

**REPORT OF THE ACADEMIC PLANNING COMMITTEE  
TO THE REGULAR June 2018 SENATE**

**FOR INFORMATION**

**Quality Assurance – Cyclical Program Review of Laurentian University’s  
BA in Economics  
Final Assessment Report & Implementation Plan**

In accordance with the Laurentian University’s Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP), this Final Assessment Report has been prepared to provide a synthesis of the external evaluation and Laurentian’s response and action plan. The report identifies the significant strengths of the program, opportunities for program improvement and enhancement, and sets out and prioritizes the recommendations that have been selected for implementation.

The report includes an Implementation plan that identifies who will be responsible for approving the recommendations set out in the Final Assessment Report; who will be responsible for providing any resources made necessary by those recommendations; any changes in organization, policy or governance that will be necessary to meet the recommendations; who will be responsible for acting on those recommendations; and timelines for acting on and monitoring the implementation of those recommendations.

**SUMMARY OF THE CYCLICAL PROGRAM REVIEW OF THE BA IN  
ECONOMICS**

At Laurentian, students can earn a Bachelor of Arts in Economics (3year) – Concentration; Bachelor of Arts in Economics (4 year) – Specialization; and an Honours Diploma – specifically tailored for students who wish to pursue graduate studies in Economics. The Department also offers a Major and a Minor in Economics.

With the exception of the Honours Diploma, all these degrees are offered in both English and French. That said, on February 14, 2018, the Department requested that admissions be suspended in two specializations offered in French: Spécialisation en science économique – option générale et Spécialisation en science économique – option mondialisation et développement économique. In general students tend to prefer graduating with either a three-year or a four-year degree and rarely choose the Honours Diploma. A good number of students from other Departments in the Faculty of Arts but also from the Faculties of Management and Sciences, choose the Minor in Economics, which has become quite popular in recent years.

Currently there are eight full-time faculty associated with the program<sup>1</sup>; there are nine if one includes a faculty member attached to another Department but also teaches Economics full-time. Of the nine, seven normally teach in the anglophone program, two

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<sup>1</sup> At the time the self-study was written, there were 7 full-time members; this number increased by one when a faculty member hitherto assigned to Sports Administration returned to the Department. In the 2008 review, there were 14 full-time faculty in the Department.

in the francophone...although a couple on the anglophone side also teach a course or two in French.

In October 2016, the program submitted its self-study to Vice President Academic and Provost.

The self-study presented an overview of program options and then set out the objectives of the program and its mission statement, followed by the program's learning objectives and learning outcomes based on degree level expectations. The self-study then addressed four major recommendations in ACAPLAN's 2008 review of the program and identified follow-up actions taken by the program.

The self-study described the role of each of the persons involved in its writing and highlighted input received from others outside the program. Thereafter, it listed the faculty and also provided a chart identifying departmental research funding between 2011 and 2016. An additional chart was included which spelled out teaching loads of the professors involved. The self-study noted that when students elected to do the Honours essay, a six-credit course, the faculty who elected to serve as supervisors did not receive compensation, nor was the course included in their teaching load.

This was followed by a discussion of the library resources, laboratory and computer facilities and space, as well as the appropriateness and effectiveness of their utilization.

The last three sections analyzed the enrollments and graduations of students—current and projected, discussed program regulations and courses and finally planning, concluding with an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the current program. There were two Appendices, one which contained course outlines and a second which contained the CVs of the faculty in the program.

After reviewing the self-study, the Review Team conducted a site visit on October 18 and 19, 2017. The external was Dr. Robert Dimand, a full professor of Economics at Brock University<sup>2</sup>, Dr. Raoul Étongué-Mayer, Geography (a faculty member outside the Department but inside the Faculty of Arts), Dr. Youssou Gningue, Mathematics (a faculty member outside the Faculty of Arts). Two students, Ali Maina, a francophone, and Yu Mu, an anglophone, made up the balance of the committee.

The site visit began with a meeting of the review team with Dr. Serge Demers, Vice-President Academic and Provost, and Dr. Elizabeth Dawes, Dean of Arts, followed by a further meeting with Dr. Dawes, and then a meeting with Dr. Hassan Bougrine, Chair of the Department of Economics. The review team then went to the Library for a meeting with librarian Desmond Maley, who is the liaison librarian for all English-language programs in the Faculty of Arts. The review team also held meetings of Liam McGill of the Greater Sudbury Development Corporation, with Pat Marcuccio of Cambrian College (a Laurentian economics graduate who went on to take an MA in Economic Development at the University of Waterloo), and with Josh Osika, a student at the Northern Ontario

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<sup>2</sup> And winner of Brock Chancellor's Chair for Research Excellence (2002-2005) ; Faculty of Social Sciences Award for Excellence in Teaching (2012); Faculty of Graduate Studies Mentoring Award (2013).

