



Cyclical Program Review Final Assessment Report and Implementation Plan for the Academic Programs Offered by the Department of Economics

Programs Reviewed

Economics: BA, BAH, MA, PhD

MA/JD Joint Program, jointly offered with the School of Law

Applied Economics: BAH

Politics, Philosophy and Economics: BAH. This is the first cyclical review of this program, which commenced in 2017.

The Department also offered a Graduate Diploma in Risk Policy and Regulation from 2014 until 2019, when it stopped admitting students. The Department is in the process of requesting Senate approval to close this program. This program was described in the department's self-study, but not reviewed by the review team.

Overview

In accordance with Queen's University Quality Assurance Processes (QUQAP), this final assessment report (FAR) provides a synthesis of the external evaluation, internal responses, and assessment of the above programs. This report identifies the significant strengths of the programs, and opportunities for program improvement.

An implementation plan (IP) is attached that identifies:

- How will the recommendations be implemented and the expected timeframe for completion?
- who will be responsible for acting on and monitoring progress on the recommendations,
- any resource or governance implications resulting from the recommendations, and
- timelines for implementation of the recommendations.

Final Assessment Report: Executive Summary

Summary of Review

- 1) The Department of Economics produced a self-study document that was reviewed by the Dean, Faculty of Arts and Science, the Vice-Provost and Dean, School of Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs, and the Vice-Provost (Teaching and Learning). The self-study was approved on August 8, 2024.
- 2) The review team visit took place on February 10-11, 2025. The review team members were:
 - i. Dr. Angela Redish, Professor Emeritus, Vancouver School of Economics, University of British Columbia
 - ii. Dr. Audra Bowlus, Professor, Department of Economics, University of Western Ontario
 - iii. Dr. Martin Hand, Professor and Head, Department of Sociology, Faculty of Arts and Science, Queen's University. Internal reviewer.
- 3) The visit included meetings with:
 - i. Students (undergraduate and graduate)
 - ii. Faculty members
 - iii. Staff members
 - iv. Department Head, Undergraduate and Graduate Coordinators
 - v. Heads of cognate departments
 - vi. Librarian
 - vii. Dean, Faculty of Arts and Science
 - viii. Vice-Provost and Dean, School of Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs
 - ix. Vice-Provost (Teaching and Learning)
- 4) The review team reported on March 18, 2025. The Department Head, Faculty Dean and the Vice-Provost and Dean (School of Graduate Studies) provided responses to the review team report by October 9, 2025.
- 5) The Senate Cyclical Program Review Committee considered the review team report, internal responses and a draft Final Assessment Report and Implementation Plan at its meeting on November 20, 2025. The documents were changed slightly during discussion and approved at that meeting.

The following strengths were noted:

- The programs are highly aligned with the university's strategic goals. Faculty members are globally engaged and have strong ties with policy making bodies.
- Undergraduate programs benefit from strong core courses and a range of field courses. The capstone courses allow students to apply the tools of economics to economic problems, while enhancing communication skills.
- The Economics Department is ranked 4th in research output among Economics departments in Canada by a widely used ranking body in the discipline.
- Diverse faculty complement. I-EDIAA addressed in a variety of courses including "Economics of Indigenous Communities".

- The department's seminar series and conferences support a vibrant research environment, valuable for both students and faculty.
- Thoughtful redevelopment of the Applied Economics program.
- Curriculum mitigates against challenges to academic integrity posed by artificial intelligence. Students in undergraduate capstone courses and in graduate courses meet and discuss progress with a faculty advisor. Regular education is provided in courses on academic integrity.

The following opportunities for enhancement were noted:

- The Department is encouraged to conduct a review of practices within and outside of the classroom to make sure issues of equity, diversity, inclusion, Indigenization and accessibility are incorporated as much as possible.
- Improving the accessibility of Dunning Hall.
- Examination of whether staff in certain positions that have taken on additional responsibilities should be regraded.
- Ensuring that supervisory loads are distributed as evenly as possible.
- Development of strategies to encourage classroom attendance and student engagement, partnering with the thriving undergraduate students' societies.
- Development of more elective options in the MA, perhaps delivered by visiting faculty or post-doctoral fellows.

