both student and faculty feedback. Having a diverse student body is an asset to the quality of the program through development of innovative skills and strategies and diversity of ideas in planning, which is in line with Langara's vision to diversify programs.</i></p>		3

Recommendation	Self-Study (specify page #)	External Review (specify page #)
<i>Increasing online course offerings in such a way that course learning outcomes are not compromised might offer more flexibility for students who are working, need to balance family responsibilities and to provide flexible options for completion of courses in case of unforeseen circumstances. Langara has advised that program offering be flexible in delivery for both domestic and international students for the forthcoming years. Lab courses for example could be updated or online courseware could be upgraded and diversify accessibility with the help of Ed Tech Services at Langara and tap into other potential college resources.</i>		3
<i>APPL should work towards transferability of courses with other institutions on a continual basis as it is a good market strategy for increases in course enrollment, especially with the program's objective to provide hands-on and focus skills development.</i>		3
<i>Continue to devise operational and inclusive admission criteria through high school programs and alliances with indigenous communities. APPL can look into SSHRC grants for Indigenous students for first year entry at Langara, consider entrance award bursaries, and/or tap in on other potential college financial aid. Indigenous inclusion and recruitment are consistent with Langara's vision of indigenizing program offerings and the BC educational curriculum.</i>		3
<i>While statistics is an important skill required to achieve the learning outcomes of the program and development of soft skills, for some students applying into the program without a statistics course could be an intimidating barrier. Consider providing bridges for students towards a designation route to achieve the admission requirement, by listing Langara statistics course offerings.</i>		3
<i>The notion of working with the Centre for Inter-Cultural Engagement at Langara toward improvements to international student outcomes is a good one; another important step in making sure international students are well-served would be to make more efforts to connect with international alumnae post-graduation in order to better track career outcomes over time.</i>		3
<i>In the letter of intent to gain admission into the program, an additional question could be posed about a student's "job readiness." This could provide valuable information about the degree of knowledge, applied skills and practices a student feels they have and allow for the course content to be developed in more innovative and customized ways.</i>		3

Planned Actions	Led by	Begin on	Anticipated Completion	Notes
Consider opportunities to vary the proportions of domestic and international students.	Coordinator	May 1, 2021	December 31, 2021	Currently, the proportion is approximately 25% international students.
Identify ways to monitor the success of our international students post graduation.	Coordinator	May 1, 2021	August 30, 2021	Currently, our international students do not actively connect as part of the APPL alumnae community.
Explore opportunities for some or all of the curriculum to be offered online.	Coordinator	September 1, 2021	March 31, 2021	Each year, several requests are made to take the program online from domestic students not resident in the lower mainland.
Consider waiving or altering the statistics requirement so that this is not a barrier to admission.	Coordinator	September 1, 2020	October 31, 2020	Currently, the program accepts students with a statistics, quantitative methods or post secondary mathematics class.
Consider adding an additional question to the letter of intent.	Coordinator	September 1, 2020	October 31, 2020	There are currently three questions that students are required to answer in their letter of intent.

Resources Required
None.

Goal 3: Build experiential learning opportunities into a formal program.

Academic Plan Priorities
1.3. Maintain and expand experiential education opportunities

Recommendation	Self-Study (specify page #)	External Review (specify page #)
<i>APPL already benefits from a strong and active Advisory Group. Numerous good ideas exist to build on connections outside Langara, through shadowing assignments, the external mentors for the Major Project, work experience placements, presentations by alumni in class, and other networking and community-building activities. These efforts should be built into a concerted, vital and valuable offering of the APPL program. A formal evaluation tool across these different experiential learning offerings could be useful in this.</i>		7
<i>Without committing to making any changes to the program in the interest of accreditation, the Program is to be commended for the work it has done to maintain its relationship with PIBC and should promote the “laddering” opportunity to accreditation with PIBC to graduates. While accreditation is not immediate, the APPL program offers a pathway to begin a career in planning following a single year of post-baccalaureate education, and from here, graduates are able to open many doors for themselves over time, including accreditation.</i>		7
<i>The external reviewers additionally support and applaud the program’s efforts to develop more consistency and transparency around evaluation and student feedback provided across its suite of courses. Students had positive things to say about their experience in the program and how they were evaluated in their courses; this is significant feedback for the program to take into account.</i>		7
<i>Work with Co-op and Career Development Centre to develop an outreach strategy. / Encourage greater participation in co-op / optional experiential work term. It was indicated that this option is predominantly subscribed to by the program’s international students. Consider means of making this option more attractive (and/or required) for a greater number of students.</i>		9

Recommendation	Self-Study (specify page #)	External Review (specify page #)
<i>Encourage greater participation in co-op / optional experiential work term. It was indicated that this option is predominantly subscribed to by the program's international students. Consider means of making this option more attractive (and/or required) for a greater number of students.</i>		8
Develop a formal evaluation tool for experiential learning.	19	
Discuss importance of experiential learning with faculty and continue to expand offerings in the program.	19	
Enhance the Shadow a Planner for a Day to become experiential learning by adding a reflection piece.	19	

Planned Actions	Led by	Begin on	Anticipated Completion	Notes
Consider options to develop an evaluation tool for experiential learning.	Coordinator	September 1, 2020	April 30, 2021	As the program continues to build experiential learning opportunities, the need for formal tools has become apparent.
Explore ways to expand experiential learning, including increasing participation in the optional experiential work term.	Coordinator	May 1, 2021	December 31, 2021	In past years, only international students have done the optional experiential work term. This is in part as many already have jobs in the field and also how it is structured. This will include meeting with the Co-op and Career Development Centre Chair.
Consider ways to better inform students of how they can ladder into PIBC membership through the APPL program.	Coordinator	September 1, 2020	October 31, 2020	The program website text will be reviewed and revised to focus on this.