School of Medicine who holds a Laurentian BA in Economics and has a strong interest in health policy and health economics. Dr. Bougrine, the department chair, then took the external reviewer, Robert Dimand, on a tour of campus facilities. The review team ended the day by meeting with Laurentian economics students Carl Aho, Qianhui Xu and Katia Shohakar.

On October 19, the review team with department members Hassan Bougrine, Akhter Faroque, Sadequl Islam, David Leadbetter and Brian MacLean and with David Robinson, a former Chair of the Economics Department who is now a member of the School of Northern and Community Studies but does all his teaching in Economics. After the group meeting, the review team also met with them individually. One department member, Louis-Philippe Rochon, was out of the country on sabbatical, and another, Corinne Pastoret, did not respond to requests from the Department Chair to meet with the review team. The external consultant concluded the visit by meeting again with the Vice-President Academic and Provost and with the Dean of Arts in the Vice-President's office.

When the Review team submitted its report on November 1 2017, it noted:

- The number of students in the English-language Economics program has, increased substantially since 2008, when the last review was completed, in contrast to the overall trend of enrolments in the Faculty of Arts.
- In addition to teaching its own majors, the Economics Department does important service teaching.
- Students are very satisfied with the quality of the courses they have taken
- The faculty of the Economic Department are active and productive researchers. Compared to the typical Canadian Economics Department, the department at Laurentian has a distinctive critical and heterodox leaning that could provide the basis for a high-quality MA program, if and only if the university were to provide sufficient resources, including a net increase in the teaching complement of the department.
- Laurentian graduates have done well in subsequent employment and graduate study.

However, the reviewers also noted:

- There is not a wide enough selection of elective courses offered, either in English or in French, and that students in the francophone program cannot be confident that the courses they need to complete their program will be offered when they need them.
- There is no co-op option.
- Recent acquisitions of economics books have been inadequate for support of four-year undergraduate programs and would be severely inadequate for a possible master's program.
- There are concerns about availability of econometric software packages for teaching and research.
- The Department used to have visiting speakers and field trip programs.
- There have been some issues about the mathematical preparation of students.

*What the review team did NOT submit, however, as per IQAP guidelines, was a specific set of recommendations, listed in priority order.*

On November 29, 2017 the program submitted its reaction to the report and on January 28, 2018 Dr. Elizabeth Dawes, Dean of Arts submitted a response that included the program's reaction as well as her own, based on recommendations deduced by the program and dean from the report. The review team's recommendations, as deduced, plus comments from the Program and the Dean appear below.

**SUMMARY OF THE REVIEW TEAM'S RECOMMENDATIONS (R) THE  
PROGRAM'S (P) RESPONSES AND THE RESPONSES OF THE DEAN OF  
ARTS (D)  
ACAPLAN'S RESPONSE**

**R1: Mathematical preparation of students**

[From the Report of the Review team]: Our one concern is that students enter ECON 2127 Introduction to the Mathematical Treatment of Economics without having taken a calculus course at university (although students entering directly from high school should have taken at least functions there, and perhaps high school calculus). We understand that there have been some issues about the mathematical preparation of students in ECON 2127, including, in the French version of the course, some students who entered university as mature students (so, if they took high school mathematics, they did not do so recently). It would not be appropriate to require economics students to take the first calculus course intended for mathematics majors, but at Brock University, for instance, there is separate required calculus course for business and economics students taught by the Mathematics Department. We understand that the School of Commerce is contemplating requiring such a course. If Management proceeds with such a calculus course for business students, taught by the Mathematics Department, that course should be required of Economics students as a prerequisite for ECON 2127. However, it should be required for Economics only if it is required for Business Administration students – otherwise there would be a loss of students to Business.

**P1:** In order to help international students succeed in their studies, our department is willing to work with the University to propose upgrade courses to support those students with math or writing deficiencies (such courses are already offered by the department of Mathematics and Département d'études françaises).

