

# Final Assessment Report

## Educational Studies

### Graduate and Undergraduate Programs (reviewed 2019-20)

#### A. Summary

1. The Department's Self Study was considered and approved by the Senate Academic Review Committee on January 21, 2020.
2. The Review Committee consisted of two external reviewers: Qiang Zha (York University) and David Mandzuk (University of Manitoba) and one internal reviewer, Alex Nikitkov (Brock University).
3. The site visit occurred on March 10-12, 2020.
4. The Reviewers' Report was received on April 19, 2020.
5. The Senate Graduate Studies Committee response was received on April 23, 2020.
6. The Senate Undergraduate Program Committee response was received on April 28, 2020.
7. The Department response was received on June 3, 2020.
8. The Dean of Graduate Studies response was received on June 17, 2020.
9. The Dean of Education response was received on June 18, 2020.

This review was conducted under the terms and conditions of the IQAP approved by Senate on May 25, 2016.

## Program Outcome Categories:

Based on their knowledge of the discipline, the content of the Self-Study and the interviews conducted during the site visit, the Review Committee gave the programs the following Outcome Categories:

Program(s)	Excellent Quality	Good Quality	Good Quality with Concerns	Non-Viable
MEd	x			
MEd ISP		x		
MPCE - Masters Preparation Certificate in Education	x			
BECE - Bachelor of Early Childhood Education	x			

## Executive Summary:

The Reviewers wrote that they:

learned about four very successful programs that are meeting the needs of different groups of students and taught by a cadre of very committed and qualified faculty members. We also found that the programs are also supported by a team of dedicated support staff members who are clearly service oriented and who support students both academically and socially. We found that each of the programs was of a high academic quality and taught by faculty members and instructors with a wide range of scholarly and practical expertise. Although the programs were found to be strong and well-conceptualized, the review team has made a number of observations and recommendations including: a) that the department conduct an analysis of the effectiveness of the systems that are intended to support those programs, b) that the department conduct an analysis of the number and preparation of the TAs that are hired to support students in those programs, and c) that the department consider exploring new ways to integrate domestic and international students, particularly in the M.Ed, and M.Ed.ISP programs. Generally speaking, the Department of Educational Studies at Brock University should be proud of the quality of programming that is currently provided to students.

## B. Strengths of the Program

The reviewers noted the following strengths:

### **M.Ed. program:**

- The M.Ed. program offered by Brock University has flexible pathways to completion (thesis/course-based) that aim to meet the diverse needs of Brock students.
- The faculty members who we spoke to seemed committed and well qualified, supportive and cohesive as a faculty team with particularly strong leadership from the Chair of the department.
- There appears to be some ability for M.Ed. students to cross into the ISP stream.
- There are steady offerings of research methods courses with a robust internal capacity to teach them.
- There are broad research methodologies represented in the research courses taught.
- There is strong student demand for the program.
- We were impressed by the clear and explicit curriculum mapping of the M. Ed. program - there are degree level expectations and outcomes for every course, including assessment and delivery methods.
- According to GPSS results, a very high percentage of students (90%) reported that they would recommend the program to others, which speaks to the program's strong reputation.

### **M.Ed. ISP program:**

- There appears to be a high degree of academic and social support provided for students by faculty members.
- There is strong student demand for the program, and it appears to be filling a clear market niche. We were told that the program receives approx. 300 applications, and only 70 are admitted per year so the demand appears to exceed capacity.
- Even though this is a separate pathway from the regular M. Ed program, there appear to be some efforts to integrate students between the two streams (M. Ed. and M. Ed. ISP).
- We were told that there is no differentiation of instructional staff for this program, and many tenured and tenure-track people teach in the program and appear to enjoy it.
- We were told that the pacing of lessons is adapted for the ISP audience, and language supports are built in.
- The program appears to be well conceptualized and operationalized by all those teaching in the program.
- There appears to be no differentiation between the two programs from a quality assurance perspective.
- Faculty have thought long and hard about the cohort model used for this program. They believe that it supports student achievement and a sense of belonging and enables faculty to provide the appropriate supports and proper pacing of material.

