York University Quality Assurance Procedures (YUQAP)
New Program Appraisal

External Appraisal Report on the Proposed New Master of Management Degree at Schulich School of Business

External Reviewer(s): Cheryl McWatters
Professor
Telfer School of Management, University of Ottawa

Anthony Goerzen
Professor
Smith School of Business, Queen’s University

1. Outline of the Visit
- Who was interviewed
- What facilities were seen
- Any other activities relevant to the appraisal

Friday, November 27, 2015
8:30 – 9:30 AM Breakfast with Vice Provost, Executive Dining Room, Schulich
Alice Pitt (Vice Provost Academic),
Barbara Crow (Dean, Faculty of Grad Studies),
Dezső Horvath (Dean, Schulich),
Markus Biehl (Assoc. Dean Academic),
Tom Beechy (TF Chair, Master of MGMT)

9:30 – 10:00 AM Faculty of Graduate Studies
Barbara Crow, Dean, FGS

10:00 – 10:45 AM Introduction to Schulich
Dezső Horvath, Markus Biehl

11:00 – 11:45 AM Master of Management Program Task Force & Faculty
Tom Beechy, Prof. Emeritus, Accounting, TF Chair
Kevin Tasa, Assoc. Prof., Organizations Studies; TF Member
Kiridaran Kanagaretnam, Professor, Accounting; TF Member
Ashwin Joshi, Assoc. Prof., Marketing; TF Member
Farrohk Zandi, Instructor, Economics
Mike Valente, Assoc. Prof., Organizations Studies
James MacKay, Director, Strategy Field Study (“601”)

1:00 – 1:30 PM Building Tour
Schulich facilities, including classrooms, meeting space and the business library.

1:30 – 2:15 PM Admissions, Student Services, Career Development
Melissa Judd, Asst. Dean, Students
Keshia Gray, Director, Student Services
Rob Hines, Exec. Director, Career Development Centre
2. General Objectives of the Program

- Is/are the program name and degree designation(s) appropriate?
- For graduate programs that wish to have a Quality Council endorsed field(s), are the fields indicated in the proposal appropriate?
- Are the general objectives of the program clear and are they consistent with University and Faculty missions and academic plans?

The program name, Master of Management, is consistent with the name used for similar programs in Canada including the University of British Columbia (14-month program) and the University of Windsor (16-month program). Other Canadian business schools offer a M.Sc. in Management (e.g., Queen’s University, Western University, Wilfrid Laurier University, Ryerson University and Brock University), some of which are research-based. Royal Roads offers a Masters in Global Management which includes an optional six-month internship. In the United States, similar degrees are offered at the University of Michigan and Duke University.

The program name and designation seem appropriate in that it is a general management program. It is not entirely clear how this degree designation would be understood in the job market relative to Schulich’s well-established MBA or as a post-graduate degree, more generally.

The program is designed to fit within York University’s mandate to increase graduate-level enrolment. However, as the program is designed to draw from local students in the GTA area, it does not appear to be aligned clearly with the University’s internationalization objective in terms of both student intake and course design. More generally, we note that the current program objectives do not at present include the University’s and the Schulich’s “internationalization” strategy, as outlined in its Mission, Vision and Key Strategies.

Notwithstanding, the general objectives of the program are clear in that it offers a management degree that is general in nature with a balance of quantitative and qualitative elements. Striking the correct balance of the latter will be critical to ensure that students are marketable in terms of possessing both management “soft” and “hard” skills.

3. Need and Demand

- Is there sufficient explanation of need/demand for the program?

The proposed program is targeted towards “direct entry” students (i.e., students with no work experience). It intends to fill the gap in MBA programs which do not encourage or accept students who have no relevant experience by offering a general management graduate degree in a one-year format. In contrast, the Schulich MBA is a two-
year program requiring several years of work experience. The Master of Management program also differs from a number of MBA programs (for example, Dalhousie University, Wilfrid Laurier, McMaster) which incorporate a co-op model and/or internships to provide relevant work experience. It is also distinct from a number of specialized masters programs offered at Schulich. The potential demand for the this program was explained well, underscoring that other business schools have introduced similar programs to react to the shifting market realities in graduate business education.

Depending on the availability of student bursaries and/or scholarships, the program entrants also would incur substantial costs in terms of tuition and fees. Thus, program design and marketability are essential such that graduates receive the intended improvements in their career prospects.