**D1:** The lack of background in mathematics has been an ongoing issue which has been raised by faculty for a number of years. Economics students could be required to take 6 credits of MATH courses as part of their Economics program. They could use MATH courses to fulfill the new BA requirement for 6 credits in scientific literacy. Prior to September 2017, students in French Language programs did not have a Science requirement. Requiring MATH courses would be unlikely to result in Economics students transferring to the Faculty of Management.

**R2: Elective courses**

[From the Report of the Review team]: The feedback that the reviewers received from present and former students is that, while they are very satisfied with the quality of the Economics courses offered, they feel strongly that there is not a wide enough selection of elective courses offered, either in English or in French, and that students in the francophone program cannot be confident that the courses they need to complete their program will be offered when the students need them. The Department states in its self-study document that with the decline in faculty complement and rise in enrolments, “the Department is facing serious difficulties in offering the adequate number of required and elective courses needed by our students to graduate on time.”

Several courses that would attract substantial enrolment not only from Economics majors but also from other Laurentian students were not offered in any of the three years for which data was provided, because of staffing constraints: ECON 2076 Introduction to Health Economics, ECON 3035 Economics of Education, and ECON 3086 Cases in the Evaluation of Health Care. History of Economic Thought was offered only in French, International Finance only in English. Public Finance I and II were offered in English in one of the three years, not at all in French. (p. 3)

**P2:** Indeed: With one additional faculty member on the English side, our department will be in a position to satisfy students’ requests for more elective courses (since they “feel strongly that there is not a wide enough selection of elective courses” p. 2) by introducing new courses such as those with more aboriginal content. Our department is already considering, for instance, offering courses such as “The Economics of Colonialism and Anti-Colonialism”, and a further research project, based on “Issues in the Economics of Decolonization in Canada”. (#3)

**D2:** There are several ways to expand the pool of available electives without requiring additional resources. The first way would be to move existing electives with prerequisites beyond ECON 1006/1007 to the 3000 or 4000 level. The ECON program is very heavy in theory and methods requirements at the 2000 level (18 credits), leaving little room for students to take electives in their second year. Many of the available electives are clustered at that level. The second way would be to offer elective courses on a two-year rotation. Some ECON electives are offered annually. Cycling them would allow the program to double the number of elective courses available in a given two-year period. The third way would be to create an approved course list of electives from other programs. There are many relevant electives that would be of interest to students: e.g. LBST 3326EL Policies for Economic and Social Justice, LBST 4206EL The Political Economy of Inequality, GEOG 2247EL Economic Geography: Canadian Issues, GEOG 3267EL Contemporary Issues in Economic Geography, POLI 4736EL Canadian Political Economy.

**R3: francophone program**

[From the Report of the Review team]: Students will not commit to taking the francophone degree in economics unless they can be confident that the required and elective courses will be offered when the students need them to graduate; the department cannot commit to offering courses year after year to one or two students. Offering degree programs in both official languages is central to the mission of Laurentian University. The only way that Laurentian can continue to do so in economics is to recruit more francophone students and to commit to offering the necessary courses, telling students what courses will be offered in French over the next three years. Fortunately, a source of sufficient numbers of additional francophone students is available, provided that Laurentian University changes how it recruits francophone visa students from Africa. (p. 4)

**P3:** The French program is indeed in a dire situation because of low enrolment. However, with one additional faculty member on the French side, our department will be in a position to offer all the required and elective courses, and establish a plan for the duration of the program – thus assuring potential francophone students, who shun the program because of its known difficulties and higher tuition fees that competitors, that they will get the courses they need to graduate on time. In addition, and in order not to rely too much on the axiom “build it and they will come”, we also ask the university to make serious efforts to recruit francophone students by developing a well-designed strategy aimed at Canadian as well as international students. A successful recruiting campaign will obviously enhance the university’s position and preserve its mission as a bilingual institution by making it more competitive with other universities, particularly with the prospect of a new francophone university. To survive this competition, Laurentian should seriously consider lowering its tuition fees for international students to the domestic level. In order to help international students succeed in their studies, our department is willing to work with the University to propose upgrade courses to support those students with math or writing deficiencies (such courses are already offered by the department of Mathematics and Département d’études françaises). (#4)

**D3:** In recent years, the Economics program has served many international students transferring from the H.B.Com. which had an abnormally high attrition rate. Less attention has been paid to addressing the needs of students from the region, most notably Indigenous students. Women are underrepresented in the program, unlike in most BA programs.

