



## **Master of Business Administration in Community Economic Development Quality Assurance Review**

### **Executive Summary**

On April 22, 2016, a letter from the Vice-President Academic and Provost (VPA&P) at the time, Dr. Dale Keefe, was sent to the Dean of the Shannon School of Business (SSOB), George Karaphillis, launching a review of the Master of Business Administration in Community Economic Development (MBA CED). In response to this, on June 8, 2016, Dean Karaphillis submitted the composition of the MBA CED Review Committee (RC) to the VPA&P. The first meeting of the RC took place on November 4, 2016.

The first full draft of the self-study report was submitted to the Quality Assurance Committee of Senate (QAC) on December 4, 2017. Revisions were suggested and the finalized report was submitted to the Office of the VPA&P on January 19, 2018. This report was sent to the external reviewers in preparation for the external site visit.

The site visit took place on February 27-28, 2018. The two external reviewers – Dr. Darryl Reed, Department of Social Science, Business & Society Program, Faculty of Liberal Arts & Professional Studies, York University and Dr. A. Scott Carson, Smith School of Business, Queen’s University - were assisted by CBU faculty member, Dr. Rod Nicholls. The visit involved meetings with a broad cross-section of faculty, staff and students, as well as tours of various university.

In their report, submitted to the VPA&P on March 20, 2018, the external reviewers expressed satisfaction with the program’s overall structure, learning outcomes, structural alignment of curriculum to educational goals, and the level of scholarly activity by faculty members. They identify the program as unique, fitting very well with the mission of Cape Breton University. While they note the program has generally been successful in maintaining quality through a prolonged period of sustained growth, they raise a number of issues and concerns largely related to this growth.

The reviewers make a series of recommendations, organized under six categories: Curriculum, Recruitment & Admissions, Faculty Resources, Governance, Research, and Student Experience. These recommendations are provided here in summary form.

#### **1. Curriculum**

**1.1 Planning** – Formalize the processes and practice of curriculum planning and clearly articulate/communicate the strategic goals of the program.

**1.2 Applied Research Project (ARP)** – Maintain the ARP – a distinctive and integral feature of the program. A course-based option should, at best, be seen as an option to deal with exceptional circumstances.

**1.3 Certificate Option** – Consider a graduate certificate option that includes all the coursework but does not require the completion of the ARP.

## **2. Recruitment & Admissions**

**2.1 Integration** – Improve communication and collaboration with university offices, especially Enrolment Services and Marketing & Communications.

**2.2 Alumni** – Utilize alumni more in recruitment efforts, including increasing the online presence of alumni to more broadly communicate the benefits of the degree.

## **3. Faculty Resources**

**3.1 Full-time Faculty Complement** – Invest in additional full-time, tenure-track faculty positions.

**3.2 Internal Collaboration** – Enhance connection to other academic departments at CBU through such means as cross-appointments and cross-listed courses.

## **4. Governance**

**4.1 Formalize Governance** – Improve formal governance documents and procedures such as job descriptions, workloads, reporting channels, and curriculum planning.

## **5. Research**

**5.1 Workload** – Given the importance of the program in increasing the research profile of the School and the University, full-time faculty members of the program should not:

- be regularly required to teach in all 3 semesters
- feel pressured to regularly teach overtime
- be over-burdened with supervisory obligations

### **5.2 Graduate Student Research**

- Convey the importance of the research component of the degree in all of its promotional and curriculum materials, including its welcome package.
- Work closely with the Dean of Research, Teaching & Graduate Studies to promote existing research funding opportunities for graduate students and establish in-house research support.
- Establish online profiles of graduate students and graduates which indicate their research interests and provide access to completed ARPs and other graduate student *publications*.

**5.3 Research Infrastructure** – Improve collaboration with existing internal units such as the CED Institute, the Tompkins Institute, and the Office of Research & Graduate Studies to provide a strong basis for seeking larger collaborative research grants - a prospect which is enhanced by the program's and the university's close relationships with local and regional community organizations.

## 6. Student Experience

**6.1 Academic Support Services** - Improve communication about, and access to, the various academic support services available to graduate students.

In addition to these, a number of recommendations were expressed throughout the external reviewer's report. They are articulated here, along with the section of the report in which they are found.

*Under Recruitment & Admissions:*

**2.3 Faculty** (see B.2) - *Link faculty bios directly to the program website to highlight faculty research*

**2.4 Admission Standards** (see B.2, B.5) – *Review the impact of lower-than-average admission standards and admission waivers on student outcomes, the quality of classroom discussions, and group work.*

*Under Student Experience:*

**6.2 Intellectual and Social Climate** (see B.4.2) – *Improve the intellectual and social climate through means such as seminar series and student participation in academic conferences.*

**6.3 Academic Advising** (see B.4.2, B.4.3, B.5) – *Review quality and availability of academic advising in light of the below-average ratings in the student and alumni surveys.*

The MBA CED RC submitted a response to the external reviewers' report to the Office of the VPA&P on May 16, 2018. The response was reviewed by the QAC, together with the external reviewers' report. The QAC submitted comments to the VPA&P for consideration in his response. The final report was submitted to Senate for approval at the November 9, 2018 meeting.