



Athabasca
University

FOCUSED ON THE FUTURE OF LEARNING

EDUCATIONAL REVIEW 2015–2016

Report

June 2016

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Dr. Cindy Ives, Vice President, Academic (Interim)

INTRODUCTION

The Educational Review originated with the *Presidential Task Force Report on Sustainability*. From March to May 2015, the task force met to review and consider options for the future sustainability of Athabasca University (AU). In its conclusion, the report highlighted the necessity for “[a]n education review or inventory... led by the faculties and with advice from General Faculties Council.”¹

The AU President presented the report of the task force to the Board of Governors on May 29, 2015 and to both Alberta Innovation and Advanced Education (AIAE) and the AU community on June 1, 2015.

Educational Review planning meetings began in June 2015, when the Vice President, Academic (Interim), the Associate Vice President, Student and Academic Services, and the Director, Academic Planning and Priorities met to develop a plan for the educational review of courses, programs, and services as suggested by the task force report. The draft plan was presented to the Deans for further elaboration.

During the fall of 2015, each of the Deans embarked on a thoughtful, comprehensive self-evaluation process of reviewing and assessing three focus areas within their respective Faculties: *programs*, *courses*, and *academic services*. At the same time, Office of the Vice President, Academic (OVPA) staff collected examples of similar investigations in post-secondary education as background resources to inform the review process. After continued discussion, a

¹ Athabasca University. (2015, June). *Presidential Task Force Report on Sustainability*. Athabasca, AB: Peter MacKinnon.

fourth focus area was added to the evaluation process: *academic structure*. Over time, a strong consensus emerged and was confirmed in the Terms of Reference (see Appendix A), which was shared with General Faculties Council and the AU Board of Governors later in the fall.

Faculty Deans and the Chairs of the Centre for Distance Education (CDE) and the Centre for World Indigenous Knowledge & Research (CWIKR) each provided full reports of their work, including an overview of their methodology and process, the results of their deliberations, and the recommendations of their Faculties and Centres. This Educational Review report consolidates the unit-specific reports and summarizes actions taken and proposed.

The review report offers numerous substantive recommendations and a set of commitments to future actions for how AU can improve as an institution, and how the AU community can come together as colleagues to inform strategic changes leading to the sustainability of the University.

When the Educational Review process began, AU was facing a budget shortfall and concerns about future insolvency. Circumstances have since worsened, and AU's financial situation is now even more critical. The Educational Review is premised on finding effective strategies that contribute to defraying costs without compromising academic quality and integrity. There is a deep commitment to innovation in the academic community, and to growing AU services and offerings in response to the needs of adult learners. However, there are serious limitations due to available funding, regulatory frameworks, restrictive tuition and funding models, and out of date information technology infrastructure that have the potential to compromise the action plan described in this report.

Across the University, employees are profoundly dedicated to strengthening the sustainability of AU. All Faculties and CDE have recently completed or are currently engaged in the process of defining strategic planning initiatives, and this review report builds on their identified goals and priority actions.

The recommendations expressed in this report will support the ongoing rejuvenation, renewal, and re-alignment of the University's academic profile. In the short term, the structural changes, continuous improvement initiatives in programs and courses, and the enhancements to academic services will clarify our academic mission in the coming year. Eventually the actions will contribute to the development of an Academic Plan. The report is expected to guide the university community as together we plan our direction for the future and establish a path forward that will contribute to AU's prosperity.

METHODOLOGY

The Educational Review was guided by a methodology of inclusive consultation. Leadership was central to the review process as Deans and Chairs of CDE and CWIKR offered their expertise and

experience to conduct conversations that formulated appropriate and applicable assessments, commentaries, and immediate, medium term and longer term recommendations. The process was emergent, multi-dimensional, challenging, and inspiring. Inclusive consultation ensured that faculty and staff contributed their views to the deliberations, decision-making, and resultant recommendations. Transparency, openness, and principled discussions led to these substantive results.

For example, informed by their strategic planning processes all Faculties and CDE and CWIKR engaged in multiple face-to-face and virtual meetings and email exchanges to identify, develop, and analyze the processes of their academic units. Wide-ranging and comprehensive discussions about future directions were initiated between September 2015 and April 2016 at Faculty and Program Council meetings, Dean's Advisory Groups and other Faculty-wide conversations. Faculty of Graduate Studies (FGS), Faculty of Science & Technology (FST), and CDE hired external facilitators to lead strategic planning discussions on challenges, opportunities, and new ways of thinking. These conversations fed into their Educational Review deliberations. All Faculties had access to data from a variety of AU sources, including their own records and policies, Institutional Studies, Human Resources, Banner, and course development and production records, and from selected external resources. Faculties with accreditation processes (Faculty of Business (FB), Faculty of Health Disciplines (FHD)) drew from their accreditation-based reviews and initiatives. Others (Faculty of Science and Technology (FST), Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences (FHSS), CDE) built on their strategic planning activities.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The following principles guided the Educational Review process:

- 1) Each Faculty, and CDE and CWIKR developed its own process for analysis and decision-making.
- 2) The review process built on Faculty strengths and focused on enhancing the quality of the learning environment for our students.
- 3) The review considered reducing cost and increasing efficiency, while focusing on academic quality and excellence.
- 4) To ensure efficient and comprehensive reviews, the process aligned with and built on existing strategic plans and accreditation reviews within the Faculties.
- 5) The process was data-driven to ensure transparency and evidence-based decision making (See Appendix E).

PROCESS

Deans reported high levels of engagement in the deliberations within their Faculties. Since June 2015, there have been at least 99 meetings related to the Educational Review (See Appendix B). Meetings will continue as Faculties implement their recommendations and those of the Educational Review. As well, Deans met at eight Educational Review retreats between November 2015 and April 2016 to review resources relating to higher education innovation, strategic planning, sustainability, academic planning, and priority setting (see Appendix E).

Academic leaders at AU wish to emphasize that the Educational Review supports and builds on a history of attention to academic quality. Since 2004, AU has conducted regular program reviews and engaged in continuous improvement efforts related to academic offerings, as required by the Campus Alberta Quality Council. AU was distinguished in 2005 as the first Canadian university to be accredited by the U.S. Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE), demonstrating an institutional-level commitment to quality assurance and continuous improvement by adhering to the commission's rigorous accreditation standards and their enforcement.

In addition, provincial, national, and international professional and regulatory bodies approve and accredit several AU professional programs that lead to certification or licensure, including the Nursing Education Program Approval Board (NEPAB), the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada (RAIC), and the National Academic Recognition Information Centre (NARIC). FB is pursuing the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) accreditation and, in FHD, the BN programs are currently undergoing Canadian Association of Schools of Nursing (CASN) accreditation, with a site visit scheduled for May 2016.