**MPCE (Masters Preparation Certificate in Education):**

- We found this program to be interesting and believe that it is somewhat unique as it captures a specific audience and market niche that is not addressed by any other programs.
- This program serves as somewhat of a 'feeder' to other Brock programs, but it also exposes students to a wide range of institutions and programs in the Ontario higher ed. context.
- Improvements have been made to allow for transfer credit to the M. Ed. ISP's next admission cycle and these improvements have been made based on student feedback and concerns. The reviewers found this to be a positive element of the program.
- A variety of academic, cultural, and prep activities are built into the program to better acquaint students with the Ontario high ed. context. We found this to be a strength of this program.
- The program is self-supporting.
- It appears to be very student-centred.

**BECE (Bachelor of Early Childhood Education):**

- The reviewers believe that BECE is a truly innovative pathway program, linking colleges and college programs in Early Childhood Education with Brock University.
- We see this program as being very forward-thinking and instrumental in raising the standards for early childhood education in the province as it allows college diploma students to transfer to a university degree program.
- Currently, there is little competition in the province for this kind of program.
- Successful strategic planning shows that the Faculty had a vision to create a program that is unique in the province.
- A research component has now been introduced so that there is a better balance of theory and practice than it was earlier which further reinforces the uniqueness of this program.
- The program also opened its doors to international students with experience in early childhood education in the past few years by dropping barriers to them to be certified with the ECE College. We believe that this is evidence that the program is working towards having graduates that possess future-ready knowledge and competencies. (p. 10 self-study)

## C. Opportunities for Improvement and Enhancement

### Recommendation #1

Review the effectiveness of Brock DB (the current student information system) and Workday (the relatively new finance system) and address the challenges that staff members who use these systems are facing.

The Department stated:

While we can continue to inform those who work with the modification of the various systems about our issues, this is beyond the Department's capacity to resolve.

The Dean of Education responded:

I support the Department's response to all recommendations.

The Dean of Graduate Studies responded:

While this is strictly speaking beyond the purview of the Dean, FGS [Faculty of Graduate Studies], I support moves to efficiencies obtained through greater automation. My understanding is that units need to make requests to ITS for changes to Brock DB.

### ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers the recommendation to be not accepted, as a review of the effectiveness of Brock dB and Workday lies outside of its jurisdiction. The Committee recognizes the importance of addressing the challenges that staff are facing and encourages the Department to work through normal challenges of advocacy to bring this to the attention of the Offices of the Registrar and Financial Services.

### Implementation Plan

Recommendation not accepted.

## Recommendation #2

Review the M Ed. ISP program for the possibility of increasing enrolment. Perhaps new strategies can be found to address faculty concerns about workload and capacity while still bringing in new revenue for the Faculty.

The Department stated:

Ongoing meetings of the MEd ISP Steering committee, which include instructors and staff, continue to explore possibilities of expansion in a sustainable way that ensures the integrity and quality of program delivery as well as exceptional student experience. Changes have been implemented since the timeframe captured by the self-study.

The Senate Graduate Studies Committee (SGSC) responded:

This need for increased support for International Master's students has been identified previously by SGSC and Graduate Council.

The Dean of Education responded:

- It is my view that we can seek to expand the M.Ed. ISP by focusing on "in Canada" international students and, potentially, considering more alternate delivery platforms.
- The M.Ed. ISP has identified innovative strategies to expand "pathways" to and within the ISP that do not jeopardize our commitment to quality education and student success.
- The M.Ed. ISP may wish to examine how some elements of the program may be adapted to remote delivery prior to their transition to Canada, thereby enhancing student engagement and retention.

The Dean of Graduate Studies responded:

Workload is an issue that is the purview of the Dean of the Faculty of Education. However, I underscore the need to ensure that international students require excellent supports.

## ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers the recommendation to review the possibility of increasing enrolment in the MEd ISP program to be accepted for consideration. The Committee expects that the Department will work with the Dean to develop strategies for increasing enrolment while minimizing negative impacts on workload and capacity. ARC recognizes that workload is subject to the provisions of the Collective Agreement.