The program may prove valuable for those who do not wish to pursue career opportunities in the area of their undergraduate studies. It may be less attractive to graduates from professionally-oriented undergraduate programs (for example, engineering, nursing, education, pharmacy). Unlike other programs at Schulich, it is targeted primarily to the domestic market; as such the Masters of Management would provide one potential means for students to pivot towards improved job opportunities if the degree is recognized adequately in the marketplace. It is noteworthy that students would still leave this program with minimal work experience with which to enter the job market.

4. Program Content and Curriculum

- Does the curriculum reflect the current state of the discipline or area of study? If applicable, comment on the appropriateness of any unique curriculum or program innovations or creative components.
- For undergraduate programs, comment on the appropriateness of the anticipated class sizes. For graduate programs, is there adequate evidence that each graduate student in the program will take a minimum of two-thirds of the course requirements from among graduate level courses?

The intention of the proposed program is to provide a general introduction to the area of management with a particular emphasis on “soft skills” (i.e., communication, teamwork, etc.) and we agree with the logic of this approach. At the same time, while the curriculum covers many of the key aspects of general management in an appropriate way, a number of issues arose in our open, frank, and wide-ranging conversations with faculty and school administrators as described more detail below:

1. Overarching framework of the program is not clear

   The program is designed to provide a general management education and has enlisted many of Schulich’s best instructors to teach their courses. There also appears to be an underlying theme that relates to “soft skills” with a particular emphasis on teams, teamwork, communication, presentation skills, etc. Yet, the overarching framework of the program is not as clear at this point as it might be. This aspect could be remedied by a more careful elaboration of why the individual course topics were chosen, why they are sequenced in the way that they are, and how they fit together to build a coherent perspective on general management.

2. International Component Missing

   Particularly in light of the fact that one of Schulich’s strategic pillars relates to a global awareness and international engagement, it was notable that the proposed program made almost no mention of international business. We would have anticipated that any Schulich program would include international concepts including the Masters of Management. One way to address this issue may be to encourage individual instructors to highlight the ways in which international concepts already are embedded into their courses as well as perhaps requiring that a certain significant percentage of each course (e.g., cases and readings) address international issues.

3. Combination of Courses

   We notice that several courses combined content and we consider this to be problematic. We understand that it is important to bring a more holistic approach to the analysis of general management, however we were concerned that combining “Strategy Thinking and Presentation Skills”, for example, as well as “Business Communication and Team Dynamics” may create problems in both staff selection and content delivery. We believe, for example, that Strategic Thinking as well as Presentation Skills are both important topics and we wonder if one instructor would have the content expertise to deliver both simultaneously. Perhaps even more importantly, we would be afraid that one topic or the other may be given short shrift, if left as a combination, especially in view of the fact that these ideas are key to the overall intent of the program. For example, with respect to Team Dynamics, a central piece of
the proposed program, we believe that the concepts and practices that need to be covered are quite extensive and may need much more time than is currently allotted. Similarly with respect to the course on Strategic Thinking, it may be that this concept becomes more central to the overarching theme of the program (see point 1 above) and may deserve thereby much more class time than is reflected in the current proposal.

4. Teams

We notice that teamwork has been identified as a key aspect of the program and that most, if not all, courses will have a teamwork component. As a result, we suggest that additional thought go into various aspects of teams including team composition and continuity by addressing the following points, to name a few:

- how will team membership be established (student self-selection or instructor);
- will diversity within teams be required and, if so, on what dimension(s);
- will students work within the same team across courses to eliminate the significant difficulty of working within multiple teams given students' time constraints; and
- if multiple-course teams are formed at the Program level, how will instructors guard against students dividing work rather than collaborating as a team.

In addition, experience shows that student teams are predictably unstable and many teams will face challenges and some will go beyond the breaking point to combustion. It is not clear how, or if, the Program will address problems such as these. The instructor for the Team Dynamics course may be charged with the responsibility of keeping teams running. Alternatively, either the individual course instructors or perhaps the Program Director may take on this task. However, we note that neither of the latter have the content expertise which risks undermining the integrity of the Team Dynamics course content (and the extent to which the team curriculum lessons are reinforced across courses).

