

**REPORT OF THE ACADEMIC PLANNING COMMITTEE
TO THE REGULAR November 2020 SENATE**

FOR DISCUSSION

Eighteen-month follow-up from ACAPLAN's recommendations from the Program Review for the following program: **M.Sc. in Biology**

Below is an excerpt from the Institutional Quality Assessment Process at Laurentian University approved at the Quality Council in June 2011 and revised in 2018 and 2019.

PROCESS FOR FOLLOW-UP

No later than 18 months after Senate submission, those responsible for implementing the changes writes a report to the Dean and to ACAPLAN, on the actions it has taken in response to the review.

**LAURENTIAN QUALITY ASSURANCE IMPLEMENTATION PLAN FOR THE
M.Sc. PROGRAM in BIOLOGY**

Recommendation	Proposed Follow-up	Responsibility for Leading Follow-up	Timeline
1. Validate proposed program learning outcomes and measures for evaluation	Consult with Associate VP Learning and Teaching to validate draft	Program Coordinator	June 2019
2. Maintain faculty complement by replacing those who leave	First hire should be a Biomolecular biologist	Dean of SEA	Ongoing
3. Maintain complement of technicians	Replace any who leave	Dean of SEA	Ongoing
4. Improve availability of graduate courses	i. Build graduate course teaching into faculty workload ii. Ensure one course is available in each of the three core research areas on an annual basis iii. Develop selected topic course iv. Identify courses offered by other programs (such as Biochemistry) that could be offered instead of 4 th year courses	i. Dean of SEA ii. Dean of SEA iii. Program Coordinator iv. Program Coordinator	i. Ongoing ii. Ongoing iii. June 2019 iv. June 2019

	v. Ensure instructor evaluations are carried out systematically vi. Confirm that cross-appointed faculty can teach in program	v. Dean of Graduate Studies vi. Dean of SEA	v. June 2019 and ongoing vi. June 2019 and ongoing
5. Improve GTA experience beyond online	i. Develop training program specific to biology ii. Encourage enrolment in training offered by CAE iii. Support GTSs who identify instances of academic dishonesty by developing departmental policy and procedures on this matter	i. Program Coordinator with Centre for Academic Excellence ii. Program Coordinator iii. Program coordinator with Department Chair and colleagues	i. Starting June 2019 to completion within 18 months ii. Ongoing iii. September 2019
6. Enhance overall student experience	i. Shorten completion time for degree to an average of 2 years and embed this policy in all written and online documentation including graduate handbook ii. <i>Where possible</i> , Increase stipend for degree beyond \$15,000 iii. List seminars attended and run in annual progress reports iv. Develop graduate handbook for Biology v. Improve departmental website	i. Program Coordinator and Dean of Graduate Studies ii. Program Coordinator with colleagues and Dean of Graduate Studies iii. Program Coordinator iv. Program Coordinator v. Department chair with Marketing and IT	i. Ongoing ii. June 2019 and ongoing iii. June 2019 and ongoing iv. December 2019 v. December 2019
7. Improve university support of students	i. Improve communication re financial matters ii. Improve website iii. Complete graduate handbook	i. Dean of Graduate Studies i. Dean of Graduate Studies iii. Dean of Graduate Studies	i. June 2019 and ongoing ii. December 2019 and ongoing iii. June 2019
8. Track student	Update dossiers annually	Program Coordinator	June 2019

success			
9. Make statistics course more relevant to students in Ecology and Evolution stream	Identify another stats course that these students can take	Program Coordinator	June 2019
10. Improve lab facilities in Science Buildings	Use a portion overhead money from research grants to support this outcome. If not possible, disclose details on how these funds are used.	Vice President Research	June 2019

Response from M.Sc. BIOL coordinator, jfrobotaille@laurentian.ca and new Biology Chair jdgagnon@laurentian.ca

In response to the ACAPLAN recommendations (March 2019) made from the External Review (June 2017), here is a progress report from the MSc coordinator and department chair on the pertaining items.

1. Validate proposed program learning outcomes and measures for evaluation

A new version of the program's objectives, mission and learning outcomes is being prepared with the collaboration of the Centre for Academic Excellence (CAE). The new version will be submitted for Departmental support through the Biology Council Meeting in Fall 2020. The official version will be included in the upcoming BIOL MSc Handbook.

4. Improve availability of graduate courses

iii. Develop selected topic course

This has been done, with the creation of BIOL 5046 Selected Topics in Biology. This course can be offered multiple times per session as registrar can give a specific name for the topic being covered. Thus the course can be taught concurrently by more than one instructor, and augment course offerings.

iv. Identify courses offered by other programs (such as Biochemistry) that could be offered instead of 4th year courses

Communications with the Chemistry/Biochemistry graduate coordinator (S. Montaut) are occurring to obtain and distribute course offerings. Grad studies has stated they are working on developing a master list of online courses across Ontario for the OVGS (Ontario visiting graduate student) courses.