Quality assurance and continuous improvement are also supported by course renewal initiatives. For example, the Faculty of Humanities & Social Sciences (FHSS) initiated a course renewal project in 2012, which resulted in identifying 64 courses for closure. Continuous improvement processes support accountability and efficiency, reduce duplication, and place greater emphasis on the alignment between assessment and outcomes. AU thus uses existing quality frameworks to support effectiveness and efficiency. This review report shows that there is more AU can do in these areas.

Each of the Faculties and CDE and CWIKR produced action plans from their work. Below is a brief summary of the specific processes followed.

The Faculty of Business new strategic plan, *Opening Opportunity* and AACSB accreditation standards and the goals served as a foundation for the Faculty's review. FB considered the currency and relevancy of all courses through a review of student enrolments in each course, when the course was first created, review cycle, age of learning materials, and links to program level outcomes. In addition, the Faculty assessed bench strength across disciplines and research outputs and teaching assignments.

The Faculty of Graduate Studies held two focus groups and three interviews of stakeholder representatives, involving 25 participants in total, in February 2016. The resulting report identified challenges, opportunities, and recommendations for strengthening the influence of FGS. At the annual FGS Council retreat members reviewed the report and identified further recommendations for action, including a commitment to a strategic planning process in the next year.

The Faculty of Health Disciplines systematically assessed courses, programs, student demand, academic services, academic structure, and opportunities for growth and development in the context of their strategic plan. A course inventory document was developed to track and monitor each course's enrolments over two years, most recent revision date, revision plan, and the use of physical texts or alternate resources.

The Faculty of Humanities & Social Sciences undertook a faculty workload analysis and a systematic, comprehensive review of all disciplinary areas and programs to contemplate the vision for each major, minor, concentration, focus area, and elective. Their review assumed current staffing levels and current or reduced resource allocations. FHSS also launched their strategic plan, *Envisioning the Future of FHSS*, during this time. Guided by an Appreciative Inquiry approach, the four strategic goals and over 40 priority actions identified align directly with three of the areas identified for assessment in the Educational Review: programs, courses, and academic services.

The Faculty of Science & Technology held eight meetings and developed a comprehensive course inventory to identify the currency and revision cycle of each of their courses. At the same time, they undertook a formal strategic planning process.

Centre for Distance Education held eight meetings to discuss, plan, and execute their review. All CDE staff and faculty participated in the process. An examination of current programs, courses, enrolment processes and numbers, and delivery methods yielded a picture of sound practice and areas for growth and improvement. Included in the review process was a continuation of the CDE strategic planning process.

The Centre for World Indigenous Knowledge & Research held five meetings to discuss and plan their review, identifying priorities and vision statements for the next 3-5 years. Once the plan was developed, follow-up discussions considered internal and external strengths and challenges. All members of the Centre, including the Elder in Residence, confirmed consensus decisions.

The university-wide Educational Review was facilitated and coordinated by the OVPA. While no budget was assigned, materials and travel costs associated with the review added up to less than \$25,000.

THEMES

While each academic unit reviewed and reported on its own programs, courses, services and internal structure and elaborated detailed action plans to address acknowledged issues, the retreats encouraged the sharing of common themes and concerns. As well, retreat participants brainstormed institution-wide approaches to solving long-standing sustainability challenges that affect the entire AU community. Some of the recommendations that follow emerged from similarities in individual action plans; others reflect conclusions about the need for University-wide strategies and tactics.

Proposals and actions that support academic quality and integrity and that advance the potential of innovation, including new programs to enhance AU's options for sustainability, emerged from these group conversations. Three themes predominated: *quality, efficiency and effectiveness, and innovation.*

These three themes are closely related. As a result of reviewing the educational systems of AU—its *academic structure, programs, courses, and services*—sustainability is conceptualized as a function of academic quality, efficiency and effectiveness, and innovation.

Sustainability = quality + efficiency and effectiveness + innovation

Sustainability for AU in this report means the future capacity of the organization to continue to exist in ways that are aligned with and supportive of the mission and mandate assigned to AU by the province of Alberta; a mission and mandate successfully confirmed in its strategic plans and realized for over 40 years. In educational terms, sustainability refers to the quality and integrity of academic offerings, the perception of excellence among internal and external stakeholders, and public recognition of the value of the institution to the post-secondary landscape in Alberta, Canada, and beyond. In business terms, sustainability refers to the ability of the organization to cover its future and expected costs, to fund its academic programs and services, and to embed continuous improvement into its processes in ways that enhance effectiveness through efficiencies and other cost-savings or cost-containment strategies. For a productive and stable future, investing in research and innovation enables sustainability. As a comprehensive academic and research institution (CARI) in Alberta, the contributions of AU to solving social, environmental, and economic challenges and to expanding knowledge that builds productivity and supports 21st-century skills development can only lead to a stronger university. If this investment is not available, implementation of the recommendations of this report will be compromised.

The recommendations of the Educational Review are presented in an Action Plan under this thematic framework. The chart on pages 28-30 identifies the relationships of the various

thematic recommendations to the four identified focus areas. It is organized by the timelines established for each recommendation (immediate, medium term and long term). Before presenting the overall strategic recommendations, however, it is important to provide a high level summary of the themes and action commitments.

■ Quality

New initiatives in quality assurance build on the commitment of all academic units to comply with the established [program review schedule](#) and process coordinated out of the OVPA. Templates and training for faculty and staff will support efficient program reviews and effective implementation of recommendations and follow-up reporting.

The focus on pursuing and maintaining accreditation and approval continues where applicable; meeting external standards assures high quality learning outcomes and business processes across the institution. As well accreditation indicates to the world that the University meets or exceeds professional standards for quality.

New and innovative course development initiatives extend established practices and emphasize course currency, relevance, and support for student success. Across the University, academics are refining course and program design processes to support continuous improvement and innovation in online course design, and to enhance the quality of the learning environment for students. Course revision schedules established during the review process will ensure timeliness of updates and enhance academic credibility, among students and employees.

■ Efficiency and Effectiveness

New initiatives to enhance efficiency and effectiveness in academic program offerings and service delivery will improve the coherence and clarity of processes and lead to increased accountability. Reducing redundancy and duplication will contain and decrease operational costs across AU. While the Business and Student Services Administrative Practices Process Review is expected to make similar recommendations in administrative areas, there are opportunities to align academic services with current capacity and, consequently, decisions may need to be made about the depth and breadth of academic programming that could contribute to future sustainability through right-sizing. The educational review conversations in many Faculties lead in this direction. Selected initiatives that embrace efficiencies and cost reduction include improved awareness related to student persistence and satisfaction through course evaluation data, survey responses on student perspectives, reports on marking turnaround times, and complaints. Other responses to the expressed concerns of students are in planning stages. These actions will be supported by the full implementation of the Student Relationship Management (SRM) system across the University. The SRM system will make processes and interactions with students more transparent and collect meaningful data about students' experiences throughout their learning journey.