Summary of Review Team Recommendations

The reviewers made 8 recommendations in the following areas. For a full list of the recommendations, please see the Implementation Plan.

- Hire an additional faculty member in Econometrics
- Expand undergraduate student enrolment within existing programs
- Senior administration provides a clear roadmap on the budget process and the impact of revenue-generating activities.
- Carefully steward past benefactors and work with the Advancement office to ascertain further fundraising opportunities.
- Explore ways of increasing financial support for graduate students.
- Explore two new program ideas:
 - Professional master's program in Policy Economics
 - Expanding the business/finance streams of the Applied Economics undergraduate program into direct entry programs.
- Require a PhD prospectus, or equivalent.
- Improve calendar description of courses and ensure that attention is given to equity, diversity, inclusion and Indigenization.

Status

The academic programs in the Department of Economics have been approved to continue.

Dates monitoring reports due: May 2027 & Nov 2029

Date of next review: 2030-2031 academic year

Prepared by Vice-Provost (Teaching and Learning),
Department Head, Faculty Dean & Dean, SGSPA May - October 2025

Approved by the Senate Cyclical Program Review Committee: November 20, 2025



Implementation Plan

Recommendation 1: Hiring in Econometrics.

The delivery of the programs in Economics depends on the ability to deliver courses in Quantitative methods at all levels. The department is currently hiring for one position which will replace a retiring faculty member but this does not solve the issue: Currently, a required PhD course is taught by either a Postdoc or Visitor. This is not an acceptable feature of a PhD program and cannot be a long-term solution. The quality of the Economics department faculty has been the key driver of their excellent scholarly reputation, and indeed that of the University. It is one of the factors determining the University's global ranking which in turn determines interest amongst international students, at all levels. The department should work with the Faculty (possibly the recommendations below can help) in order to secure another econometrics position; investing in a known area of strength is much easier than trying to rebuild from the ground up.

Planned Action(s)	Deans' Contributions to Plan, where appropriate:	Person(s) Responsible for Leading Implementation	Resource and/or Governance Implications	Timeline and Milestones
The department fully endorses this recommendation.	Faculty Dean: The Faculty Office will consider exceptional requests for new positions, but given the current hiring freeze it is unlikely to be successful in the short and medium term.	Faculty Dean, Department Head.	New faculty positions to replace retirements and resignations.	Next 2-3 years to prevent reaching a point of no-return.

Co-development of quantitative skills courses with other departments might be appropriate at the undergraduate and master's level. At the PhD level, the content is too specialized to Economics to be taught in a shared course.	Vice-Provost and Dean, SGSPA: The SGSPA concurs it is likely not feasible at this time owing to financial austerity measures, but the program is encouraged to explore creative measures, such as co-develop courses with other departments.			
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Recommendation 2 (Continuous Improvement): Expand undergraduate enrolment within existing programs

The undergraduate programs have seen significant declines in international undergraduate enrolment. While this is a phenomenon across Canada, it has been particularly severe at Queens suggesting scope for recovery.

- Reach out to the central recruiting team with information about changes to the APEC program. The department has reorganized the APEC program and there is also a suggestion (that we endorse) to create a "Gateway" program for economics. These will be attractive to international students but only if they know about them. We encourage the department to reach out to the central recruiting team and provide them with as much information as possible to support recruitment to these programs. Note that this recommendation only makes sense in an environment of budget clarity – see next.*
- Seek agreement from Commerce program to give students who are rejected from their undergraduate program automatic admission into APEC.*
- Expand access to the PPEC program. The PPEC program currently admits 50 students per year. It is a popular program and could expand somewhat without significant cost.*
- Monitor the enrolment in other programs to ensure that the new programs are not cannibalizing enrolments in existing programs.*

Planned Action(s)	Deans' Contributions to Plan, where appropriate:	Person(s) Responsible for Leading Implementation	Resource and/or Governance Implications	Timeline and Milestones
Work with and augment efforts of central recruiting to promote and market the new modular APEC plan.	Faculty Dean: Support the department with development of	Undergraduate Coordinator, Department Head,	Expansion of the PPEC program will require additional teaching, TA and	One year.

