

Academic Program Review for the School of Earth and Ocean Sciences (SEOS), University of Victoria

2020

The Academic Program Review Committee:

Professor Russell Pysklywec (U. Toronto), Professor Susan Allen (UBC), Professor John Lutz (UVic)

Executive Summary

The site visit for the academic program review of the School of Earth and Ocean Sciences (SEOS) took place January 30-31, 2020 and involved an intensive set of meetings with the full scope of the unit's faculty and staff, graduate and undergraduate students, as well as the Deans of Science and Graduate Studies, the Acting Associate Vice President Research and the Associate Vice President Academic Planning. Preceding the site visit, the Academic Program Review Committee was provided with a comprehensive self-study document on the school's research and graduate/undergraduate programs.

Based on the metrics and other information gathered during the review, it is clear that SEOS is a nationally-/internationally-leading research institution with the highest quality undergraduate and graduate programs. SEOS has a stellar group of research faculty members. Graduate students are well-supervised and are sharing in the research successes of their faculty mentors. The undergraduate student body is engaged and enthusiastic and speak of the passion and excellence of the professoriate and lab instructors teaching their programs. Graduate and undergraduate enrolment numbers are good, generally reflecting trends nationally for geoscience programs where student numbers can fluctuate owing to events in the mineral/petroleum resource sector.

To enhance the excellent undergraduate/ graduate programs and research in SEOS, the Review Committee has identified five primary areas for improvement (with specific recommendations to address these areas detailed in the report):

- Development of the Climate Science undergraduate program will help balance the strong Earth Science program in SEOS. Increased flexibility in the pre-requisite structure in the Earth Science program would benefit students and open opportunities for climate/ocean courses in the programs.
- Key components of field education in the SEOS undergraduate program are underfunded and are a heavy (and growing) financial burden on students. Address the issue of funding undergraduate field components, which are key to the SEOS undergrad programs. We recommend two primary avenues to bring SEOS/UVic in line with other Canadian institutions: (a) develop a multilevel development/alumni relations program at the School level (with assistance from the Faculty of Science) to raise external funds for the academic mission of field education; (b) leverage funding at the Decanal/Provostial level for experiential education. Opportunities for such funding may be coming available at UVic generally, but it should be recognized that SEOS is a unit with unique requirements here.
- Improve general management and oversight over the graduate programs. Students are very-well supervised and successful, but some logistical issues around graduate funding/payment, course delivery, and admissions would improve the graduate experience for students and faculty.
- Technical staff support for research is critically low and impacting the research success of SEOS. Address the low technical support situation with staff hires in geochemistry and sea-going marine research.
- Determine a 5-10 year strategic plan for the School to clarify the longer term vision and priorities in the School. As part of the School-level planning, determine ways to leverage SEOS strength in resources/oceans/climate and close alignment with the UVic Strategic Framework (2018-2023) to aggressively pursue faculty expansion opportunities (CRC, Impact Chairs, etc.) and research funding.