

External Review Report of European Studies Program
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External Review Committee

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Executive Summary

The European Studies Program at the University of Victoria is a small but excellent program. It operates with few resources yet delivers outside benefits. It is interesting, relevant and interdisciplinary with an outstanding experiential learning component and highly enthusiastic students. The experiential learning components, including an EU Study Tour and internship program and West Coast Model EU, are a great credit to the program and the university. Notably, they draw registrations from across Canada. This program, coupled with the university's strength in European Union studies, puts the University of Victoria on the map in this field both nationally and internationally and delivers significant reputational benefits.

The organizational changes that the program has undergone in the past several years, with its move out from under the umbrella of the office of interdisciplinary studies, and lost its base budget, have been disruptive. It operates with limited administrative support and could benefit from more assistance from central administration in championing its existence.

The program is vulnerable and faces some challenges: First, it is heavily reliant on sessional instructors. We note that while these sessional instructors have been excellent (as we detail in the report below), it leaves the program on a more insecure basis. The program does not hold any hiring lines and needs to create strong cross-departmental and cross-faculty coordination structures to increase the participation of more full-time faculty in the program. Second, it needs to increase its small number of declared minors in the program, and maintain its growth of course registrations. Third, it operates with minimal administrative support, which likely hinders some of its marketing and advising that would support plans to increase its registrations.

The unit and the academic leadership have called for more permanent faculty members teaching in the program. The program has asked for additional resources in the form of a 0.5 FTE cross-appointment, preferably in political science, but they also seek to increase the involvement of permanent faculty members in the program through cross-listed courses and through securing agreements to team-teach core courses.

During the review, we received the impression that providing additional appointments to the program would likely be very difficult due to budgetary constraints. However, there are other solutions to increasing the involvement of permanent faculty in the program that would require no additional expenditure, such as team teaching and increasing the number of cross-listed courses.

First, permanent faculty involvement in the program can be increased through team teaching. There are a number of faculty members (especially in political science) who currently participate in the EUS program through their role as guest speakers in EUS core courses. In the past, these faculty members team-taught courses. We would encourage the EUS program to re-establish this practice. In order to

be successful, extra-to-load and ad hoc arrangements need to be avoided and department chairs and the dean must support this practice by supporting a teaching buy-out arrangement. Second, the program

could increase the number of cross-listed courses. There are more courses currently offered in the Humanities and Social Science faculties that could be a natural fit with the EUS program, but they are not currently affiliated with it.

While these solutions do not require additional resources to implement, there are organizational and institutional barriers to interdisciplinarity and bringing more permanent faculty into the program. It will involve an organized and deliberate outreach effort by the program to cultivate these relationships. Second, to be successful, these efforts will need to be supported, ideally at the faculty level, by the creation of decision-making processes that support and create incentives for faculty from different departments (and faculties) to teach in the program, and create incentives for department chairs to support these efforts. To do so, the EUS program, as a small program in the faculty, would likely benefit from coordination assistance. In the case of team teaching, Deans could facilitate meetings with department chairs to secure agreements on 'lending' faculty to teach in the program. It is unrealistic to expect EUS to negotiate this themselves: it is difficult to see how the EUS director would have much leverage with department chairs.

Senior administrators have mentioned the possibility of scrapping the program in its current organizational structure, and keeping the EU Study Tour and Internship program. We do not believe that this is a good idea. It risks undermining a successful program that enhances the reputation of the university, has strong student satisfaction and alumni support.

Recommendations

1. Conduct a curriculum review to facilitate the cross-listing of courses.

Cross-list more courses across departments and faculties to increase the courses that contribute toward the minor. There may especially be opportunities in history to cross-list courses with EUS, and possibly with economics and political science.

2. Develop faculty-level coordination (led by the dean) to facilitate interdepartmental and interfaculty cooperation.

The involvement of regular faculty in the teaching of EUS courses has budgetary implications for their home departments. It is unrealistic to expect that increasing faculty teaching in the EUS program will result purely from departmental goodwill. The EUS director has little leverage in these discussions. If the dean were to organize and lead these negotiations, they would have a much greater chance of success. It would also signal the importance that the faculty places on the program. Decanal involvement can smooth logistical (or registration allocation) difficulties with cross-listing courses across faculties, to achieve greater interdisciplinarity. The discussions should be scheduled to allow team-teaching and cross-listing decisions to be incorporated into departmental and faculty teaching allocation and planning decisions.

3. Improve program data collection.

More detailed data on how many EUS courses students take and the home program of these students will help the program identify how to best target its marketing and advising to increase enrolments in its minor.

4. Prioritize administrative support for the unit.

The current support of 0.25 FTE for the minor may not be adequate to support the program. We recommend that the faculty consider how additional support may be made available for the program, including through administrative support shared with another program.