Work with the Commerce Faculty to discuss a mechanism for recruiting students who have applied to Commerce but not been granted admission. Continue to actively monitor the allocation of our students across degree plans.	marketing material for the APEC and PPEC plans. Vice-Provost and Dean, SGSPA: N/A – undergraduate enrollment falls outside of SGSPA oversight.	Undergraduate Studies Committee.	administrative support. The others will not require additional resources.	In time for 2027 admissions cycle. Ongoing effort.
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Recommendation 3: Budget clarity.

We heard from many individuals that the budget process (both within the Faculty and the application of the revenue attribution model at the University level) was opaque. This left individuals nervous about any initiative that might be revenue generating as it seemed that a unit might undertake a considerable investment of time for little to no reward. Similarly, concern that any fund-raising efforts will be heavily taxed centrally reduces the incentive to support advancement efforts. We recommend that the senior administration provide a clear roadmap to the department on how it can secure positions through revenue-generating initiatives.

Planned Action(s)	Deans' Contributions to Plan, where appropriate:	Person(s) Responsible for Leading Implementation	Resource and/or Governance Implications	Timeline and Milestones
The department administration could be made aware of the impact of past and future decisions on revenues generated by the department.	Faculty Dean: This recommendation is largely complete Vice-Provost and Dean, SGSPA: NA, this is primarily a Faculty issue and has largely been completed.	Faculty Dean.	No new resources required.	Ongoing effort.

Recommendation 4 (Continuous Improvement): Advancement

As described above, the department has benefited immeasurably from the endowments and trusts created in the past. It is important to note that these endowments reflect the past strength of the department and its programs and the history of caring for students and public policy. We encourage the department and Faculty to carefully steward past benefactors, not least by honouring their intentions to enhance programs through, for example, graduate funding and seminar/visitor programs (and not to substitute for core program funding). The self-study noted the ‘deeply connected network of alumni’ and that the department intends to further strengthen relationships with alumni. We encourage this and additionally suggest that the department work with the Advancement office to ascertain further opportunities while noting, we repeat, that donors were inspired to contribute to the department by faculty members who were outstanding scholars and who themselves contributed generously to both public policy and student education.

Planned Action(s)	Deans’ Contributions to Plan, where appropriate:	Person(s) Responsible for Leading Implementation	Resource and/or Governance Implications	Timeline and Milestones
Department fully endorses this recommendation, and will continue to honour these intentions, both explicitly and implicitly, by using the funds to augment resources in the department, not substitute existing ones.	Faculty Dean: Advancement staff support Vice-Provost and Dean, SGSPA: The department is encouraged to access support to strengthen alumni relations and build financial capacity.	Department Head, department’s Fundraising committee in conjunction with FAS Advancement.	No new resources required.	Ongoing effort.

Recommendation 5 (Continuous Improvement): Financial support for Graduate students – Department/Faculty/University

The department is justifiably proud of its success in attracting grants (\$6.5m from 2015-2023 excluding infrastructure grants; p.31). We would encourage them to explore mechanisms for using the money committed to graduate student research assistantships in funding packages to attract PhD students given competitors are offering larger packages over five (not four) years.

We heard many concerns that the QGA of \$6,000 for MA students is slated to be withdrawn. This has been a key attractor for the Queens graduate program and we are deeply concerned that this withdrawal will harm the MA program. We recommend its continuance.

Planned Action(s)	Deans' Contributions to Plan, where appropriate:	Person(s) Responsible for Leading Implementation	Resource and/or Governance Implications	Timeline and Milestones
Continue QGA funding for MA students.	<p>Faculty Dean: Continue to advocate for QGA support</p> <p>Vice-Provost and Dean, SGSPA: We agree that QGA plays a critically important role in supporting master's students.</p>	Vice-Provost and Dean, SGSPA.		

Recommendation 6: New programs

In the current budgetary environment, we were told that revenue generation is key to any program improvements that are financially costly. We believe there is scope for some programmatic innovation within the Economics Department that would attract new students. We are very aware that the current faculty, and staff, are stretched thinly. Development of new programs takes time and energy. We encourage the Faculty or Central University to provide short term support for program development (assessing demand, assisting with program approvals...) and again relate this to Recommendation 3. We considered the possibility of programs offered jointly with other units (including the Industrial Relations Centre, the Public Administration program and the Centre in Innovation and Policy Research) but did not find much scope for joint programming that would result in net new revenues with the caveat that we did not have much time to explore such opportunities during our visit. Instead we offer two new program ideas that could be done within the department.

