

External Review Report of Learning and Teaching Support and Innovation
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External Review Committee

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Executive Summary

The Division of Learning and Teaching Support and Innovation (LTSI) resulted from a merger of the Learning and Teaching Centre (LTC), Technology Integrated Learning (TIL), and Community-Engaged Learning (CEL) in 2018. LTSI's strength in technology-integrated learning and teaching was fundamental to the University of Victoria's shift to remote teaching during the height of the Covid-19 pandemic. LTSI also has a strong student-facing group supporting student academic success. The Division has the potential to be a key partner for the university as multiple strategic initiatives are undertaken, including the new peer review framework, academic integrity and grade inflation concerns, Indigenizing the curriculum, and others.

Although we found the staff to be collegial and dedicated, and the stakeholders generally appreciative of their work, the external review team found that there was a lack of understanding of the mandate of LTSI, both internally and among stakeholders. At this crucial time in the evolution of LTSI, it is essential to clarify the mandate of the unit, and to use the mandate to make decisions about organizational structure. The external review team members find that LTSI has a glaring gap in faculty-facing educational and curriculum development expertise, expertise that is essential if LTSI is to support instructors, departments, and the university in carrying out strategic initiatives.

Recommendations

1. LTSI, in collaboration with VPAC, should define a clear mandate for their activities. Once completed, LTSI should revisit their recent work defining mission and values.
2. Once a mandate is defined, LTSI should build strength in educational and curriculum development to assist in their efforts to support instructors, departments, and the university in carrying out strategic initiatives.
3. LTSI should combine all instructor-facing groups (new resource/expertise in educational development and existing staff focused on curriculum development as well as the Learning Experience Design and Educational Technology Support teams) into a single group that works collaboratively.
4. Devise a clear plan for future activities of the unit, strategically aligned with the new mandate. A mapping of elements of the plan to the skills of the team could allow for more efficient assignment of projects and ongoing work to team members.

5. LTSI should perform a needs survey for faculty, cultivate relationships with departments to promote collaboration on priorities, and form a communication plan to ensure that they are meeting the needs of stakeholders. VPAC should consider where LTSI needs to be linked in to the Faculties to best support their joint work.
6. Consider the overlap and set boundaries between the work of Systems and the work of LTSI in order to reduce redundancy and inefficiency and contribute to clarifying the mandate of LTSI.
7. Since different strategic initiatives may span across various portfolios in LTSI's team, we recommend that strategic initiatives be assigned to different teams within the unit based upon their scope and team expertise rather than having a separate portfolio focused on strategic initiatives.