■ Innovation

Faculties and CDE and CWIKR are embracing innovations that will contribute to sustainability through strategies for enhanced services, revenue generation, and adaptive programming. Examples include creating partnerships to foster new growth opportunities in student recruitment, sustaining and enhancing existing programs, and identifying new program niche opportunities. Initiatives to convert visiting students into program students are also underway. Other innovative initiatives involve reinventing degrees, exploring modularized approaches, developing competency-based assessments, strategically focusing on cost-recovery graduate programs for niche markets, transitioning to Open Educational Resources (OER), improving course and program design, expanding delivery models, implementing online exams, and offering professional development opportunities. Innovation is expected to increase visibility of offerings and services, and to enhance AU's reputation.

DECISIONS

As the educational review process unfolded across the University, solutions to existing challenges were proposed, discussed, debated, and decided. Action plans were written by Deans, the Chairs of CDE and CWIKR, and by the OVPA. Some of the decisions were made and completed immediately, or are currently underway, and thus are not appropriate to be included in the Recommendations section. One example of these in each focus area is provided below, as an illustration of the types of assessments conducted and judgments made. Each example is indicative of attention to cost reduction and effectiveness in university business.

■ Academic Structure

On April 1, 2016, the Centre for Learning Design and Development (CLDD) was phased out as an Athabasca University department and learning designers were assigned to work directly in the Faculties. Embedding learning design expertise within the Faculties will improve the learner experience through enhanced quality of courses. The distribution of learning designers was intended to build capacity in the Faculties, to improve communication with course developers, to expedite course production, and to support learning outcomes assessment. The decision resulted in the disestablishment of two administrative positions.

■ Programs

There are overlaps between FB's Bachelor of Commerce and Bachelor of Management 4-year degrees, with both degrees having identical learning outcomes. FB will discontinue the 4-year Bachelor of Management degree. Resources will be reallocated to strengthen the 4-year Bachelor of Commerce degree producing a much stronger, encompassing degree. Savings will

be realized through reduced demand on internal resources. OVPA is working with Advanced Education to accelerate the approval process.

■ Courses

Approximately 50 courses were identified for closure across FHSS programs. These closures will reduce direct instructional and learning resources costs and increase capacity for other administrative duties in the Dean’s Office and academic support units across the University.

■ Academic Services

The OVPA is improving the program development and program review process with a view to expediting the approval process and enhancing external perceptions of quality at AU. Templates that align with CAQC guidelines are under development. A training manual and support will build capacity within Faculties.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This report presents 31 recommendations. To ensure that the overall goals of the Educational Review are met, the recommendations were categorized into immediate, medium term, and longer term time frames (see Action Plan in Appendix C). This will allow the OVPA and Deans to track and monitor immediate outcomes while evaluating progress towards medium term and longer term goals and targets. Immediate term actions will show results within a year. Medium term recommendations will be actioned within 1-2 years. Longer term recommendations emphasize institutional enhancement and strategic development and will materialize in 2-3 years, assuming adequate investment. A formal evaluation of the recommendations of the review will be conducted annually by the OVPA.

RECOMMENDATIONS – QUALITY

■ Immediate (0-12 months) Quality

1) Maintain/Capitalize on the University’s status as a CARI.

Academic Structure

Observations

While research was not specifically embraced as a focus area for the Educational Review, its critical importance to AU’s existing and future education landscape was raised in discussions across the organization. Research cannot be divorced from the educational enterprise. AU has a strong reputation for research leadership in technologically enhanced open and distance

education and for excellence in research in other disciplines including business, computing science, environment and sustainability, globalization and cultural studies, Indigenous education, nursing and health, labor and Canadian studies, space science and astronomy, and workplace and community education. Despite the University's diverse research profile, misconceptions about research [persist](#). The University must continue to highlight its diverse research enterprise and grow its research profile by cultivating research excellence and creating strong disciplinary, interdisciplinary and multi-sectoral collaborations, including productive academic-industry partnerships. Securing both capital and operational funds to validate our commitment to meeting our research profile is a challenge in the face of current fiscal constraints.

Expected Outcomes

Enhanced reputation of the University, its employees, students and graduates. Increased research output: grants, publications, and knowledge mobilization.

2) Review the relationship between IT and the Academy.

Academic Services

Observations

The challenge of lagging IT infrastructure is a University-wide academic issue. Hurdles such as an outdated version of the learning management system and a lack of IT resources to maintain and improve academic and administrative IT services threaten our ability to provide excellent programs and high levels of student service, support research, and maintain our reputation as an innovative online education provider. The expectation is that academic influence in IT decision making will improve service, but it is well understood that the University is not adequately funded for our operational needs.

Expected Outcomes

Increased academic influence in IT decision making; decreased response time for maintenance and other services; better alignment of IT to academic priorities while recognizing the needs of the administrative units.

3) Build capacity to support continuous improvement and increase accountability in program reviews and proposals within the Faculties.

Programs

Observations

Greater support and guidance from OVPA will lead to streamlined processes for both program reviews and program proposal development, with templates and follow-up that align with CAQC guidelines. New CAQC guidelines are expected that will increase scrutiny and influence of external perspectives on programs. The OVPA will investigate the use of a mentor to improve the success of program proposals with Advanced Education (AE) officials and will champion continued communication with AE.

Expected Outcomes

Facilitation of a cross-disciplinary perspective through shared expertise and equitable standards across the University. FGS input will be formally included in graduate review processes.

4) Engage in succession planning within Faculties and support succession planning initiatives for University leadership positions.

