Report of the Principal's Advisory Committee on Instructional Development

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Instructional Development

Every activity thoughtfully undertaken to improve post-secondary teaching and learning can be considered instructional development. What an instructional development centre brings to this process is the knowledge and skills of individuals specialized in the presentation of information, the processes of learning, and the techniques and resources (tools) available to enhance learning. None of this is a replacement for good teaching; it is a means of serving faculty members to allow them to use their time effectively and well for the improvement of both their teaching and research.

Summary

The Committee’s terms of reference were to review the various approaches to instructional development, the types of centres in place at other universities and to judge whether they were effective and whether teaching and learning at Queen’s would benefit by the establishment of a centre at the University. The Committee completed its review and concluded that, provided certain criteria are met, instructional development centres may have a significant effect on the quality of teaching and learning. It has recommended that the best approach to instructional development at Queen’s would be through the establishment of a centre which would support both curriculum and teaching skills development. It observed that in a research intensive environment, faculty gained in time and effort from this approach - time and effort which could be devoted to enhancing both teaching and research leading to a demonstrable improvement in the quality of education.

The model the Committee proposed is outlined on page 7 of the report. The proposed Queen’s Centre would be staffed by four professionals with expertise in curriculum design and teaching skills consultation. The staff would be responsible for the co-ordination of curriculum development initiatives as well as offering a teaching skills consultation program, a teaching assistants program and a new faculty orientation program. The Cross-Faculty Teaching Forums would continue but be co-ordinated through the Centre.

The Committee feels quite strongly that a centre provided with sufficient resources and a high degree of institutional commitment would have significant impact on the quality of teaching and learning at Queen’s.

For this to occur the Centre would have to see its prime functions as improving the satisfaction of faculty and teaching assistants (TAs) with their role as teachers while at the same time enhancing their individual effectiveness and the quality of all aspects of their academic pursuits.

Such an orientation coupled with intensive support for faculty and TA skill development and curriculum design would result in:

- an increase in the quality of teaching and learning
- the improvement of courses and curricula
- the development of better teachers
- a confirmation of Queen’s commitment to undergraduate and graduate education
- improved academic effectiveness and efficiency
- a demonstration of the Queen’s commitment to the individual faculty member, teaching assistant, student and alumnus.
Introduction

Queen's University takes pride in its role as a leader in education. Over the last fifteen years, however, there has been a decline in the real financial resources available to the University. This has coincided with an increase in the demands on faculty time due to both larger classes and heightened research expectations. Moreover, we are entering a period of faculty replacement which over the next fifteen years will result in half the staff being replaced with new appointees. It is apparent that the University must take action to ensure that the quality of education is not eroded. Action is being taken on a number of fronts particularly in planning for the new fund-raising campaign, but the question of how to preserve or enhance teaching and learning is not one which is solved by dollars alone.

It is the underlying premise of all our programs that all professors want to be thought of as good teachers and that all share a dedication to education. The question remains as to what action the university may take to support their commitment and benefit the students. To provide advice on these matters the Committee was established in the autumn of 1988 and given terms of reference which included but were not necessarily limited to:

- preparing a review of the various types of instructional development centres in operation at comparable institutions
- assessing the success of these centres in fostering an improvement in quality of undergraduate education
- determining, if instructional development centres have proven effective in enhancing undergraduate education at other institutions, which model(s) would provide the greatest benefit and be most compatible with the Queen's environment
- assessing the resources required to implement the various options
- recommending a course of action based on the foregoing analysis.

The Committee began its work by conducting a review of the literature and assembling reference materials which are outlined in the attached bibliography. From the initial literature survey and from discussions with individuals knowledgeable in the field, the Committee identified six prominent centres which had mounted instructional development programs. These centres are Syracuse, Waterloo, Guelph, McGill, Harvard and Stanford. Because the first three universities are within reasonable driving distance of Queen's, the Committee was able to visit these centres. While the Committee as a group did not visit the other three, individual members were able to see the centres while attending conferences at these universities. In one instance the director of the Stanford Centre visited Queen's, meeting with the Committee and with other groups. Reports on each of these centres are available as Appendix A.

Models for Instructional Development

As we proceed in our work, we began to think of instructional development centres in terms of a general model. The model considers four elements interacting in the teaching and learning process. Professors and teaching assistants interact with students through the curriculum. As an adjunct to this process is a media centre which acts to provide necessary printed and visual materials. This is set out below.