5. Integration

We understand that the Program is intended to have an integrated, more holistic composition (although see Point 1 above) yet it was not clear how integration would happen, particularly in the combined courses (e.g., Strategic Thinking and Presentation Skills). Significant integration may occur by having more than one instructor teach a given course but the challenges in this case relate to the costs of delivery and the difficulty of achieving collaboration amongst faculty. A lighter form of integration could occur by having faculty meet regularly simply to discuss their ideas and to share information. Another lighter form may be to request that faculty use common cases which imparts the sense of integration as students examine similar course materials to derive different lessons. In any case, we suggest that some additional thought be given to the ways in which integration could happen most effectively.

6. Masters of Management as a Niche Program among Schulich’s list of Programs

It appeared to us that one of Schulich’s key considerations when designing the Program was a clear desire to avoid overlap in content that may be available in other Schulich programs. In our view, this objective seemed to sometimes eliminate from consideration certain ideas that may benefit students within the Masters of Management program. One example has to do with bringing more international content into the Program. Although Schulich offers various undergraduate and graduate-level courses that are focused on the international side, we believe that the proposed program should be stand alone and that the Program should allow students to obtain a rounded education while still recognizing the inherent time constraints. In our view, Schulich should put forward a convincing case that the courses are designed to achieve the overarching theme without eliminating any aspects from consideration simply because they may be available in other Schulich programs.

7. Courses from the existing MBA program

Three of the proposed courses are part of the existing MBA course structure: Financial Accounting, Organizational Behaviour, and Marketing Management. As noted in Point 6 above, there was an expressed desire by Schulich to avoid overlap with other programs. Thus, it is not clear why these three courses were deemed to be suitable for this program as well (which may be the case but it does conflict with arguments presented that there would be no cross-fertilization of students). We also encourage discussion of how these courses could be customized (as they are to be offered in separate sections) for the proposed program yet be the same course in terms of required content, deliverables, and student assessment. In our opinion, the rationale for adopting these courses should be clearer and also efforts made to ensure that the students in this stream do not get the sense that they are receiving a watered-down version of MBA courses. Given that at least one if not two of these courses are
more technical in nature, and the program has been designed to exclude technical material, it could be problematic to have students graduate having taken seemingly the same course that is not actually the same, particularly when technical skills are critical for subsequent employment.

8. Selection of Electives

In our opinion, the electives currently being proposed for the Masters of Management program seem fairly random (as opposed to thematic). Within the constraints that exist at any business school, we encourage Schulich to consider courses that would be important to Masters of Management students and that fit within the Program’s overarching theme.

5. Program Structure, Learning Outcomes, and Assessment

- Are the program requirements and learning outcomes clear, appropriate and in alignment with the relevant degree level expectations?
- Comment on the appropriateness of the program curriculum and structure to support the program learning outcomes. For undergraduate programs, comment on the nature and suitability of students’ final-year academic achievement in the program. For research-focused graduate programs, comment on the nature and suitability of the major research requirement(s).
- Are the methods and criteria for assessing student achievement appropriate and effective relative to the program learning outcomes?
- For graduate programs, comment on the appropriateness of the program length, including on how students’ time-to-completion will be supported and managed to ensure that the program requirements can be reasonably completed within the proposed time period.
- Comment on the appropriateness of the proposed mode(s) of delivery to meet the program learning outcomes.

It should be noted that the external reviewers were only provided with brief course descriptions and not full course outlines. Thus our evaluation of learning outcomes is limited in our ability to link outcomes to course design, deliverables, and assessment techniques.

We encourage the Program to consider developing a series of metrics that would allow the measurement of a “learning delta” on proposed learning outcomes (as described on p. 8 of the Program Brief) including, for example

- an improved understanding how diverse disciplines intersect;
- an ability to work effectively in teams (i.e., more effectively when they graduate as compared to when they arrive);
- a greater appreciation for social, ethical, and environmental obligations; and
- a greater understanding for the various methods of evaluating management.

We also encourage consideration that the faculty assigned to this program develop processes to ensure that the team-based format extends to those assigned to teach in the program. Communication across the faculty could contribute to the continuous improvement of the program offerings and enhance student outcomes, both of which are included as part of Schulich’s strategic objectives.