**R4: Faculty complement**

[From the Report of the Review team]: We recommend that any faculty retirements or departures be replaced, one for one, and that to allow for adequate provision of required and elective undergraduate courses in English and French the teaching complement should be increased by one. Offering of an MA program, perhaps in Economic Development, would require a further net increase of one in the department’s teaching complement. These recommendations already count as part of the present teaching complement for Economics a former member of the department, now in Northern and Community Studies, whose teaching load

consists of Economics courses (an anomaly that might be resolved by the department offering and the faculty member accepting a cross-appointment).

**P4:** The external reviewer correctly noted that, compared to the situation when the last program review was done in 2008, our department is now “doing more teaching with less resources”, and this is where our most urgent needs are. The reviewer recommends that “the teaching complement should be increased by one” in order to “allow for adequate provision of required and elective undergraduate courses in English and French” and a further increase by another one, if we are to offer an MA program. It is our department’s view that, in fact, we need one full-time faculty on the French side and one full-time faculty on the English side just to be able to offer the required courses and a good selection of elective courses in the undergraduate programs. (#2)

**D4:** As a significant period of faculty renewal occurs over the next 5-10 years, there will be an opportunity to address the gender imbalance in the department using the equity provisions of the Collective Agreement. In recent years, several members of the department transferred to other units (e.g. SPAD, LBST) while continuing to teach in the Economics program.

**R5: Resource issues**

[From the Report of the Review team]: In the future, there should be closer consultation with faculty members about which journals to subscribe to. Concerns were expressed to the review team about the availability of econometric software packages for teaching and research. Also, it is important that the Library continue to subscribe to such key databases as that of the OECD (the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, whose members are the governments of the world’s two dozen most advanced economies). A smaller resource issue is that the Economics Department has had to discontinue what was formerly an active visiting speaker and field trips program. Reinstatement of this program would, apart from providing intellectual stimulus to both faculty and students, be the sort of extracurricular activity that would help visa students feel more integrated into the department and the university community.

**P5:** Concerns about the availability of econometric software packages were addressed by our department this year by purchasing the highly recommended software “Eviews”, using funds from our operating budget and with a much-appreciated financial contribution from the Dean’s office. Also, the department wishes to clarify that it did not have a specific budget for speakers or field trips that was cancelled. (#5)

**D5:** The department did not spend all of its operating budget in 2016-17. Operating funds may be used to support visiting speakers, purchase software, etc.

**R6: Future coop program**

[From the Report of the Review team]: A coop program in economics would help attract students, give them practical experience, and provide them with contacts in the job market. Such programs have been successful with economics students at other universities, such as Brock. Laurentian already has a coop office for Business students; Economics students could be placed with many of the same coop employers. We also recommend that an effort be made to reach out to regional and municipal economic development offices, so they realize that Economics students have the analytical and statistical skills that are looking for, both for coop placement and permanent employment.

**P6:** The suggestion of a coop program in economics is a welcome one and we are ready to collaborate with potential coop employers.

**D6:** Both the Faculty of Management and the Labour Studies program within the School of Northern and Community Studies have experience with placements in the region.

**R7: Future MA program**

[From the Report of the Review team]: The faculty of the Economic Department are active and productive researchers. Compared to the typical Canadian Economics Department, the department at Laurentian has a distinctive critical and heterodox leaning that could provide the basis for a high-quality MA program, if and only if the university were to provide sufficient resources, including a net increase in the teaching complement of the department. Such a master's program might have a focus on Economic Development (covering both development of Northern Ontario and development), perhaps in conjunction with Northern and Community Studies (components of which, notably Geography and Labour Studies, would be strongly complementary to Economics) – but, to reiterate, only if sufficient resources are provided by the university. We are satisfied with the quality of the resources for teaching and research, but concerned about the quantity.

**P7:** The department is also ready to consider offering the MA program once we secure the sustainability of our undergraduate programs (French and English). Indeed, we believe that having graduate students will strengthen the undergraduate programs since these students can act as “Teaching Assistants” and provide incentives for potential students to join the department. That is why increasing the number of faculty becomes crucial and we call on the administration to pay close attention to this issue. In addition, having an MA program will help us secure research grants since the involvement of graduate students is increasingly becoming a major requirement in grant applications, such as is the case with SSHRC. Given our department's unique heterodox standing, the MA program would attract students beyond Laurentian, as well as encourage local and other undergraduate students to do the Economics BA. (#6)

**D7:** I would encourage the department to bring forward a proposal for an MA in Economics. Faculty teaching loads could be modified to accommodate graduate

teaching as they have been in various other Arts departments by cycling more courses, adopting an approved course list, etc. Some members of the Department of Economics may be interested in collaborating with the School of Northern and Community Studies in the proposed MA in Sustainable Northern Community Development.