![Figure 1](image)

In this model, instructional development activities focus at the level of faculty, curriculum or students. Faculty-based initiatives include such programs as teacher skill development through direct consultation, peer consultation, workshops, forums and conferences. Curriculum-based initiatives include consultation with faculty about course and curriculum design and improvement through the use of formative evaluation techniques. See Appendix B.

Student-based initiatives include learning-skill and tutoring programs such as those offered by the Writing Centre or Counselling Service. Needless to say, efforts in any one domain affect the others. For example, changes in the curriculum have implications for both faculty development and student learning.

The above model does not show a direct relationship between faculty and students except through the curriculum. We acknowledge that there are many other links between these two groups which are very important. If we were to diagram the real interaction between faculty and students, our model would look more like Figure 2.

In this model we show the direct ties which occur between faculty and students outside the context of the curriculum per se. Such
activities may include academic counselling in the broad sense, personal counselling in some instances, participation in student committees or in student events, or even, but quite importantly, extra curricular activities such as frosh-prof dinners, alumni sponsored events, etc. All these activities bear on the academic enterprise and set the climate in which we work. They are often the most pleasurable part of the university experience, and what the student (and indeed the professor) may recall long after the details of Archaeology 727 have faded.

Nevertheless, in considering what we could develop as an institution, we need to focus on institutional arrangements and, in that sense, students and faculty interact together through the curriculum. Lectures, seminars, laboratories and office hours are, in the first instance, focussed on curricular matters. The extra-curricular activities flow from them. Figure 1 highlights these interactions and is therefore our working model.

The other point we wish to note about our working model is that media centres or units provide a service which can be used to facilitate instructional development, but need not be a part of an instructional development program.

Effectiveness of Instructional Development Centres and Programs

Organizational arrangements
Although there are as many organizational arrangements for instructional development centres as there are centres themselves, there appear to be three general patterns which are based on the assignment of responsibility for implementing instructional development activities. They are: ¹

- assignment to a standing committee
- assignment to a full-time professional staff.
- Of the above organizational arrangements it has been concluded that staff based options (above) increase the number of services offered faculty. Although this approach has a higher cost than the other two options, it has the greatest potential for the improvement of teaching and learning and curriculum and course design.
- The other two options are limited by the time and commitment those responsible can bring to the task (Weimer 1989). We found that institutions committed to the improvement of teaching and learning used the staff-based option.

Programs²

(i) Curriculum
Curriculum design or revision involves the application of specialized techniques and tools. While these approaches and methods can be used by faculty members, generally, assistance from persons skilled in the approach is the most efficient in terms of time and effort and most effective in the improvement of teaching and learning.

These techniques involve:

- establishment of course or curriculum goals
- assessment of current status including current levels of student achievement, faculty and student perception, alumni response, and, where relevant, perception of employers and accreditation boards
- development or refinement of course or curricula to achieve the aforementioned goals and objectives, taking into consideration the judgements made by students, faculty, etc.
- implementation of changes and measure or assess their effectiveness and make whatever modifications are deemed necessary.

The ultimate objective of the above initiatives is to minimize the discrepancies between the intended, the perceived, and the actual curriculum.

The feature which differentiates curriculum development initiatives at the institutions we have studied is the amount of assistance given to faculty. We stress that it is assistance. In all cases faculty maintain the responsibility for, and control over, curricula. Staff help in this process by developing the evaluation tools and working on revised programs under the direction of, and in consultation with, faculty.

Many of the centres we visited had curriculum support services. In our judgement, those that are most effective provide faculty with a high and continuing level of professional support.

(ii) Faculty and Teaching Assistant Programs
Faculty development and programs for teaching assistants focus primarily on skill development within the pedagogical context. Such programs often include new faculty orientation, workshops, direct and peer consultation, practice and concept based teaching.

¹ For further discussion see Weimer, Maryellen, Instructional Development Models.
² See Appendix B.
³ This is a simplified outline. For a full and comprehensive examination see Diamond, 989 and Appendix B.
grants to support faculty projects, and discussion of student evaluation. The literature shows that not all programs are equally successful in benefiting participants and improving the quality of undergraduate education. We are able to draw some generalizations. The most successful programs are those which involve faculty on an individual basis and are designed to meet his or her needs while minimizing the time commitment. Hence peer and professional consultation rank highly. These methods have been deemed 'perhaps the most powerful methodology yet conceived for the actual improvement of in-class teaching.'