Academic Structure

<p>Observations</p> <p>Faculty succession plans are required to ensure that strong and visionary academic leadership is shared and sustained. Succession planning will assist in managing knowledge capital and change, developing leadership capacity at both Faculty and institutional levels, building effective teams, and retaining and deploying talent in a manner that helps the University reach its greatest potential.</p>
<p>Expected Outcomes</p> <p>Strong leadership; efficiency improvements; enhanced communication; employee satisfaction and retention; continuous delivery of programs; institutional learning in online pedagogies.</p>
<p>5) Reinvent and reinstate the Learning Conference as per the Student Services Review.</p> <p>Academic Services</p>
<p>Observations</p> <p>It is important to enhance relationships among faculty, tutors and Academic Experts (AEs) and those who support their work: the conference should be open to all, should provide presentations, workshops, keynotes, etc., and should be a true professional development opportunity. In keeping with the distributed nature of the AU community, virtual conference technology should be incorporated to include all interested in participating, regardless of geographic location. The nature of the reinvented conference will determine the cost, but investment is needed to improve the engagement of faculty, tutors, and AEs.</p>
<p>Expected Outcomes</p> <p>Improved engagement of faculty, tutors, and AEs; enhanced communication and knowledge sharing; employee satisfaction and retention.</p>
<p>6) Review, revise and meet service standards.</p> <p>Academic Services</p>
<p>Observations</p> <p>In surveys and association meetings, students regularly express their concerns about staff not meeting service standards, including marking turnaround times. It is essential to ensure that the standards are set and met in a way to increase enrolments, retain students, and ensure their successful completion of courses and programs.</p>
<p>Expected Outcomes</p> <p>Consistency in practice across the disciplines and departments; increased efficiency; decreased student complaints; increased enrolments; student retention; improved reputation.</p>

■ **Medium term (1-2 years) Quality**

<p>7) Reposition existing programs and develop new programs to meet the emerging needs of learners.</p> <p>Programs</p>
<p>Observations</p> <p>Managed closely, program redesign will ensure academic success and career preparation, and enhance the attraction for students through greater attention to online pedagogy and learning design. A greater degree of attention to market research and business case development in the preparation of program proposals is needed to ensure programs meet current and future social</p>

and educational needs. Further, a focus on learning outcomes will facilitate approvals by various regulatory bodies.

Expected Outcomes

Increased enrolment in new or reinvented programs that meet the changing needs of the market; building on program design strategies, higher conversion rates of visiting to program students; enhanced awareness of the relevance of AU programs; better graduate preparedness for the workforce.

8) Establish and share stronger processes and criteria for assessing course currency and relevance.

Courses

Observations

All Faculties identified processes for ongoing evaluation of course currency and relevance, and are working on updating their revision cycles. Sharing experiences and criteria will lead to enhanced consistency of course review practice across the disciplines. While there is university policy for evaluating print-based courses, it is out of date and does not describe current practices related to online courses. The *Course Review Policy* will be reviewed and revised in 2016-2017.

Expected Outcomes

Improved service integration and relationships; greater consistency of student experience.

9) Indigenize curricula through responsive academic programming, reflecting the *Calls to Action* (2015) of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.

Courses

Observations

Indigenous pedagogy includes ways of teaching and learning that encompass learning through observation, direct and lived experience, individualized instruction, oral tradition and storytelling, and shared social values. AU can demonstrate commitment to Indigenous success through action (for example, the provision of Indigenous Student Services, the dedicated intellectual and actual space for Indigenous knowledge, education and research, critical review of resources and text materials that generalize about Indigenous peoples, the inclusion of Indigenous knowledge in course development, the inclusion of Indigenous peoples in course construction and review of courses as they pertain to Indigenous populations, and the successful Learning Communities project). In line with this approach, new culturally appropriate courses are under consideration. Initiatives will require discussions with government partners to improve Internet connectivity to ensure that Indigenous peoples in rural and northern communities have access to reliable and affordable infrastructure that supports broadband requirements of online courses.

Expected Outcomes

Increased Indigenous enrolment and improved retention and success of Indigenous learners' supports the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's reconciliation efforts by exposing non-Indigenous students to the realities, histories, cultures, and beliefs of Indigenous peoples in Canada.

■ Longer term (2+ years) **Quality**

10) Infuse Indigenous knowledge and perspectives into the structural layers of the University to create a more inclusive environment, reflecting the *Calls to Action (2015)* of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.

Academic Structure

Observations

An Indigenous Advisory Council should be established to advise the AU President on First Nations, Métis and Inuit academic and community matters. By fostering an inclusive environment that values and respects Indigenous ways of knowing and learning, AU will increase the potential for access and success of Indigenous students.

Expected Outcomes

Increased awareness within the University about the importance of facilitating access and success for Indigenous students; greater participation and success of Indigenous students; enhanced Indigenous community development, engagement, and empowerment.

RECOMMENDATIONS - EFFICIENCY AND EFFECTIVENESS

■ Immediate (0-12 months) **Efficiency and Effectiveness**

11) Fully embrace Student Relationship Management (SRM) technology when it is available.

Academic Services

Observations

SRM technology provides us with the opportunity to offer consistent service by establishing and adopting common business processes across departments, and by increasing communication throughout the university community. Collection of meaningful data from SRM systems enables us to focus on continuous improvement in the areas of student services, recruitment, and process improvement, and provides us with reliable information to make informed business decisions.

Expected Outcomes

Improved student service across the University; increased engagement with prospective and current students; increased conversion of prospects into students; increased consistency and transparency of services; reduced overhead costs (by improving business processes); additional options for learning analytics.

12) Affirm decanal responsibility to reflect AU's governance structure.

Academic Structure

Observations

Deans are responsible for the overall leadership and governance of their respective Faculty in accordance with the provisions of the *Post-secondary Learning Act (PSLA)*. University policies and procedures, collective agreements, job descriptions, and reporting relationships require updating to reflect the PSLA.

<p>Expected Outcomes Enhanced communication flow; increased engagement and awareness among employees of university priorities and policies; clear lines of accountability; clarity in role description.</p>
<p>13) Strategically reinvent or suspend underperforming programs. Programs</p>
<p>Observations As demand for programs changes over time, Faculties will identify programs that are underperforming and strategically reinvent, reconfigure, or suspend them. In support of the systematic allocation and reallocation of resources, the Deans have identified programs that require further scrutiny. Faculties are committed to examining the viability of majors, minors, certificates, and diplomas with low application and completion rates. Cost reductions generated by suspending underperforming programs are expected to provide the investment needed for reinvention.</p>
<p>Expected Outcomes Supports integrated academic planning and budgeting; improved allocation of resources to programs with better enrolment and revenue potential.</p>
<p>14) Strategically suspend underperforming courses. Courses</p>
<p>Observations Extending recommendation 8 into the future, and in response to recent enrolment and program application trends, all Faculties, and CDE and CWIKR have completed comprehensive course inventories. Faculties and CDE and CWIKR are committed to annual reviews of course performance to ensure viability. The <i>Course Review Policy</i> will be revised in 2016-2017 to guide the annual course review process. The <i>Course Outlines Policy</i> will be revised in the same time frame.</p>
<p>Expected Outcomes Improved quality assurance; increased efficiency; reduced costs; increased clarity for students through consistent descriptions of courses.</p>
<p>15) Complete the 2009 recommendation of the Academic Council Ad Hoc Academic Structure Review Committee (2007-2011) to review the Faculty structure within two years. Academic Structure</p>
<p>Observations Review of faculty structure not completed in 2011, as directed by Academic Council (now known as General Faculties Council).</p>
<p>Expected Outcomes Completing the faculty structure review will clarify roles and responsibilities</p>
<p>16) Review the implications of renaming academic units within the Faculties. Academic Structure</p>
<p>Observations Currently, academic units are called Centres, Schools, and Departments. Consistent with nomenclature currently used in leading post-secondary institutions across North America, the University will consider repositioning Centres within Faculties as Schools or Departments.</p>

