

Annex I: Potential IQAP Submission

Dear Drs. Rivera, Smith & Slackenerny,

Thank you for providing your services as arms-length reviewers for the BA in Legal Studies program in the University of Waterloo's Faculty of Arts.

The Waterloo Undergraduate Student Association represents all undergraduates at the university, and we choose to provide feedback to all arms-length review panels, based on findings that we conduct in parallel with your work. If you confer with the Associate Dean responsible for Undergraduate Studies, they should be able to confirm that this is a routine matter with the university's approval.

We assess the program based on student feedback, as well as against some criteria that we feel represent informed pedagogy, reasonably tailored to the particularities of each program. These findings are also often informed by complaints we have received from students or recent alumni regarding the delivery of the program. We recognize your expertise in the field, and would invite you to consider our thoughts below as you apply your expertise in creating an external reviewers report. We also recognize and respect that you may not agree with some of our recommendations or findings given your own knowledge, experiences and pedagogical beliefs. We hope that you will give our thoughts any attention you think they are due.

Our findings for this program are as follows:

Category 1: Curricular Content

- 1.1 We conducted a comparison to other comparable programs at other institutions and found that the number of courses in the major (16) are lower than comparable at Ontario Tech and Guelph. Upon surveying students, they found they were **satisfied** with the core content of the program, with two exceptions.
- 1.2 Our survey of current students and alumni found that the core content is highly research and theory based compared to the Ontario Tech program with mandatory introduction to public and private law. Alumni agreed that for pursuing law degrees (a goal of 65% of graduates and 72% of current students), they felt disadvantaged by not having these as mandatory courses.
- 1.3 Some students noted that while there are courses on transnational topics, there is no core course on **comparative international justice studies**, a course (POLS4020) at the University of Guelph may be a template for a course that fills this gap.

Category 2: Course Types

- 2.1 Students with double majors in political science noted more prevalent use of discussions in Political Science than in Legal Studies, and that
- 2.2. Students noted a preference for 1.5-hour course slots twice a week, while first year courses are disproportionately delivered as 3 one-hour courses. Preference for 2 1-hour slots and a discussion or 2 1.5-hour slots would be preferred. Furthermore, a study conducted in February 2043 by WUSA in conjunction with the psychology department found learning outcomes in both of these formats outperformed the 3x1hr structure, which is validated by finding of Jones & Malone's 2038 study on course scheduling.

Category 3: Experiential Learning

3.1 Exceptional satisfaction was found in the co-op option in the major. No recommendations are made on co-op.

3.2 The continuing lack of the option for students to apply their research training through an undergraduate thesis option continues to be a problem, highlighted first in our 2042 Winter Term newsletter edition on “Barriers to Undergraduate Research in Waterloo’s Program Design”, where we highlighted the disparity between courses on research and research application as making Legal Studies one of the least aligned programs, not aligning with Dillamond, Binns & Birch’s seminal 2032 paper and framework on experiential alignment with classroom material.

Category 4: Teaching

4.1. Concerns have been raised about the relative strength of expertise and teaching quality in the emerging quantitative legal research field, creating issues in keeping the “Legal Research” 200-level course up to date. WUSA recommends hiring of the next tenure track professor should place emphasis on bringing in quantitative talent.

4.2. Seminar delivery has in many instances been delivered in a largely lecture format by Drs. Richards and Gray, with a volunteer set of students in their sections noting that professors speaking time reached up to 70% of dialogue in these classes, as opposed to an average of 25% taught by teaching assistants or Dr. Bartlet. Our best practices manual highlights that seminars by design should use a professor as a guide, not a slightly more interactive lecture, and recommends professor course delivery be lower than 40%.

Category 5: Culture and Support

5.1 The undergraduate journal has repeatedly asked professors for support in conducting peer reviews of submissions, but professors have not volunteered their time. A followup with professors by WUSA has found that the department chair has noted that such time will not count toward professors teaching, research or service scores.

5.2 Funding for financially unstable students to attend the Ontario Undergraduate Legal Studies (OULS) conference has dropped from 10,000 to 5,000 as of 2044, without explanation. This lack of communication on an equity-oriented initiative goes against WUSA guidelines on consultation ahead of removal of financial supports for disadvantaged students.

Conclusion

WUSA believes this program to be a strong one, and not a good candidate for flagging as deficient. WUSA does however see multiple areas for improvement across all categories, with especial focus on curricular content related in comparative international justice, “hard skills” in public and private law, and a capstone thesis offering.

For more information about any of these recommendations or to discuss more, please contact WUSA’s Research and Policy Analyst (Institutional Quality and Educational Practices), Sam at 519-888-4567 x00500.

Sincerely,

S.A. Reiter

VP Education,

Waterloo Undergraduate Student Association