



Aurora College Response to External Program Review of the Bachelor of Education Degree Program

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Overview

All high quality post-secondary institutions carry out regular reviews of their programs. In 2019, Aurora College developed an Academic Program Management Framework (APMF) to guide work in this area.

The development and implementation of an APMF is one of the processes needed for Aurora College to pass a quality assurance review to become a polytechnic university.

The review of the Bachelor of Education program was undertaken using the newly established APMF that follows best practices and national standards. The Bachelor of Education program is one of the first programs to be reviewed using the APMF.

Bachelor of Education Program Review Process

The program review has three phases Self-study, External Review and an Institutional Response. What follows below is a description of each phase and the Institutional Response to the recommendations of the External Review.

Phase 1 – Self-Study

The first phase of the review is a self-study completed by the program staff. The self-study is a compilation of a number of items associated with the program such as student numbers, student satisfaction, attrition rates, graduation rates, degree completion at University of Saskatchewan, faculty to staff ratios, course outlines and content, practicum experiences and cultural activities. This phase was completed in April 2021.

Phase 2 – External Review

The second phase of the review consists of an external review by academic experts in the field of Bachelor of Education programming. Two external reviewers were selected from schools who are part of the Aurora College's Academic Advisory Committee, the University of Alberta and the Yukon University as both institutions deliver Bachelor of Education programs using different pedagogies. Both schools also serve a large number of Indigenous students in their programming and have active education programs at the diploma, baccalaureate, and master levels. Their programs are delivered at multiple sites and with Indigenous partners which is similar to our context here in the NWT.

The reviewers were asked to review the Bachelor of Education program curriculum for currency and relevance to present day teacher education practices, teacher employment opportunities across the NWT as well as the connections to Northern context and its people. They were also asked to review the program through a lens of accreditation standards set by the national accrediting bodies for Canadian Teacher Education Programs.

A large number of Aurora College documents were examined by the external reviewers. The documents are listed in Appendix A and the entire documents can be found in the External Program Review Report found in Appendix B.

This review was completed during the pandemic as a virtual review. The reviewers held virtual focus group meetings with teachers and principals from across the NWT, graduates from the program, students who did not complete the program, former and present instructors, and Elders who had participated with the students in classroom and cultural activities. In

some cases, individual meetings were held to gather input and reflections about the program.

The final report and recommendations from the reviewers was received in the fall of 2021. Aurora College is grateful to the external reviewers for their work and commitment and look forward to continued opportunities to work with the Academic Advisory Committee as Aurora College moves forward with the transformation to a polytechnic university.

Phase 3 –Institutional Response

The Institutional Response is the final step in the review process and outlines Aurora College’s response to the recommendations made by the External Reviewers. This is a standard practice in academic program reviews across post-secondary institutions.

External Review Recommendations

RECOMMENDATION 1

Recruit and educate Indigenous teachers and Northerners and ensure that prospective students know the entrance requirements for the program well in advance of applying

Aurora College accepts this recommendation

Aurora College will build on existing processes including implementing the Strategic Enrolment Management Plan (SEM) that will help prospective students understand how they can best be prepared for the academic programming of their choice. Aurora College will continue to work with high schools and the Department of Education, Culture and Employment to promote and provide information related to programs including the entrance requirements for the Bachelor of Education. In this way, Aurora College will recruit and educate Indigenous teachers and Northerners.

RECOMMENDATION 2

Consideration of Program Pathways for Students without Sufficient Academic Background

Aurora College accepts this recommendation

Aurora College already delivers University and Occupational Access Programs as well as literacy and numeracy skill development courses that prospective Bachelor of Education students can access.

As part of the transformation work, Aurora College is also in the process of creating student pathways from Community Learning Centers to Campus programming; adding STEM programming which supports and moves students from where they are to meet entrance requirements in trades and academic programs. STEM education is an approach to learning where academic concepts are presented with real life lessons as students apply science, technology, engineering, and mathematics in contexts that make connections between school, community, and work.

At this point in time, it is too early to determine if a pre-education program will be included in the student pathways.

RECOMMENDATION 3

- A. Recommend that Aurora College consider creating a generalist program for K-6, with Indigenization across all curricular subjects.**

Aurora College accepts this recommendation

Aurora College intends to develop two streams for the Bachelor of Education degree program. After students complete their first two years of the degree program, they will have the opportunity in their third year to choose one of two streams, JK-6 or Grades 7-12. The JK-6 stream will build on the existing curriculum to include additional Indigenous knowledge, ideas, and concepts. The Grades 7 – 12 stream will require more specialized content and knowledge in order that program students are able to teach the higher grades including Indigenous knowledge, ideas, and concepts.