6. Admission Requirements

- Are the admission requirements appropriately aligned with the program learning outcomes?
- Is there sufficient explanation of any alternative requirements, if any, for admission into an undergraduate, graduate, or second-entry program, such as minimum grade point average, additional languages, or portfolios, along with how the program recognizes prior work or learning experience?

The program has established a set of admission criteria that equate with the reality that this program will be highly demanding with three terms of intense studies. The minimum GPA (B+) will be used to screen students in first instance if applications exceed current capacity in the program. The admissions process includes an interview stage to assess student motivation and readiness for the program but how this process would take place could be
clarified in terms of the student profile. In contrast to most other graduate programs in management, no GMAT is required as it is perceived to be a detractor for graduates with less quantitative backgrounds.

7. Resources

For all programs
- Adequacy of the administrative unit’s planned utilization of existing human, physical, and financial resources, and any institutional commitment to supplement those resources, to support the program.
- Appropriateness of the collective faculty expertise to contribute substantively to the program.
- Participation of a sufficient number and quality of faculty who are competent to teach and/or supervise in the program, including qualifications, research, innovation, and scholarly record.
- Evidence that there are adequate resources (e.g. library, laboratory) to sustain the quality of scholarship produced by undergraduate students as well as graduate students’ scholarship and research activities.

Our interviews have reinforced our view that Schulich has adequate resources to deliver this program, particularly as it will take advantage of lower resource requirements in the MBA (reduced enrollment). We recommend that adequate administrative staff be available for this program and efforts made to ensure that areas such as career advising and placement develop appropriate means to place these students and transition them to full-time employment. It was not clear how graduates of this program would be presented, as they would fit on a spectrum between a Bachelors and a MBA; with a graduate degree, less work experience than an MBA but ahead of the undergraduates by virtue of having completed undergraduate and graduate degrees. Yet, they would have, given the direct-entry to the program, less experience than an MBA graduate.

As noted earlier, it would strengthen the program to ensure that full-time faculty teach in this program such that there is a sense that the program is at the same level of quality for which the Schulich MBA and BBA programs are recognized.

The library resources are more than adequate for this program and we were favourably impressed with the library facilities, and the collections housed within the School.

Additional criteria for undergraduate programs only
- Evidence of and planning for adequate numbers and quality of: (a) faculty and staff to achieve the goals of the program; or (b) of plans and the commitment to provide the necessary resources in step with the implementation of the program; (c) planned/anticipated class sizes; (d) provision of supervision of experiential learning opportunities (if required); and (e) the role of adjunct and contract faculty.

Additional criteria for graduate programs only
- Evidence that faculty have the recent research or professional/clinical expertise needed to sustain the program, promote innovation and foster an appropriate intellectual climate.
- Where appropriate to the program, evidence that financial assistance for students will be sufficient to ensure adequate quality and numbers of students.
- Evidence of how supervisory loads will be distributed, and the qualifications and appointment status of faculty who will provide instruction and supervision.

Schulich has a faculty with breadth in terms of research capacity. Many of the Schulich faculty are globally recognized for their research. Thus, we would expect that the level of the program would be intellectually challenging and of high quality.

We have been assured that students would be eligible for OSAP funding but there was no mention of scholarships and bursaries specific to this program. Given that the tuition for this program has been stated as being in the $50,000 range, it would be encouraging to consider possibilities for program-specific student funding such that the program does not benefit a select group or burden students with significant student debt. This point relates
also to placement of program graduates. We would encourage further thinking on how and where these graduates would be placed as part of the marketing of the program to both potential students and employers.

8. Quality of Student Experience

- Is the evidence of a program structure and faculty research that will ensure the intellectual quality of the student experience?

Note: Reviews are urged to avoid using references to individuals. Rather, they are asked to assess the ability of the faculty as a whole to deliver the program and to comment on the appropriateness of each of the areas/fields of the program that the university has chosen to emphasize, in view of the expertise and scholarly productivity of the faculty.

We do not have adequate information (course outlines, deliverables) etc. with which to assess that the program structure in significant detail. However, as noted earlier, Schulich has a strong research culture to contribute positively to the student experience.

9. Other Issues

We have no other issue on which to report.

10. Summary and Recommendations (Note: The responsibility for arriving at a recommendation on the final classification of the program belongs to the Appraisal Committee. Individual reviewers are asked to refrain from making recommendations in this respect.)