Resources Required

None.

Goal 4: Make more effective use of College resources.

Academic Plan Priorities
1.1. Promote and support innovation and quality in teaching and curriculum design
1.2. Advance the application of innovative technologies that support learning and teaching
2.1. Strengthen and develop student support systems
2.2. Maintain enrolments to maximize student access and success
4.2. Increase intercultural supports for students, faculty, and staff

Recommendation	Self-Study (specify page #)	External Review (specify page #)
<i>The program's intensive structure, the proportion of students working simultaneously and classes primarily in the evenings have combined to result in few students taking advantage of the library resources available. The library, with knowledgeable staff and impressive resources, including customized workshops and advising, should be used to its full effect. While this is acknowledged in the self-study through the results of the student survey and was echoed in the review teams' conversations with the students, the review team suggests that specific actions be identified to improve the awareness of and connection to library resources. This could include an introductory research primer and periodic refresher sessions for students on available resources focused on information used most frequently by the applied planning students and/or the integration of more library tutorials and workshops into courses.</i>		8
<i>The self-study indicates a desire to make more use of education technology. The review committee suggests taking a needs-based approach to ensure that any educational technology employed augments the learning that takes place (online laboratories will always be inferior to in-class labs); that said, there are definite advantages to have a strong backbone of technological support (ongoing discussion, skills practices and interactive exposure to new tools).</i>		8

Recommendation	Self-Study (specify page #)	External Review (specify page #)
Work with TCDC and faculty to ensure students are clear on how they will be assessed and to ensure students are getting consistent feedback from faculty.	19	
Work with TCDC and faculty to develop rubric for all courses to ensure consistency in grading practices.	19	
Work with the Centre for Inter-Cultural Engagement at Langara to seek input on how to improve employment outcomes for international students in the program.	19	
Work with the Library to identify if more appropriate resources are available to faculty and students.	22	
Learn more about education technology available through Langara and make more effective use of it.	22	

Planned Actions	Led by	Begin on	Anticipated Completion	Notes
Identify ways to create stronger connections with College resources	Coordinator	May 1, 2021	October 31, 2021	This will include connecting with the Library, TCDC and EdTech to benefit from their expertise and services.
Identify ways to ensure that grading practices are consistent through the program.	Coordinator	September 1, 2021	December 31, 2021	APPL has a common grading scheme. The use of rubrics and assessment techniques is currently inconsistent.
Identify strategies to improve employment outcomes for international students in the program.	Coordinator	September 1, 2020	October 31, 2022	APPL will work with Intercultural Engagement and the Co-op and Career Development Centre to develop a strategy and then monitor its success.

Resources Required
None.

Goal 5: Strengthen and formalize external connections.

Academic Plan Priorities
3.2. Expand awareness, acceptance, and inclusiveness of Aboriginal cultures within Langara
3.3. Strengthen partnerships with Aboriginal community
5.3. Build sustainable partnerships with employers, community partners, and alumni

Recommendation	Self-Study (specify page #)	External Review (specify page #)
Expand PAC membership to add a representative from the private sector.	25	
Develop a strategy to maintain relationships with relevant industry partners and employers. / <i>Structuring employer and program partner outreach by building a database of employers and key contacts and inventorying whether each has summer student positions, internships, availability for information interviews, availability for job shadow, or potential topics for students. Periodic outreach through e-newsletters and other tools to the program partners should be undertaken to increase program presence (in addition to the other tactics mentioned in the program review).</i>	25	9
<i>The reviewers understood that the program includes a high degree of flexibility for students to self-select and design final capstone projects. Students should be encouraged to select project topics which have the greatest potential to expand their professional network and be of interest to prospective employers.</i>		9
<i>Though the CACPT has a relatively limited presence in western Canada, and is not generally referenced by employers, the program should consider recertification. The last review of the program was conducted in 2002 and the program has changed considerably since.</i>		9
<i>The intensive nature of the program comes with the drawback that students have limited time to participate in networking events locally. The shadow a planner program is effective and other means should be considered to connect students with practicing planners and prospective employers. For example, an opportunity for informal 'speed dating' with the PAC or partner employers.</i>		9

Recommendation	Self-Study (specify page #)	External Review (specify page #)
<i>The review team concurs with the recommendations indicating that the program should consider additional focus on communications and design skills, however, feels the program's strong focus on technical skills is a sound strategy and offers a means of distinguishing its graduates.</i>		9
<i>Connections to First Nations are not mentioned. Consider opportunities to strengthen in this area. This could include indigenous representation on the PAC.</i>		9
<i>Pursue an agreement with SFU to ladder our students into their Master of Urban Studies. / Build a more formalized laddering approach with SFU Urban Studies.</i>	19	9

Planned Actions	Led by	Begin on	Anticipated Completion	Notes
Explore opportunity to expand the PAC.	Coordinator	September 1, 2021	January 1, 2022	This could provide a key opportunity to increase the representativeness of the PAC.
Develop a strategy to maintain relationships with relevant industry partners and employers.	Coordinantor	September 1, 2022	March 31, 2023	This could include ideas from the external review, including speed dating, creation of a database, etc.
Work with CACPT to identify timeline for next accreditation cycle.	Coordinator	September 1, 2020	November 30, 2020	It has been almost 20 years since CACPT undertook a formal accreditation process with APPL.
Explore ways to ladder APPL student into the SFU Master of Urban Studies.	Coordinator	January 1, 2021	December 31, 2021	Each year, several alumnae take the SFU Master of Urban Studies. No formal laddering has been identified to date.

Resources Required
None.