<p>Expected Outcomes Enhanced clarity of unit roles and structures; consistent nomenclature that aligns with other institutions.</p>
<p>17) Support the review of student services currently underway by the Associate Vice President, Student and Academic Services and the implementation of recommendations. <i>Academic Services</i></p>
<p>Observations The Student Services Review, outlined in Appendix D, is intended to identify and prioritize student services improvements that will benefit undergraduate and graduate students.</p>
<p>Expected Outcomes Improved student services; concerns expressed by students in the NSSE Survey (2014) and the Biennial Undergraduate Student Experience Survey (2015) will be addressed.</p>
<p>18) Coordinate the administration of student awards. <i>Academic Services</i></p>
<p>Observations Currently, the Research Centre, FGS, and the Office of the Registrar administer student-focused research funds. This leads to confusion for students. The plan is to identify and implement more efficient ways to administer student awards.</p>
<p>Expected Outcomes Reduced delays in administering awards; reduced confusion for students; reduced duplication of administrative effort.</p>
<p>19) Support efforts to enhance financial reporting capacity. <i>Academic Services</i></p>
<p>Observations Responsibility centered management (RCM) fosters productivity and innovation and supports integrated academic planning and budgeting. Academic leaders are committed to implementation but they also recognize that successful implementation will require an adequately sized and technically skilled group of financial experts. Currently, implementation obstacles limit financial reporting capacity. Investment is needed to ensure access to accurate and timely budget information that supports transitioning to an RCM model.</p>
<p>Expected Outcomes Enhanced collaboration and understanding between academic and administrative units; greater financial literacy and budget accountability at the senior academic level; increased clarity and accuracy of management reporting on financial matters; provision of relevant data for decision-making; integrated planning.</p>
<p>20) Develop criteria and process for cross-listing of courses. <i>Courses</i></p>
<p>Observations The cross-listing of courses across programs has historically been seen as a way to increase enrolment through enhanced student awareness of options available to them. Data from the Office of Institutional Studies indicate minimal uptake of these cross-listed courses. Removing the cross-listings will reduce administrative, instructional, technical, and other support work associated with course maintenance for duplicate courses.</p>

<p>Expected Outcomes More efficient use of administrative, instructional, technical and support resources; reduced duplication.</p>
<p>21) Collaborate and build capacity with Advancement in needs analysis and business planning initiatives. Academic Services</p>
<p>Observations Advancement should continue to maintain strong and collaborative relationships with the Deans to ensure that planning and development of communications materials support the advancement objectives of Faculties. In addition, academic quality and financial considerations must be assessed to ensure and to document in convincing business cases that academic partnerships are appropriate and sustainable. Advancement and Deans will work together to identify and take advantage of opportunities that are consistent with the academic plans and priorities of Faculties.</p>
<p>Expected Outcomes Increased recruitment; enhanced retention; support for Strategic Enrolment Management initiatives; enhanced employee relationships.</p>

■ **Medium term (1-2 years) Efficiency and Effectiveness**

<p>22) Align teaching loads with AU's priorities and budget realities. Courses</p>
<p>Observations Faculty workloads within and across Faculties vary considerably. There are inequities in tenured and tenure-track faculty workloads, in academic coordinator and professional workloads, and in workloads associated with full-time equivalents allocated to part-time term academic appointments. The general imbalance of workloads across the professoriate poses difficulties with annual faculty performance assessments and accreditation initiatives, impacts instructional engagement with students, influences marking turnaround time and impacts research productivity.</p>
<p>Expected Outcomes Improved balance and equity in teaching loads for instructional staff; enhanced employee motivation and satisfaction; improved student service in some cases.</p>
<p>23) Clearly define the roles of Academics, Chairs, Associate Deans, Program Directors, Academic Coordinators, Academic Experts, and Tutors. Academic Structure</p>
<p>Observations Academic staff role descriptions are inconsistent across the Faculties. Standard and coherent role profiles will clarify administrative duties and processes. This, in turn, will help role holders understand reporting structures and relationships among the different academic roles, as well as relationships between academic roles and the roles of non-academic services.</p>
<p>Expected Outcomes</p>

Enhanced clarity and efficiency; improved workflow; better role clarity supports relationship-building with external organizations, such as employers and other universities and colleges.

24) Integrate/consolidate graduate research methods courses across the University.

Courses

Observations

The University currently offers over 25 graduate research and statistics courses that range from introductory to advanced levels. It may be possible to streamline the offerings and to thereby enhance the variety of methodologies available to AU students and faculty.

Expected Outcomes

Reduced duplication; improved support for interdisciplinarity.

25) Enhance services offered by Institutional Studies.

Academic Services

Observations

There is a need for additional and enhanced reporting and analysis to support planning and to improve institutional effectiveness. Specific needs include: improved interactive and self-serve data options (e.g. dashboards/ Key Performance Indicators (KPI's)), market analysis and environmental scanning, learning analytic tools, data visualization tools, curriculum mapping software etc. to support learning outcomes assessment, strategic enrolment plans, annual and other reports. The OVPA and Institutional Studies will collaborate to improve capacity in these areas.

Expected Outcomes

Improved accuracy of data; timely reporting; better. Ongoing mapping of curricula to learning outcomes may help focus academic courses and programs and enhance external reporting.

■ **Longer term (2 + years) Efficiency and Effectiveness**

26) Investigate shared services between the Research Centre and FGS.

Academic Structure

Observations

Submissions to the *Presidential Task Force Report on Sustainability* and a report commissioned by FGS point to possibilities for alignment between FGS and the Research Centre. Both groups are committed to further investigation. It may be possible to identify new efficiencies, cost savings, and revenue streams.

Expected Outcomes

Improved efficiency and effectiveness of processes in both units; opportunities for innovation; better coordination of resources and processes.

