



Faculty of Science

Department of Biochemistry
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The AUP panel reported a clear sense of collegiality within the Department, a marked contrast to previous reviews 10 years ago. The panel also found the department to be fully engaged and well aligned with the MUN Strategic Frameworks and Plans for all three areas of academic life – Teaching and Learning, Research, and Public Engagement. The panel endorsed the department's self-study document and the proposed direction described in that document, which largely focused on renewal and modernization, and provided additional useful insights and recommendations for consideration. The department fully accepts and agrees with the recommendations in the panel report (an itemized list of all recommendations is provided at the end of this report). The panel specifically recognized the major transition point that the department is at, brought about by a large turn-over in faculty and staff and an impending move to new, custom-built, facilities, and agreed that this represented a logical time for full curriculum and strategic planning reviews to occur. An implementation plan and response to the panel report has been developed and accepted by the Dean of Science.

A number of panel recommendations were made related to the Department's curriculum plans at both undergraduate and graduate levels and the panel agreed that these were best addressed through a dedicated multi-day curriculum planning retreat. In particular the curriculum needs modernizing and work on this has already begun. The intent is to hold this retreat in the Spring of 2021, although on-going pandemic restrictions on face-to-face meetings may necessitate this be delayed a little. The panel also identified the need for terms of reference for the department's sub-committees. This is accepted and such terms of reference are in the process of being developed. Clearly articulated plans for programme renewal and terms of reference for sub-committees will form the cornerstones of developing a strategic plan to guide the department through the short- (1-2 years), medium (2-5 years) and long (5-10 years)-term, which should be in place by the end of the 2021 calendar year.

Finally the panel also indicated that programme modernization is directly linked to staffing renewal and identified the ongoing fiscal constraints in place at MUN as an impediment to timely staffing renewals which pose considerable risk of leading to knock-on effects on



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programme renewal and delivery. This was acknowledged as largely beyond the department's control, but was identified as an area that should be addressed by MUN. Other items beyond the department's immediate control were also identified particularly related to some policies in place in the School of Graduate Studies and Faculty of Medicine that impact the department's graduate programming, and the department has committed on its part to engaging with relevant stakeholders in external units to try and find solutions to these areas.

List of Specific Committee Recommendations:

Recommendation 2.1: The Department should consider the development of a strategic plan building from the priorities developed during the self-study, this report and the undergraduate curriculum review.

Recommendation 3.1: The Department should consider a name change to better reflect its research and teaching activities in both nutrition and biochemistry.

Recommendation 3.2: The Department should consider developing a joint Nutrition-Kinesiology honours program.

Recommendation 3.3: The Department should conduct a comprehensive review of the undergraduate curricula with a focus on the skills and competencies and prerequisites. The Department should enable focused time on this through a multi-day departmental retreat. This process should involve the entire teaching staff including both faculty members and instructional staff.

Recommendation 3.4: The Department should consider including indigenous content in the undergraduate curriculum.

Recommendation 3.5: The notion of streams proposed in the discussion paper on curricular review should be further developed and expanded by the Department.

Recommendation 3.6: The Department should ensure timely communication between the Planning Committee and Undergraduate Studies Committee.



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Recommendation 4.1: The Department should consider creating a 1-year course-based M.Sc. program to expand graduate options and serve students interested in a non-research-based career.

Recommendation 4.2: The School of Graduate Studies should consider requiring an oral thesis defense as part of the formal examination process for the M.Sc. program.

Recommendation 4.3: The Department should enter into a dialog with the MUN Medical School to enforce a requirement to complete the M.Sc. program before students are accepted into the Medicine program.

Recommendation 5.1: The Department should prioritize the growth of the core nutrition faculty and ensure their training and expertise in the fundamentals of nutrition.

Recommendation 5.2: The University upper administration should play a more active role in assisting the Department and the Faculty of Science in finding additional sources of suitable matching funds for external grants.

Recommendation 5.3: The development of a more streamlined process for replacing vacated faculty positions in a timely manner should be a priority of MUN's upper administration.

Recommendation 6.1: The Department should continue to look for opportunities to forge new collaborations in research and teaching with other departments.

Recommendation 6.2: The Department should continue to work with other departments such as Chemistry and Biology in offering laboratory-based outreach activities so that more members of the public can participate in these activities. In addition, the Department should continue to involve undergraduate and graduate students in the administration of Department outreach activities.

Recommendation 7.1: The Department should develop terms of reference for the Graduate Studies Committee.

Recommendation 7.2: The Department should develop terms of reference for the Undergraduate Studies Committee.



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Recommendation 7.3: The Department should develop terms of reference for the Planning Committee. In addition, the Department should consider a name for the committee that is more indicative of its activities.

Recommendation 7.4: The Head of the Department should implement measures to include staff in regular departmental meetings.