

Internal Memorandum

To: M. Catherine Bolton, Vice-Provost, Teaching and Learning

From: André Roy, Dean of Arts and Science

Date: 31 July 2015

Re: Department of Psychology Implementation Plan

Dear Dr. Bolton,

Please find enclosed the finalized Implementation Plan for the Department of Psychology as part of the academic appraisal process in the Science sector of the Faculty of Arts and Science. This Plan was duly discussed with the Department Chair.

As mentioned in the Concordia University Academic Program Appraisals Manual, 5th edition revised, the Faculty and Department will follow-up on this Plan in two years when prompted by your office.

Sincerely,



André Roy
Dean of Arts and Science

cc. Dr Virginia Penhune, Chair of the Department of Psychology

Implementation Plan: Department of Psychology

The Department of Psychology offers undergraduate (BA or BSc Major or Specialization or Honours in Psychology, or BSc Specialization or Honours in Psychology (Behavioural Neuroscience Option)), and graduate (MA and PhD with Research or Research and Clinical Training Options and a Diploma in Clinical Psychology) programs. Within the Psychology Department's Objectives, Psychology is defined as "*the scientific study of mental life, both its neurological bases and its manifestations in behaviour*" and it is stressed that "*Psychology also examines the factors that promote change in behaviour and mental activity.*" Their programs provide students with a solid background in psychological theories, methods, research and applications with a goal of fostering "*informed and critical thinking based on a research-driven curriculum*". Within the Department, both undergraduate and graduate students are exposed to research in four broad areas: Behavioural Neuroscience; Clinical and Health Research; Cognitive Science; and Human Development and Developmental Processes. The Department recognizes the synergy that results from strong research and teaching programs as research enhances teaching and excellence in teaching fuels research. Moreover, "*the Department serves the community by furthering such knowledge and applying it to promote human welfare*".

When this appraisal was initiated, the complement of faculty and staff responsible for delivering the academic and research programs included 37 full-time tenure-track faculty members (including three Canada Research Chairs, four Concordia University Research Chairs, three CIHR Young Investigator Award holders, and three FRQ Career Award holders), three faculty holding Extended Term Appointments (ETAs), seven faculty holding Limited Term Appointments (LTAs), two technical staff members, two information technology professionals, three administrative program assistants, three full-time permanent secretaries, and a department administrator. In addition to classrooms, undergraduate teaching laboratories, and individual research laboratories, the Department also maintains affiliations with the Centre for Sensory Studies, Centre for Clinical Research in Health, Centre for Research in Human Development, Centre for Studies in Human Behavioural Neurobiology, Centre for the Study of Learning and Performance, and the PERFORM Centre.

Research success within the Department is evidenced by funding from private, provincial and federal sources awarded to faculty members in fundamental, applied and clinical research. Moreover, this success is reflected in the number of publications in top quality international peer-reviewed journals. Further opportunities for continued research success are evident from the recent hires of dynamic new faculty members and the world-class instrumentation and facilities in the Science Pavilion and the recently-completed PERFORM Centre. To continue the development and advancement of the Department of Psychology, a number of suggestions have been put forward through this appraisal process. These suggestions can be grouped into broad but interrelated areas: undergraduate and graduate education, research, and the direction

of the Department. The Faculty of Arts and Science has reviewed the Department Appraisal Committee's, External Examiners' and University Appraisal Committee's reports and provides the following recommendations based on these reports.

Recommendation 1: The Department needs to develop and update a Department Hiring Plan to highlight areas of need. This plan should include the place and role of Tenure Track and Extended Term Appointment positions in the research and teaching goals of the Department. Furthermore, the Department should contact the Faculty of Arts and Science and Human Resources to develop a plan to explore staffing needs. The planning can be initiated immediately in the context of the current University Strategic Planning exercise. A Department document can be generated for May 2016.

Recommendation 2: The Department requires a Space Plan. This plan can be completed in concert with the Hiring Plan and the Department's overall strategic plan. The development of this plan can be carried out by the Chair, The Department Space Committee and the Associate Dean, Academic Facilities for May 2016.

Recommendation 3: The Department must continue its efforts to rationalize course offerings. This will follow on the recent curriculum mapping and review exercise that the Department carried out on its undergraduate courses. This exercise can be continued by the appropriate departmental curriculum committees and program directors. As part of this discussion, at the undergraduate level, the Department should continue to explore alternative methods of course delivery including online and blended learning to ensure that course sections are available both for program and non-program students. For example, providing an online section of a methods and statistics course would provide additional spaces for students in the Minor and remove this as a bottleneck for some students. Given the demands of the accredited Clinical Program, efforts also must be made to organize and optimize all course offerings at the graduate level, for example, to have consistent graduate course offerings in core areas. This curriculum mapping and review also may help to improve times to completion. Graduate students within the Department also should be made aware of courses in other departments which may be relevant with respect to their areas of interest and likewise students in other departments should be informed of Psychology course offerings, when appropriate. These discussions can be initiated immediately among the Chair, the appropriate program directors, and the Associate Dean, Academic Programs.

Recommendation 4: As suggested by the external examiners, the Department needs to ensure an equitable distribution of courses to faculty members when defining teaching assignments. This will allow all faculty to experience a variety of classes and will have the added benefit of *“making senior faculty, often national and international leaders in their field of research, visible*

from time to time to undergraduate students". This will enrich the experience of both the faculty and the students. The Chair can lead this initiative as part of the annual work-load planning exercise. This also can be linked to the rationalization of course offerings.

Recommendation 5: To optimize graduate student enrolment and to benefit current students, the Department must promote existing funding opportunities and continue to work with the Associate Dean, Research and Graduate Studies in the Faculty and with the School of Graduate Studies to improve funding packages for graduate students, *e.g.*, by increasing tuition remissions for international students, or by increasing the number of teaching assistantships for students. More teaching assistantships would have the added benefit of providing "*students with better teaching experience – an important skill in obtaining both academic and industry positions*". These discussions both by the Graduate Committee and within the University are already ongoing.

Recommendation 6: The Department must improve the quality of academic advising. The external evaluators indicated that the results of the student survey suggest that "*37% of the undergraduate students are not satisfied with their psychology training*" and the Department appraisal committee identified undergraduate advising as an area that needs improvement. The Department is encouraged to continue its initiative of making advising more streamlined, providing more advising information on the Department website and developing a repository of frequently asked questions. Immediately, the undergraduate academic advisors within the Department should consult with Student Academic Services to explore best practices for academic advising. Given the broad range of information that academic advising can entail for Psychology students, the Department should call upon any of the services available within the University. For example, Career and Placement Services could help in organizing career fairs for students. Finally, in terms of Graduate Student advising, the students should be encouraged to take advantage of all available opportunities for soft skills development at the graduate level, including those offered through the School of Graduate Studies, *e.g.*, GradProSkills. This can be begun immediately with assessments carried out annually.

Recommendation 7: The Department should develop a mentorship program that fits the needs of the more junior faculty. Given the success of the senior faculty members within the department, a more formal process should be developed to offer the advantage of this expertise to the junior faculty. In addition to offering support and advice on issues ranging from grant applications, graduate student recruitment, lab management, contract renewal and tenure, junior faculty also should be directed to the Faculty of Arts and Science and the Centre for Teaching and Learning for additional assistance. The Chair can initiate this process immediately.