Programs which require a greater commitment of time on the part of the faculty member but less intensive interaction between a centre and that faculty member have been shown to improve teaching quality but not to the same degree as direct consultation. These include practice and concept based teaching.

Programs which involve fairly modest time commitments and little involvement of the centre (once established) result in helpful interchanges on pedagogical issues but have less direct impact on undergraduate teaching. These include some workshops and conferences.

When an entire group shares a need or requirement then the advantages usually associated with individual interaction can pertain to the group. An example of such generalized requirements or need would be the need of new faculty for orientation to the university (an overview of its history, governance and administration, and the role of and support for teaching and research).

Graduate students play an important instructional role which includes conducting tutorials, one on one consultation with undergraduate students and marking assignments, essays and examinations. For many graduate students this is a new responsibility and they have had little or no experience in this area. Coupled with their other 'student responsibilities' which include course work and research, they need guidance and support to perform to the best of their ability in each of these areas. Therefore, in order to ensure high standards of instructional development at the undergraduate level, it is necessary to address graduate students' unique position in proposing recommendations for a centre for instructional development at Queen's.

The centres which the committee found to be most successful incorporated a strong TA development program. These programs cover the spectrum given above. They range from individual consultation to workshops for new TAs, and from university-wide to department-specific activities. Their effectiveness is dependent on the same criteria as described above for faculty programs.

Common Elements of Successful Centres and Programs

Based on our analysis of the literature and our visits to six centres, we have identified a number of requirements for success. We cannot stress enough how critical these elements are for the establishment of an effective instructional development centre.

Orientation of the Centre

It is commonly perceived that instructional development centres tell people how to teach. This is not the case. Good instructional development centres serve and support faculty in their academic endeavours. This implies a recognition and acceptance of the climate for research at the university. The centre's activities should enable the faculty member to make the best use of his or her time so as to deal with the demands of high quality teaching in a research intensive environment.

The centre should be considered a service to help the good become better. Its focus is the improvement of teaching but the assumption is that university faculty are motivated individuals with a desire to improve their research and teaching effectiveness. To support this role the centre must be removed from the administrative reward system in the sense of evaluation for promotion, tenure, and merit. Any participation by faculty must be voluntary and confidential.

Programming

Programming should respond to the varying professional needs of faculty. The focus should be on work with faculty on an individual basis, to identify and meet needs with the least expenditure of faculty time. By this we mean programs such as individual consultation with faculty for skill development and pedagogical analysis as well as intensive support in the area of curriculum development. Effective centers do not attempt to do everything, but what they do, they do extremely well.

Staffing

Selection of a centre's staff is a key determinant in its success. The director and staff must share the centre's orientation to faculty service and have a strong commitment to undergraduate education. The staff must be willing to play a supporting role. The director must have academic credibility so that he or she will have the confidence of those served.

Institutional Commitment

Successful centres are in universities where the administration has demonstrated its commitment to the instructional development initiative in the following ways:

- the provision of a long-term mandate for the centre in recognition of the university's commitment in support of faculty in all aspects of the academic endeavour. This endeavour, which includes improvement of undergraduate teaching, is a long term process.

- the explicit recognition of teaching by demonstrating through tenure, promotion, and merit decisions that faculty should be both good researchers and good teachers. In most cases this requires the development and use of summative (course) evaluations. At Stanford for example, there is a university-wide course evaluation system organized by the Registrar's Office. The use of both student and peer evaluation provides credibility to a university's claim to value teaching. As is the case at Stanford, it is helpful if the centre's staff contribute to the development of the evaluation instruments but it is of vital importance that the centre be removed from the administrative and adjudicative processes.

- the establishment of a reporting structure at a senior level (ie, that of vice-principal).

- the provision of resources to support a unit of suitable size (at least four professionals).

4 Bergquist and Phillips 1975
The State of Instructional Development at Queen's

Queen's University at present has no major integrated effort in instructional development, although there are three well established programs currently in place which address some aspects of it. These are:

- the Cross-Faculty Teaching Forum
- the Counselling Service
- the Writing Centre.