In the previous Bachelor of Education program, students were prepared to be a generalist in the K-9 system.

- B. A second part of this recommendation is to recruit students who have received a bachelor's degree in a relevant subject and create a 2-year program in which they can develop pedagogical and curricular knowledge.**

Aurora College accepts this recommendation

Aurora College will develop a two-year post baccalaureate program that will allow individuals who already have a relevant degree to move into the teaching profession after completing the two -year program. This post-degree two-year program will build curriculum around core Bachelor of Education courses such as Educational Technologies, Assessment, Creating Effective learning environments, Teaching Exceptional Children, Legal and Institutional Contexts.

RECOMMENDATION 4

Recommend that hiring of both Aurora College Instructors and other instructors from outside the institution.

Aurora College partially accepts this recommendation

In renewing a relationship with University of Saskatchewan or in negotiating a new partnership with a different postsecondary institution, it will be important to define a role for Aurora College faculty and administrators on the partner institution's Education-related committees such as curriculum and evaluation committees. This clear role will ensure that any changes in course content, program sequencing, and assessment methods including prerequisites will continue to meet the needs of the NWT learners. As well, it will need to be made clear in any partnership agreement that autonomy to make program changes as needed, in consultation with the partner institution is fully supported.

RECOMMENDATION 5

Experiential Learning and Indigenous Cultural Content -These experiences need to be purposefully woven into a revised program in ways that students are able to maintain connections with their home communities, if desired.

Aurora College accepts this recommendation

Aurora College will endeavor to continue to build in cultural activities and experiences for all Bachelor of Education students. This work will be supported by the Indigenous Knowledge Holder's Council that will be part of the governance structure of Aurora College. Part of that council's work will be to develop a framework that will guide both strategic and operational decision making across the institution.

RECOMMENDATION 6

It is crucial that a future version of the Education program be built around a solid faculty complement. A Bachelor of Education program should be built around a core group of permanent instructors hired by Aurora College, including an instructor in a program lead role.

Aurora College accepts this recommendation

Aurora College believes it is important that the core faculty group not only has the required level of postsecondary education but also has prior public school teaching experience, ideally within the NWT, the broader Canadian North, and/or rural and remote Indigenous communities.

The program lead should also have prior public school teaching experience and, therefore, be able to teach core Education courses in the program and mentor students towards the teaching profession. The program lead should be an instructor and an administrator. This position would also be the primary liaison and relationship builder with key contacts at NWT's Department of Education, Culture and Employment and any partner institution.

Next Steps

The first step in Aurora College's plan is to complete an environmental scan to look at Bachelor of Education programs at other Canadian post-secondary institutions. Programming will be reviewed to identify similarity in terms of geographical location and school size, significant Indigenous student bodies, laddering programs, currency, and relevancy to best practices in the teaching context of JK-12. If a suitable partner school is identified, then a partnership agreement will be established that includes the above items in the short term. In the longer-term Aurora College will work towards an autonomous degree conferred by the polytechnic university itself.

APPENDIX A

1. Bachelor of Education Program Outline
2. Timeline – History of Teacher Education in the NWT
- 3a. Saskatchewan Professional Teachers Regulatory Board
- 3b. NWT Teachers Qualifications and Certification
- 4a. Aurora College Program Review Policy
- 4b. Aurora College Program Review Procedure
5. Sample Job Posting in the Field of Education in the NWT
- 6a. NWT Committee on Teacher Education, Membership List, Terms of Reference
- 6b. Aboriginal Advisory Committee (Instructor Letter 2002 – 2010)
7. Aurora College Bachelor of Education Current Delivery Map
- 8a. Bachelor of Education, Program Quick Facts
- 8b. Aurora College Bachelor of Education Program Promotion
9. Self Study Survey Tools
- 10a. B.Ed. Course Outlines
- 10b. B.Ed. Course Sample Syllabi
- 10c. B.Ed. Course Sample Rubrics
11. Aurora College Policy C.28 Student Academic Evaluation
12. B.Ed. Faculty Resumes
13. Aurora College Bachelor of Education Program Map “Blue Sky”

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APPENDIX B

External Program Review Report

Aurora College Bachelor of Education Program Review