**Implementation Plan (1<sup>st</sup> Priority)**

Responsible for approving:	Department
Responsible for resources:	Department
Responsible for implementation:	Department
Timeline:	Dean of Education to report by the end of academic year 2020/21

### Recommendation #3

Review the fields of specialization in the department to better reflect the areas of expertise of faculty members and the changing needs of students.

The Department stated:

The reviewers' observations and recommendations are well-received and reflect previous reviewers' recommendations in 2014. In response to the changing needs of the students and the necessity to better reflect the areas of expertise among the faculty, the MEd Graduate Program Committee struck a subcommittee in 2018 to develop a redesigned program in consultation with the program committee members and broader faculty.

The Senate Graduate Studies Committee stated:

In order to safeguard the quality and vigor of our graduate programs, graduate level courses should reflect the expertise of available instructors.

The Dean of Education responded:

I fully support the shift from Fields of Specialization to Concentrations. This adjustment to the program will allow students to customize their program to their interests and should grow the M.Ed. student numbers and increased completion rates.

The Dean of Graduate Studies responded:

Workload is an issue that is the purview of the Dean of the Faculty of Education. However, I support efforts to ensure that students are provided with a mix of courses to support progression through their programs.

### ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers the recommendation to be accepted and in the process of implementation.

#### Implementation Plan (1<sup>st</sup> Priority)

Responsible for approving:	Department
Responsible for resources:	Department
Responsible for implementation:	Department
Timeline:	Dean of Education to report by the end of academic year 2020/21

#### **Recommendation #4**

Explore ways to integrate domestic and international students across the M. Ed. and M. Ed. ISP programs.

The Department stated:

The M.Ed. program is currently concentrating on increasing student enrollment from emerging markets. In preparing to welcome more international students from diverse home countries, aligning the language scores with program expectations and the student support structures in place will respond to diverse students' needs, enabling them to thrive in their academic studies. Additionally, stronger language competencies enable more interaction between students educated in English, and those who have been educated in a language other than English.

The Senate Graduate Studies Committee stated:

Such integration is important for scientific exploration and development.

The Dean of Education responded:

- It is critical that social, cultural and academic barriers between domestic and international student pathways be diminished. The greater integration of these two streams of students who are in different pathways to the same degree is important, particularly as the Faculty and University are committed to increased diversity and inclusion. The current COVID-19 pandemic re-emphasized stress lines in our society.
- Greater integration does not undermine our commitment to academic quality or international students' pathways to success. The University, through Faculty of Graduate Studies and A-to-Z Learning, amongst others, and the Faculty through our International Office will need to ensure appropriate academic supports for international students.
- The FOE [Faculty of Education], through the Office of the Associate Dean Research, Graduate and International and the international office, provides cultural, social, and professional development opportunities to all international students. Many of the opportunities integrate domestic and international students.

The Dean of Graduate Studies responded:

I strongly support efforts at the University to achieve a more diverse and inclusive graduate student, as well as faculty environment. A move towards greater integration of students from different backgrounds is an enriching experience for all.

#### **ARC Disposition of the Recommendation**

ARC considers the recommendation to be accepted and in the process of implementation.

**Implementation Plan (1<sup>st</sup> Priority)**

Responsible for approving:	Department
Responsible for resources:	Department
Responsible for implementation:	Department
Timeline:	Dean of Education to report by the end of academic year 2020/21

## Recommendation #5

Review international student recruitment efforts, particularly in light of the effects of COVID-19 on international student enrolment.

The Department stated:

The MEd Graduate Program Committee are conscious of the importance of building not only the international enrollment but also the domestic enrollment. The Faculty of Graduate Studies allocated some extra funds for the Faculty of Education so that we could promote our program. We continue to recruit from the Brock undergraduate student body through information sessions held during the academic year.