RECOMMENDATIONS - INNOVATION

■ Immediate (0-12 months) Innovation

27) Enhance and share use of learning design, innovative pedagogy, and leading practice online teaching tools.
Courses
Observations Building on the success of learning design approaches to course development, proactively extend this expertise throughout the University. Students' diverse learning preferences and needs for interaction and feedback can be met by optimizing the use of available, pedagogically sound technology. A cross Faculty community of practice will explore options for use of new technology and promising new instructional practices including Universal Design for Learning (UDL), and will build capacity and share successful innovations across the academy. Some examples include the use of OER, enriched visual design, engaging media content, mobile learning, and learning analytics. Academic leaders encourage the allocation of resources to provide opportunities for and space to trial innovations.
Expected Outcomes Increased learner and instructor engagement; increased awareness of learning needs of students; improved course design practice through learning analytics; advanced accessibility through UDL; enhanced online learning development skills; increased student retention (success, satisfaction, persistence); reduced dropout rates; increased student perceptions of instructional service; ultimately, increased academic credibility.
28) Adopt open educational resources (OER) as appropriate to enhance quality of content and learning experience while reducing cost.
Courses
Observations This recommendation builds on recommendation 27. AU's early adoption of OER is ground breaking. Building on their early experiences building, adopting, and sharing OER, faculty members are discontinuing their association with publishers, whose control of content challenges course production cycles and whose regular price increases compromise affordability for students and the University. Successful funding proposals through the Alberta OER Initiative will provide efficiencies and new opportunities in the long term. At the same time, AU is recognized externally as an innovator and as a contributor to freely accessible knowledge available worldwide. Academic leaders encourage the development of a university-wide platform for cataloguing and hosting AU-developed OER.
Expected Outcomes Reduced cost to AU, to students and to taxpayers; reduced course production time; increased reputation for innovation; potentially increased accessibility to students and, ultimately, increased student satisfaction through better quality courses.

■ **Medium term (1-2 years) Innovation**

29) Work with government to lift the new program development moratorium.

Programs

Observations

There are currently two new program proposals on hold at the government level and three in advanced stages of development. Revenue generation depends on the approval of additional programs. AU must work with government to have the moratorium lifted as soon as AU's sustainability plan is in place. Delayed approval of new programs hampers the academic fulfillment of degree offerings and reduces the perception of quality, particularly in graduate programs. Deferred approval poses significant impediments for researchers, who rely on graduate students to supervise and help train highly qualified personnel for research projects. Faculties report that surveys and environmental scans show great demand for programs that align with our Strategic University Plan, research institutes, and other offerings. Current limitations on new program development inhibit AU's ability to respond to dynamic and changing demand for programs, impede its capacity to compete within the post-secondary sector, and introduce barriers to access for AU students.

Expected Outcomes

Attract students in new markets; increased potential for faculty to receive Tri-council funding; increased AU allotment for Tri-council funding for students; enhanced credibility for AU; increased enrolments: greater funding opportunities are a recruitment incentive for graduate students.

■ **Longer term (2 + years) Innovation**

30) Increase institutional focus on graduate credentials.

Programs

Observations

Post-secondary institutions worldwide are seeing a gradual shift in enrolment and a plateauing of demand for undergraduate programs. Real demand growth is being realized in graduate programs. To respond to and offset the anticipated decrease in undergraduate program demand, Faculties are exploring opportunities to investigate the market potential for graduate programs in under-served areas. Go-forward strategies will focus on new program initiatives and other efforts to expand enrolment, including offering professional development courses and non-credit, cost-recovery credentials. As well there will be a focus on integration of undergraduate and graduate services to address the lack of alignment in policies and procedures, and to enhance institutional awareness of the importance of graduate programs. As these initiatives will require significant investment, they are constrained by current financial challenges. They may also increase academic workloads, which may stretch the capacity of academic staff.

Expected Outcomes

New revenue streams; increased research; will help in attracting faculty with strong potential or who possess strong research programs; more university-industry partnerships; enhanced visibility and reputation.

31) Explore cross-Faculty initiatives.

Programs

Observations

Multi-disciplinary approaches to learning are attracting new populations of students in the post-secondary sector worldwide. There may be opportunities for AU to capture new markets through the development and offering of cross-Faculty programs at both graduate and undergraduate levels. These should be fully researched cost-recovery initiatives, developed with full business cases.

Expected Outcomes

New revenue streams; multi-disciplinary experience in education will help prepare students for a multi-disciplinary work environment.

CONCLUSION – TOWARDS A VISION FOR THE FUTURE

AU’s academic leadership has conducted a systematic and comprehensive review of *academic structure, programs, courses and services*, as directed by the President's Task Force Report on Sustainability. The Educational Review described in this report focused on the future of learning at AU and thus exceeded the stated expectations of the Task Force for an “education inventory”.

The Educational Review contributes three key outcomes to the discussion of sustainability at AU. First, the review process included wide and deep engagement with faculty and staff across the University. Second, the review assessed all AU offerings with a view to recommending improvements to the entire academic enterprise. Third, the review affirms both the primacy of the Academy in university decision-making and the criticality of attending to efficient and effective business practices in all programs and services.

With respect to *engagement*, active participation characterized the discussions and debates that were generated around the four focus areas. Engagement establishes a tone and foundation for the follow-up conversations that will be needed as the University moves towards its vision for the future, and negotiates that vision with the Government of Alberta. The involvement of so many individuals across the academic division has contributed a sense of community and purpose that is welcome in a distributed work environment. The review process affirms the benefit of developing specific strategies for the deliberate ongoing commitment of all members of the university community to quality enhancements in and understanding of academic matters. A challenging topic that drives the conversation, such as sustainability, may successfully help address climate issues such as disengagement and scepticism. Creating and maintaining collegial relationships will enable AU to achieve its vision and goals through innovative and supportive people practices. Executive and management

leadership that supports collaboration with and engagement of faculty members in university business will be rewarded with enhanced work satisfaction and productivity. Purposeful leadership development and succession planning will support the overall business goals of continuous improvement and continuity.

Recommendations proposed as a result of the Educational Review are focused on the future but grounded in the mission and mandate of Athabasca University. Using a multi-method approach informed by data on a number of measures including quality, enrolment, persistence, student experience and satisfaction, the review offers an updated view of what AU is currently. The development of an Academic Plan that will follow this review will help define what AU aspires to be. Recommendations from the review include cost cutting and cost containment measures that will improve *quality*, increase *efficiency and effectiveness*, and lead to *innovations* in teaching and learning. Thirty-one recommendations are offered at the institutional level in this report. They build on and emerge from the individual actions identified within the Faculties, CDE and CWIKR. An annual evaluation will monitor progress and report results.