We also are aware of tutoring arrangements which are in place in some faculties and many departments. In addition we have a number of units which provide media support services. These are:

- QTV
- Electronic Services
- Media Services (Education)
- Medical Art and Photography
- Visual Arts Centre (Applied Science)
- Graphic Design Unit
- Media IV (Geography).

These initiatives can be represented on our model and are shown in figure 3.

The Cross-Faculty Teaching Forum

The Forum evolved from a discussion-leadership workshop organized by T.R. Williams and J.R. Gordon in 1984. Since then responsibility for the Forum has been in the hands of an ad-hoc committee which has sponsored annual workshops on issues related to teaching and learning. The workshops have received favourable appraisal from participants and each year the workshops have been over-subscribed.

The Queen's Counselling Service

The Service runs a variety of study skills workshops and public speaking forums in addition to other counselling programs. Last year study skills workshops were offered to 1,134 participants. They have also made some contributions to faculty and TA development. As we later note, we see the counselling service as contributing to both faculty and TA orientation programs.

The Writing Centre

The Centre is in its fourth year of operation. It provides a program designed primarily to help students with their writing skills - both good students who wish to polish their writing and students who need remedial work. The centre also has developed a TA workshop on writing and marking skills in response to needs expressed by faculty and students.

Student Tutoring

Queen's does not offer a structured tutorial program, but some faculties and many departments make informal arrangements. For example, the Faculty of Applied Science, under the auspices of the Committee on First Year Studies, offers an evening tutoring program throughout the year. This is for first year students; the tutors are upper year students.

Media Support Units

Queen's has a wide variety of media support units. The Task Force on Audio Visual Services is looking at the organizational arrangements and service functions of these units. We think it important to note the interaction of these units with any instructional development centre, as much as they provide services and materials which may be of use in some instructional development initiatives. Examples would include video-taping of lectures for faculty skill development or assistance in the production of audio-visual materials for use in the classroom.

Queen's Today

As Figure 3 and the description above show, we have a number of services which address two aspects of instructional development. On the student side, there are a number of needs being addressed. The teaching side has one grass-roots initiative, (the cross-Faculty Teaching Forum), and pioneering contributions from the Writing Centre and Counselling Service but there are no centrally mandated comprehensive support programs. There are also no formal programs supporting curriculum development. If Queen's is to launch an initiative in the area of instructional development, it is teacher skill-development and curriculum design which require the greatest attention.

Recommendations

Previously we outlined what we believe to be the common elements for a successful instructional development initiative. Provided these requirements are met, an instructional development centre would provide an opportunity to improve the quality of education at Queen's while at the same time increasing faculty job satisfaction, and their effectiveness and efficiency in all aspects.
of the academic pursuit.

The Committee recommends the establishment of an instructional development centre at Queen's with a focus on curriculum, TA, and faculty development.

Programming
A curriculum development initiative, encompassing the previously discussed attributes, has potential to make a significant impact on the quality of teaching and learning. We would recommend that the initial focus of this unit be to support curriculum development in large, first and second year courses or where an entire program is undergoing change.

In our opinion, faculty development initiatives are an important part of a centre. We believe there must be the opportunity for consultation and assistance for faculty who wish to improve their teaching. This would include direct consultation with trained professionals.

Orientation for new faculty is another important task for the centre. In the next fifteen years over 50 percent of the faculty will be new at Queen's. We see a need to support these individuals in adjusting to the heightened demands of both teaching and research. Such an orientation program would include an overview of the history of Queen's and its role in the Canadian context, its governance and administration, and the role of and support available for teaching and research. This program might also include workshops on teaching skill development and research grant preparation. We envisage a number of units at Queen's contributing to this program, including the Office of Research Services, which already offers some aspects of such a program, and the Counselling Service. An additional benefit of such a program would be the strengthening of cross-campus and cross-disciplinary ties.

We see the continuing need for the Cross-Faculty Teaching Forum but we also see a need for some co-ordination with the work of the new centre. We propose that the forum continue to mount programs, possibly twice a year, and that the centre provide financial and logistical support.

The other major component of teaching skill development is a TA program. There are currently over 1,000 teaching assistant positions at Queen's, yet there is no comprehensive university-wide program for their support. The Writing Centre now offers a two hour TA workshop on writing and marking skills but there remain many aspects of TA training and development which need to be addressed. By supporting TA development, Queen's not only improves the quality of undergraduate teaching but also demonstrates its commitment to graduate education.