Representatives are present at Ontario university fairs with materials for our program to share with prospective students, our faculty communications officer is advertising the program on Twitter and Facebook. The Graduate Program Director continues to work with the communications officer as well as the Faculty of Graduate Studies personnel to seek new ways of reaching more prospective students from among local communities.

The Senate Graduate Studies Committee stated:

This is a risk management issue that requires Institutional strategies.

The Dean of Education responded:

- COVID-19 has exposed weaknesses in the recruitment processes. The FOE, with the assistance of IMD [International Market Development] and FGS, has been seeking ways to diversify our markets and to look at the in-Canada international market as an untapped source.
- In 2019-20, the FOE invested heavily in on-line marketing strategies.
- The shift to online delivery and “designed” remote teaching and learning creates opportunities for the FOE to be more active in a highly competitive professional Masters of Education environment.

The Dean of Graduate Studies responded:

Continual assessment of established processes can lead to new insights and improvements. FGS is happy to work with both the Faculty of Education and Brock International to support international student recruitment efforts.

## ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers the recommendation to review international student recruitment efforts to be accepted and in the process of implementation. The Committee recognizes that COVID-19 is affecting recruitment at many levels including the Department, Faculty and institution as a whole. ARC expects that the Department will work with the Dean and various units across

the university, such as the Faculty of Graduate Studies, International Market Development and Recruitment to address this recommendation.

<b>Implementation Plan (1<sup>st</sup> Priority)</b>	
Responsible for approving:	Department
Responsible for resources:	Department
Responsible for implementation:	Department
Timeline:	Dean of Education to report by the end of academic year 2020/21

### **Recommendation #6**

Explore possibilities of co-op programs, internships, or student participation in professional organizations.

The Department stated:

Internships (two half credit courses, one in each year of study) are part of the experience for the students enrolled in the BECE program. With regard to the other program under review spaced between grad and undergrad, and a specific course is part of the program focused on experiential learning for the MPCE students. The remainder speaks to the opportunities for work environment experiences for the MEd ISP students since it was stated that ISP students would especially benefit.

The Senate Graduate Studies Committee stated:

SGSC agrees that graduate students in Educational Studies will benefit from direct exposure to the professional environment.

The Dean of Education responded:

I support the Department's response to all recommendations.

The Dean of Graduate Studies responded:

Experiential opportunities benefit all students. FOE might consider partnering with CCEE [Co-op, Career and Experiential Education] to assist with these experiential opportunities.

### **ARC Disposition of the Recommendation**

ARC considers the recommendation to be already current practice. The Committee understands that the programs under review already include many experiential components and that the Department is involved in an ongoing exploration of further possibilities.

### **Implementation Plan**

No action required.

### **Recommendation #7**

Re-assess whether there is the correct balance between F/T faculty members and ILTAs teaching in the M.Ed. ISP program.

The Department stated:

With the variety of programs in the FOE being housed within the Department of Educational Studies, it is important that full time faculty, and ILTAs continue to have instructional opportunities across the various programs. We do recognize three program quality characteristics at play with instructional assignment decisions a) consistency across sections of the same course during the same term (as contained within the Brock Faculty Handbook Section III Article 9.1.8), and b) exposure to a diversity of instruction/instructors, and c) area of scholarship of instructors. We are aware that we must be diligent in not assigning the full ILTA workload with the MEd ISP cohorts and have made certain to outline the composition of workload to ensure a better distribution of assignments across graduate and undergraduate programs for each ILTA and tenured faculty member. We have made a commitment to this effect for the 2020-21 workload assignments.

The Dean of Education responded:

I support the Department's response to all recommendations.

### **ARC Disposition of the Recommendation**

ARC considers the recommendation to be not accepted as it lies outside of its jurisdiction. The Committee recognizes that a "correct" balance is subject to discussion and that workload issues are the purview of the Dean and subject to the provisions of the Collective Agreement.

### **Implementation Plan**

Recommendation not accepted.

## D. Summary of Recommendations:

First Priority:

Recommendations 2,3,4,5,

No Action Required:

Recommendation 6

Not Accepted:

Recommendations 1,7