Recommendations presume a solid financial foundation that will support academic structure, programs and services that meet or exceed the needs of the learners of the future. All recommendations proceed from the goal of enhancing students' educational experience at AU. Several of the strategies proposed are already underway at the individual Faculty level: underperforming programs are being realigned, reinvented or removed from inventory. Underperforming courses will be closed or redesigned. Timelines of one to three years were assigned to university-wide strategies, and individual Faculties have established action plans for their areas of responsibility with immediate, medium term and longer term time frames. Academic leaders are committed to reinvesting the savings from alignment of programs, reduction of courses and improvements in services into innovations that will generate revenue and enhance AU sustainability. The two areas with the greatest potential for revenue generation are new partnerships and new programs. Current negotiations with private sector and non-governmental organizations are promising. Based on our experience with existing partnerships, these opportunities could attract students looking to enhance their credentials for career progression or transfer. More and more, these partnerships are pursuing professional development and graduate programs, which further requires better integration of AU services at both graduate and undergraduate levels. Due to the Advanced Education moratorium on new program development, AU is not in a position to provide all the requested graduate credentials. Academic leaders urge the Ministry to lift the restrictions and allow AU to develop and provide new graduate education that is in line with business and social needs of twenty-first century learners.

The review confirms the *importance of the Academy* in university business, suggesting that better communication and collaboration across the divisions of the University will lead to sustainability. Focused attention on the integration of academic planning and budgeting is anticipated as a result of the move to RCM, which recognizes decanal authority. Priority setting activities for budget allocations, technology implementations, policy development and other

university activities must involve Deans as academic leaders in order to align responsibility with accountability. Further clarity in these matters will improve university governance as well.

During the Educational Review, Deans exercised their leadership in many ways: as individuals managing large numbers of staff and students in their Faculties, and as a group working together to address long-standing AU problems. The review process confirms the value of their collaborative contributions. These recommendations are the product of their commitment to the University and its mission.

The intended goal of the Educational Review was to provide a strategic review of the Academy, thus contributing to the overall university-wide academic sustainability plan. The Educational Review Report incorporates a perspective that is transformative, clarifies academic vision, proposes strategies to enhance student experience, and makes contributions to AU's long-term sustainability.

APPENDIX A

EDUCATIONAL REVIEW TERMS OF REFERENCE



**Athabasca
University**

**Office of the Vice President Academic
Educational Review 2015-2016
Terms of Reference**

Background

At a Special Meeting of the Athabasca University Board of Governors on February 26, 2015, a task force was struck to review and consider options for the future sustainability of the University. The report, which was submitted to the Ministry of Innovation and Advanced Education on June 1, 2015, outlined four options, one of which focuses on *“efficiency and effectiveness in course delivery and business practices.”* In its conclusion, the report highlights the necessity for “[a]n education review or inventory... led by the faculties and with advice from General Faculties Council.”

Planning

Planning meetings began in June 2015, when the Vice President, Academic, the Associate Vice President, Student and Academic Services, and the Director, Academic Planning and Priorities, met to develop a possible plan for the educational review of courses, programs and services. The plan was presented to the Deans for further elaboration. Following a high level of engagement in the discussions, a strong consensus has emerged.

Purpose

The Educational Review will serve as the initial roadmap for the journey to academic excellence. The University stands on the threshold of change. Challenges must be identified and opportunities must be explored as we confirm and define the future of Athabasca University. The review is seen as a positive and enthusiastic initiative, leading to outcomes that will support the development of a university-wide Academic Plan. The Plan will be bold and transformative, leading to actions that clarify the academic vision, enhance the student experience, and contribute to the long-term sustainability of Athabasca University.

Process

The Deans will lead the Educational Review, with direction from the Vice President, Academic (interim). Each Faculty will be responsible for completing its own review. The Vice President, Academic will manage the review of the Centre for Distance Education and the Centre for World Indigenous Knowledge and Research. The review will be supported by staff in the Office of the Vice President, Academic.

The review will align with the business practices and academic support services efficiency and effectiveness review. It will also align with, and be informed by, responsibility-centred management budget planning currently under way. Coordinating and aligning these initiatives will result in synergies and quality outcomes.

Scope

The review will include, but not be limited to, an assessment of academic structure, courses, programs, and academic services.

Review	Assess
Academic structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Faculties and Centres and reporting relationships ▪ Role and responsibilities of Academics ▪ Role and responsibilities of Chairs ▪ Role and responsibilities of Deans ▪ Role and responsibilities of Associate Deans ▪ Role and responsibilities of Program Directors ▪ Role and responsibilities of Academic Coordinators ▪ Role and responsibilities of Academic Experts and Tutors ▪ Disciplinary alignment, if appropriate
Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Rationalization of programs ▪ Program reviews ▪ Explore impacts of limitations on program development ▪ Demand
Courses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Currency ▪ Revision plans and frequency ▪ Demand ▪ Faculty workloads ▪ Student evaluations ▪ Performance management
Academic Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Academic services offered in the Faculties ▪ Program delivery ▪ Marketing and communications

Guiding Principles

The Review will be guided by the following principles:

- 1) Each Faculty will develop its own **process** for analysis and decision-making.
- 2) The review process will build on Faculty strengths and focus on enhancing the **quality of the learning environment for our students**.
- 3) In the ever more competitive environment and with growing fiscal constraints, the review will consider **reducing cost** and **increasing efficiency**, while focusing on **academic quality and excellence**.
- 4) To ensure an **efficient and comprehensive review**, the process will align with and build on existing **strategic plans** and **accreditation reviews** within the Faculties.
- 5) The process will be **data-driven** to ensure that the review is **transparent and evidence-based**. Data will be gathered from various sources.

Report

The Deans will develop an action plan. The report, which may include recommendations and decisions, will be submitted to General Faculties Council, the President, and executive of the

University, and shared with the Board of Governors in the Spring 2016. Work on an Academic Plan will commence shortly thereafter.