Organizational Structure and Size
We see an organizational structure as outlined in figure 4.

Because a centre for faculty and curriculum development would serve faculty members from across the university, its location in the administrative hierarchy must be consistent with this function. As well as facilitating the workings of a centre, its location within the university hierarchy would provide a strong signal about the importance attributed to the unit. The most appropriate reporting level for the centre's director would be that of a Vice-Principal (Academic). As Queen's does not have a comparable office, possible alternatives include either the VP (Operations and University Relations) or VP (Human Services).

The director of the centre would receive advice from an advisory board. He or she would be an ex-officio member of that board. The other board members would be faculty who are active and well respected in all facets of the scholarly endeavour, and students representing both undergraduates and graduates. Members of the board and its chair would be appointed by the Principal. The board would guide the unit and assist the new director to establish his or her role within the community.

The director should be experienced in instructional development. In some cases this appointment might involve a cross-appointment with tenure in an academic department. Following the appointment of the director, we recommend that there be three other professional positions (curriculum developer, evaluator, and teaching consultant). These positions should be filled by persons with past experience in the field and academic qualifications.

![Organizational Structure Diagram](attachment:figure_4.png)

Figure 4
to give them the credibility required to function in the Queen's environment.

**Expectations**

It is very likely that the proposed centre will be greeted with a great deal of scepticism. Much of this scepticism would be due to the history of past failures at Queen's and in the Province of Ontario. Some of it would be due to the natural reluctance to accept change in, and advice on, activities which one has practiced for many years. This view was initially shared by many members of the Committee, but was alleviated after we saw the success of several instructional development units. This scepticism will diminish only if the Centre successfully demonstrates its ability to serve faculty and enhance the quality of teaching and learning at Queen’s.

At universities such as Harvard, Stanford and Syracuse we have seen documented evidence of improvements in the quality of teaching and learning resulting from their instructional development programs. We are confident that if Queen's adopts our recommendations similar results will be realized here.

**Mandate**

To effect change, the centre requires a long term mandate – probably ten to fifteen years. This term coincides with the impending hiring surge and the time required for a small unit to reach a significant number of faculty through one-on-one consultation. In the short term there should be numerous successes at the level of the individual faculty member, course and curriculum. For these benefits to be recognized in the improvement of the quality of undergraduate education at the institutional level, the long term commitment is required.

**Review of the Mandate**

We think there should be formal reviews of the centre, perhaps every five years, in addition to ongoing reporting to the advisory board. These reviews should consider documented evidence of improvement in the quality of teaching and learning resulting from the involvement of the centre, evidence such as:

- an improvement in student and faculty course evaluations following course or curriculum development
- some indication, within the bounds of confidentiality or with the agreement of the individuals concerned, that there have been positive results from faculty participation in direct consultation
- evidence of demand for the services of the centre.

**Initial Steps**

The advisory board should be drawn from the Queen's community, both faculty and students. The board should reflect the breadth of teaching and research at Queen’s.

The advisory board initially would serve as a search committee for the centre's director and in this capacity would be chaired by the Vice-Principal to whom the centre would report.

We think the search for a director is the most critical activity the board will undertake. The evolution of the centre, its ethos and acceptance are contingent on the choice made. The search will take some time. If it is begun in the fall of 1989, the earliest we can expect to have the director on campus would be the summer of 1990. In order to attract a director of the quality required, a clear commitment of resources for staffing, equipment and space needs to be made.

**Conclusion**

In our review we found there had been numerous initiatives to enhance the quality of teaching and learning at Queen’s. These activities while valuable, leave many aspects of instructional development to be addressed. The Committee believes there is much to be gained by the establishment of an instructional development centre along the lines recommended. We feel that such a centre will result in improved teaching and curriculum design while at the same time increasing the satisfaction of faculty and students with the teaching functions of the University.
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3. 'The Principal’s Advisory Committee on Teaching Effectiveness.' Senate of Queen’s University Papers (December, 1977) Appendix J.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Reports on visits to Instructional Development Centres at other universities.

Appendix B: Programming.*

*Available upon written request from I. Smith, Office of the Vice-Principal (Resources).

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