- *One new program could be a professional Master's program in Policy Economics. Here there are significant headwinds to consider given considerable competition from other programs in Ontario and the relationship with the current MA program in Economics. However, Queens has a very strong reputation in the field of Canadian economic policy, and existing relationships with policy makers which are huge assets.*
- *A second new program could be a direct entry undergraduate program in addition to classifying economics as a "gateway" program. If possible, the most straightforward path would be to make the two business/finance streams of the newly constructed APEC program into direct entry programs.*

Planned Action(s)	Deans' Contributions to Plan, where appropriate:	Person(s) Responsible for Leading Implementation	Resource and/or Governance Implications	Timeline and Milestones
<p>Department endorses the idea of exploring revenue-generation ideas, but somewhat skeptical of the feasibility and possible chances of success of the two suggested programs.</p> <p>Exploration of other pathways, some jointly with other faculties.</p> <p>Work closely with colleagues across disciplines to include appropriate Economics content in the redeveloped Master of Public Administration program.</p>	<p>Faculty Dean: Continue to support the unit</p> <p>Vice-Provost and Dean, SGSPA: Should the department wish to explore new programs, they are encouraged to reach out to the SGSPA and VPTL.</p>	Department Head, department's Undergraduate and Graduate Coordinators.	Department's teaching and supervisory capacity is the major constraint. Development of any new programs will require commitments for permanent faculty positions in relevant areas, as well as financial and administrative support to study the feasibility of and develop new programs.	Ongoing effort. But even in best case scenario, development and approval of a new program will take 3 years or more.

Recommendation 7: (Continuous improvement) Require a PhD prospectus (or equivalent)

The self-study noted that the department would like to see PhD students move more quickly towards their thesis work, in particular by developing their 2nd year paper. A number of Economics PhD programs require a student to present a prospectus by the end of year 3 to a group of relevant faculty members out of which the student's committee is assigned. This provides a clearer goal for the students and ensures they have multiple faculty providing feedback at an early stage.

Planned Action(s)	Deans' Contributions to Plan, where appropriate:	Person(s) Responsible for Leading Implementation	Resource and/or Governance Implications	Timeline and Milestones
The Graduate Coordinator and the department's Graduate Studies Committee will discuss the	Faculty Dean: N/A	Department's Graduate Coordinator and	No new resources required. But will result in some	Departmental discussion and

recommendation, see how it complements our current mechanisms, and explore operational details for its implementation.	Vice-Provost and Dean, SGSPA: The SGSPA welcomes conversation on how to improve times to completion.	Graduate Studies Committee.	increase in workload of Graduate Coordinator and Graduate Assistant.	approval are expected within one year. Implementation in years 2-3.
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Recommendation 8: (Continuous improvement) Improve calendar description of courses and ensure that attention is given to EDII

The self-study notes both of these issues, and we commend the department for highlighting them. We note that the department responded to the previous review by introducing a new course “The Economics of Indigenous Communities”. The curriculum mapping has highlighted how issues of EDII are covered across the curriculum, and we encourage the department to continue to contribute to education in these areas.

Planned Action(s)	Deans’ Contributions to Plan, where appropriate:	Person(s) Responsible for Leading Implementation	Resource and/or Governance Implications	Timeline and Milestones
Need to ensure that calendar descriptions of all courses are updated to reflect more accurately their current content.	Faculty Dean: N/A Vice-Provost and Dean, SGSPA: N/A	Departmental Undergraduate Studies committee and the Graduate Studies committee.	No new resources required.	Ongoing effort, expected to be completed in 1 - 2 years.
Develop a more comprehensive catalogue of the coverage of EDII issues across the curriculum.	Faculty Dean: N/A Vice-Provost and Dean, SGSPA: N/A	Departmental Undergraduate Studies committee, Graduate Studies committee, I-EDIAA committee.	No new resources required. The Department will consult with the Centre for Teaching & Learning.	Ongoing effort, expected to be completed in 1 - 2 years.