APPENDIX B

EDUCATIONAL REVIEW – SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS

Date	Retreat	FB	FGS	FHD	FHSS	FST	CDE	CWIKR	OVPA	Deans' Committee	Governance
June 2015									●	●	
July 2015											
Aug 2015										●	
Sept 2015	●●			●	●					●	
Oct 2015		●		●●●	●	●		●			
Nov 2015	●	●●			●		●	●●	●	●	●●●
Dec 2015		●●			●		●				●
Jan 2016	●	●		●●	●●●		●	●	●●●●		●
Feb 2016	●●	●●	●●		●●●●	●●●	●●●	●●●	●		
Mar 2016	●●				●●●●	●●	●●		●●●●		
April 2016	●●		●	●	●●		●●	●●	●●●●●●		
Total	8	10	3	7	17	6	10	9	20	4	5
Total – 99 meetings											
● Indicates meeting											
FB – The Faculty of Business											
FGS – The Faculty of Graduate Studies											
FHD – The Faculty of Health Disciplines											
FHSS – The Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences											
FST – Faculty of Science and Technology											
CDE – Centre for Distance Education											
CWIKR – Centre for World Indigenous Knowledge and Research											
OVPA – Office of the Vice President, Academic											

APPENDIX C

ACTION PLAN

■ Immediate (0-12 months)

#	Recommendation	Theme	Focus Area
1	Maintain/Capitalize on the University's status as a CARI.	Quality	Academic Structure
2	Review the relationship between IT and the Academy.	Quality	Academic Services
3	Build capacity to support continuous improvement and increase accountability in program reviews and proposals within the Faculties.	Quality	Programs
4	Engage in succession planning within Faculties and support succession planning initiatives for University leadership positions.	Quality	Academic Structure
5	Reinvent and reinstate the Learning Conference as per the Student Services Review.	Quality	Academic Services
6	Review, revise and meet service standards.	Quality	Academic Services
11	Fully embrace Student Relationship Management (SRM) technology when it is available.	Efficiency and Effectiveness	Academic Services
12	Affirm decanal responsibility to reflect AU's governance structure.	Efficiency and Effectiveness	Academic Structure
13	Strategically reinvent or suspend underperforming programs.	Efficiency and Effectiveness	Programs
14	Strategically suspend underperforming courses.	Efficiency and Effectiveness	Courses
15	Complete the recommendation of the Academic Council Ad Hoc Academic Structure Review Committee (2007-2011) to review the Faculty structure within two years.	Efficiency and Effectiveness	Academic Structure
16	Review the implications of renaming academic units within the Faculties.	Efficiency and Effectiveness	Academic Structure
17	Support the review of student services currently underway by the Associate Vice President, Student and Academic Services and the implementation of recommendations.	Efficiency and Effectiveness	Academic Services
18	Coordinate the administration of student awards.	Efficiency and Effectiveness	Academic Services

19	Support efforts to enhance financial reporting capacity.	Efficiency and Effectiveness	Academic Services
20	Develop criteria and process for cross-listing of courses.	Efficiency and Effectiveness	Courses
21	Collaborate and build capacity with Advancement in needs analysis and business planning initiatives.	Efficiency and Effectiveness	Academic Services
27	Enhance and share use of learning design, innovative pedagogy, and leading practice online teaching tools.	Innovation	Courses
28	Adopt open educational resources (OER) as appropriate to enhance quality of content and learning experience while reducing cost.	Innovation	Courses

■ **Medium term (1-2 years)**

#	Recommendation	Theme	Focus Area
7	Reposition existing programs and develop new programs to meet the emerging needs of learners.	Quality	Programs
8	Establish and share stronger processes and criteria for assessing course currency and relevance.	Quality	Courses
9	Indigenize curricula through responsive academic programming, reflecting the Calls to Action (2015) of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.	Quality	Courses
22	Align teaching loads with AU's priorities and budget realities.	Efficiency and Effectiveness	Courses
23	Clearly define the roles of Academics, Chairs, Associate Deans, Program Directors, Academic Coordinators, Academic Experts, and Tutors.	Efficiency and Effectiveness	Academic Structure
24	Integrate/consolidate graduate research methods courses across the University.	Efficiency and Effectiveness	Courses
25	Enhance services offered by Institutional Studies.	Efficiency and Effectiveness	Academic Services
29	Work with government to lift the new program development moratorium.	Innovation	Programs

■ Longer term (2+ years)

#	Recommendation	Theme	Focus Area
10	Infuse Indigenous knowledge and perspectives into the structural layers of the University to create a more inclusive environment, reflecting the Calls to Action (2015) of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.	Quality	Academic Structure
26	Investigate shared services between the Research Centre and FGS.	Efficiency and Effectiveness	Academic Structure
30	Increase institutional focus on graduate credentials.	Innovation	Programs
31	Explore cross-Faculty initiatives.	Innovation	Programs

APPENDIX D

STUDENT SERVICES REVIEW

A student service review is in progress under the direction of the Associate Vice President, Student and Academic Services. This review reflects a renewed focus on the student experience and student progression at AU.

■ Student Service Goals

The review begins from the objectives that are to be met in the student service portfolio. An initial starting point for these goals is listed below and will be refined through the review process.

- student progression/retention
- student success
- creation of “nearness”
- quality and consistency of experience
- efficiency

■ Data and Inputs

To date, information has been gathered from a variety of sources, as documented below. It is further expected that the Grant Thornton report will feed into the review.

- Graduate Outcomes Survey, if available.
- Student Experience Survey
- NSSE
- course evaluation data
- student issues
- internal review and metrics
- stakeholder input and feedback

■ Student Service Change Possibilities

Because the review is in progress, the specific changes that will be implemented are not yet final. Nevertheless, there are a number of student service projects that are under consideration (below). Some of these projects have been raised in various forums as possibilities, others are already in progress. It is fully expected that, through the review process, this list will be expanded and changed. Importantly, the review process will provide a prioritization and plan to move forward in an intentional way based on the goals and objectives set out.

■ Portfolio-Wide

- streamlining navigation/one-stop service
- reviewing our service standards: “Expect the Best”
- student orientation

- student service core competencies
- business continuity planning
- student service dashboard
- implement SRM for student service improvement

■ **Learner Support Services**

- accessibility review and revision of ASD policies
- advising initiatives to increase call outs to students; for example,
 - students who have enrolled in a course but not completed any credits within certain period of time
 - students who have extra-to-degree credits
- case management

■ **Learning Services Tutorial**

- reinstitute Learning Conference
- strengthen coordination with HR and faculties

■ **Learning Resources**

- Learning Resource Provision review

■ **Office of the Registrar**

- online invigilation pilot
- Student Financial Aid business process redesign
- automate manual forms and processes
- implement ASRP student
- implement Gradebook
- Register Today, Start Tomorrow
- Extensions to last day of course contact.

■ **Centre for Learning Accreditation**

- decrease student time to completion of PLAR process through increased self-service and greater focus on timelines

■ **Library and Scholarly Resources**

- expand and refine successful webinar series through new topic offerings and alternate dates and times
- leverage SRM to increase student outreach

■ **General Timelines**

May-June 2016	Student Service Management Team Retreat and Planning
July-August 2016	Creation of Student Service Review Draft
Fall 2016	Consultation and Input through Athabasca University governance
January 2017	Implementation

APPENDIX E

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