

Internal Academic Review Committee
Report on the Review of the Department of Economics

The Department of Economics at Queen's University, as noted in the report of the external consultants, is "one of Canada's leading Economics departments, and one with a substantial international reputation". It enjoys a distinguished history in every area of its enterprise. Both the graduate and undergraduate programs are highly regarded as being rigorous and of outstanding quality; numerous graduates have gone on to distinguished careers in government, academia and the private sector. Moreover, faculty members in this Department, well-known for their excellent research and scholarship, have long played a leading role in contributing to public debate on economic and social policy in Canada. All of these factors notwithstanding, preserving a position as one of the top departments in the country could prove to be a difficult challenge if some important issues facing the Department are not addressed in the very near future.

Major Recommendations

1. STAFFING STRATEGY: The Department of Economics at Queen's, as is the case in other universities, is subject to external market forces which make it increasingly difficult to establish and maintain a stable faculty complement of an adequate size. There is a worldwide demand for productive scholars in this field and competition for new recruits

of high quality continues to intensify. This, along with continuing budgetary constraints within the University, have affected the Department's ability both to recruit and to retain first-rate scholars or to replace senior faculty members who have retired, and according to the views expressed in the IAR reports, the result has been a decline in the Department's stature.

The IARC recommends that as an immediate priority, the Department of Economics, working with the Faculty of Arts and Science, develop a comprehensive staffing strategy to address its short and longer term staffing problems. The staffing strategy should take into account the realities of the market as well as specifically addressing the issues of employment equity and faculty retention.

Other Recommendations the Department may wish to consider

1. The Department of Economics has two different routes with varying minimum course requirements that lead to the doctoral degree, depending on whether the students enrolling have completed their previous work at Queen's or elsewhere. The IARC noted that there are sound academic reasons in support of such a policy. Moreover, it is evident that the Department is flexible in its application of the policy, although the way that it is currently presented on the Department's website does not reflect this reality. In the circumstances, the IARC recommends that the language on the website be revised to more accurately indicate the flexibility that exists in assessing program requirements for individual students at the doctoral level.

Outcomes of the Review:

Joint response submitted by the Dean, Faculty of Arts and Science and the Head of the Department of Economics:

1. DEPARTMENT PROFILE:

Although the Economics Department is still one of the strongest departments in the Faculty of Arts and Science, there are signs of serious trouble ahead for the Department if resources cannot be found to support it. The external reviewers provide convincing evidence that it remains in the top 5 departments in Canada, in the top 15 in the US and Canada, and in the top 60 in the world. This reputation, and specifically the reputations of the graduate programs, are in serious jeopardy because of the erosion of faculty (37 in 1993 to 25 in 2002). High faculty turnover – a characteristic of Economics Departments – must be addressed.

2. STAFFING STRATEGY:

The Department of Economics is in full agreement with the major recommendation of the IARC report that the Department “working with the Faculty of Arts & Science, develop a comprehensive staffing strategy”, through an updated website and other marketing and recruiting measures, as well as through serious attention to equity issues. Implementing the recommendation will require a significant departure from recent practice. For such a strategy to be effective an appropriate faculty complement will have to be established as a goal, which is independent of resignations and retirements. This will allow the Department to go out on the market and recruit until it meets that complement.

3. FACULTY COMMITMENT

The Faculty of Arts & Science is committed to supporting the Department of Economics, and facilitating the establishment of a staffing strategy as indicated in point no. 2.

Follow-up on these recommendations and issues will take place in the annual budget and staffing strategy meetings between the Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Science and the Vice-Principal (Academic).