### ACAPLAN'S RESPONSE

While ACAPLAN would like to endorse the recommendation that one additional faculty member be hired on the French side, it is of the view that it would be even more useful to hire a bilingual faculty member on a full-time basis who could relieve several pressures facing the department, including during sabbatical absences, and would certainly enhance the department's ability to offer more options as well as mount a MA program.

As to the recruitment of francophones, ACAPLAN is proposing three strategies.

As a start ACAPLAN is of the view that this university needs to level fees charged to francophone students coming from abroad to those domestic student pay. **The fact is that Laurentian's main competitor in Ontario for these students is the University of Ottawa which has adopted this strategy.**<sup>3</sup> If Laurentian wishes to remain an attractive option for international francophone students, it should eliminate this particular financial barrier. Any potential student in economics who chose Laurentian under current circumstances would probably not have a bright future in the profession

Secondly, because the university has a large number of African-Canadian faculty who have a good knowledge of the local languages and cultures, Liaison could benefit from their experience as they travel to their homelands. Their mere presence in the recruiting campaign could send positive signals to parents and potential students, since they are seen as role models.

Thirdly, and this is particularly relevant to Economics—when liaison officers travel abroad, they need to ensure that they take time to promote individual programs such Economics as opposed to the Laurentian / Sudbury site.

It should also be noted that ACAPLAN does not completely endorse the recommendation surrounding resources. As far as the library is concerned, while it did in fact cancel the OECD databases this was done after consultation with the program chair who understood the reasoning: in part because of cost, exacerbated by the collapse of the Canadian dollar, but primarily because of low use. While the book budget was frozen in the year of the review, in the current year, it has been restored. As to software, the economics program was able to purchase "Eviews", using funds from its operating budget and "with a much-appreciated financial contribution" from the Dean's office. That said, resources need to be provided to the Department on an ongoing basis to bring in speakers—Laurentian is comparatively isolated from major centers and speakers have proven an important part of academic programming in other arts programs.

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<sup>3</sup> See <https://www.uottawa.ca/university-fees/differential-tuition-fee-exemption>

ACAPLAN'S recommendations, in priority order, are as follows:

<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Proposed Follow-up</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Timeline</b>
<b>1. Expand faculty complement</b>	<p>i. Hire one new bilingual francophone faculty member</p> <p>ii. Replace any faculty who leave</p>	Dean of Arts with VPA and Budget Committee	December 2018
<b>2. Support those students with math deficiencies</b>	Require Economics students <i>in both languages</i> to take 6 credits of MATH courses as part of their Economics program	Chair to prepare proposals for Arts Council as well as CPF and CELP	December 2018
<b>3. Expand the pool of available electives</b>	<p>i. Move existing electives with prerequisites beyond ECON 1006/1007 to the 3000 or 4000 level.</p> <p>ii. Offer elective courses on a two-year rotation</p>	Chair	December 2018
<b>4. Recruit more francophone students...and women</b>	<p>i. Level tuition fees for international francophone students</p> <p>ii. The Liaison office needs to establish a clear strategy involving faculty which is focused on recruiting francophone students from Africa.</p> <p>iii. Develop program-specific strategy to ensure Liaison officers travelling abroad promote individual programs rather than</p>	<p>Associate VP Academic and francophone Affairs</p> <p>Chair and Executive Director, Student Life &amp; Enrolment Management</p>	December 2018 and ongoing

	the overall Laurentian experience		
<b>5. Establish a coop program for interested students</b>	Explore possible placement options within existing courses	Chair	December 2018
<b>6. Bring in guest speakers</b>	Establish line item in program budget for visiting speakers	Dean in consultation with Chair	December 2018
<b>7. Create new MA program</b>	Develop courses, including possible cross listing	Chair with assistance of Dean to resolve workload issues	June 2019

The Dean of Arts shall be responsible for monitoring the implementation plan. The details of progress made shall be presented in the Dean's Annual Report and filed with the Vice-President Academic and Provost. The Executive Summary and the monitoring reports will be posted on Laurentian University's web site.

### **CONCLUSION**

Laurentian's BA program in Economics is approved to continue and it will be reviewed in the fall of 2025.