5. Improve GTA experience beyond online

i. Develop training program specific to biology

GTA's are now receiving in depth specific training from the course instructor and technologist before lab sessions begin.

ii. Encourage enrolment in training offered by CAE

Courses including ACEX5006E (Teaching in Post-Secondary Institutions) were advertised and several students enrolled.

iii. Support GTAs who identify instances of academic dishonesty by developing departmental policy and procedures on this matter

A document is being prepared with consultation from the biology teaching lab coordinators, that addresses GTA rights and responsibilities, including student conduct and GTA conduct.

6. Enhance overall student experience

i. Shorten completion time for degree to an average of 2 years and embed this policy in all written and online documentation including graduate handbook

It is being stated in the current draft version of our MSc BIOL handbook that the normal duration of the program is two years.

ii. *Where possible*, Increase stipend for degree beyond \$15,000

The new student handbook clarifies that the 15,000/ year is the minimum stipend. Students may make arrangements and negotiate for stipends above this amount.

iii. List seminars attended and run in annual progress reports

Progress reports happen every 6 months. A new line on seminars attended will be added to the thesis advisory committee report form.

iv. Develop graduate handbook for Biology

The first draft Guidelines to M.Sc. BIOL have been circulated to members of the biology department involved with Grad coordination in the past (MMG, Jga). The construction of an exhaustive document requires time, and additional pieces of information (e.g. LU Regulations) are being appended to Draft #1. Drafts will be reviewed by the new biology graduate student club, satellite locations (HSNRI, NOSM etc) and finally approved by the biology department.

v. Improve departmental website

The department chair along with 2 other department members have created the "Digital Strategies Committee". This committee has received training from Web@laurentian on CIR1 and 2 and we can now make our own web updates. Extensive updates were made in the summer of 2020. In addition a new Twitter account was created for biology to help get rapid info out.

7. Improve university support of students.

While follow up responsibility is listed as Dean of Graduate Studies, Biology has addressed several issues here. Students can now obtain information quicker thanks to the extensive biology website updates

8. Track student success

Update dossiers annually

This is in progress, thanks to the help of a graduate coordinator assistant, use of LU google Drive, and a unique MScBIOL@laurentian.ca email address. The chair has also received *business objects* training and can now generate graduate student contact lists. Students can now be contacted in an expeditious manner.

9. Make statistics course more relevant to students in Ecology and Evolution stream

The lack of stable graduate statistics course is an issue for both biomedical and ecology and evolution based biology research. This year Biology was able to get 7 of their graduate students in a UofT course through the OVGS program. Until a stable LU course offering can be found or developed, OVGS courses will be a key component of acquiring statistics training.

As an additional point, we would like to notify ACAPLAN that a new Biology Student Club was started in spring 2020. This was a joint effort between the graduate students and the new departmental chair. This is a ratified student club with an executive. The president of this new club attends the biology council meetings and is a voting member on departmental motions. This new endeavour will provide a strong voice and sense of community amongst our MSc students.

Response from the Interim Dean of Graduate Studies

In response to the ACAPLAN recommendations (March 2019) made from the External Review (June 2017), here is a progress report from the Interim Dean of Graduate Studies on the pertaining items.

4. Improve availability of graduate courses

iv. Identify courses offered by other programs (such as Biochemistry) that could be offered instead of 4th year courses

Communications with the Chemistry/Biochemistry graduate coordinator (S. Montaut) are occurring to obtain and distribute course offerings. Grad studies has stated they are working on developing a master list of online courses across Ontario for the OVGS (Ontario visiting graduate student) courses.

IDGS: The building of the master list is under way

6. Enhance overall student experience

i. Shorten completion time for degree to an average of 2 years and embed this policy in all written and online documentation including graduate handbook

It is being stated in the current draft version of our MSc BIOL handbook that the normal duration of the program is two years.

IDGS: Agree with program. It is also worthwhile repeating the message in different forums

ii. *Where possible*, Increase stipend for degree beyond \$15,000

The new student handbook clarifies that the 15,000/ year is the minimum stipend. Students may make arrangements and negotiate for stipends above this amount.

IDGS : Nothing to add to the program's response

7. Improve university support of students.

While follow up responsibility is listed as Dean of Graduate Studies, Biology has addressed several issues here. Students can now obtain information quicker thanks to the extensive biology website updates

IDGS: All of the program's website are presently being looked at, from an institutional perspective. Good progress is being made on the graduate handbook.

CONCLUSION

The M.Sc. program in Biology is approved to continue and it will be reviewed in the fall of 2026