

Program Review

# Final Report

Post-Degree Diplomas

**Submitted to**  
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**Faculty of Business and Applied Studies**

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## A. Executive Summary

The School of Business developed a Self-Study and shared with three reviewers who formed the External Review Team. The reviewers virtually met various people at NIC for two days to explore and learn more about the challenges and successes of the School of Businesses Post-Degree Diploma programs.

The reviewers provided a total of 12 recommendations related to commitment to learners, program structures, the learning community, practices, and collective impact. These included recommendations regarding curriculum development, program goals, student engagement, Indigenization, and internationalization.

The School of Business has created a final report summarizing their Self-Study recommendations along with the recommendations from the External Review Team. This report accompanies an Action Plan report.

## B. Background

In accordance with North Island College's Policy 3-11 and the Quality Assurance Process Audit specifics (QAPA), this Final Report synthesizes the PDD Self-Study conducted by the School of Business and the External Review Report.

The Self-Study was completed in February 2019 and submitted to the Dean of Business and Applied Studies, Diane Naugler. It included a brief history of the diploma programs, a description of the programs' currency and relevance to labour market supply and demand, student demand and retention rates, an exploration of the strengths and opportunities in curriculum design and instruction, program resources, services and facilities. Survey data from current students, alumni and faculty were included to support the conclusions and recommendations of the Self-Study.

Due to the onset of the global pandemic, the External Review was postponed from Spring 2020 until March 9 and 10, 2021. The planned onsite visit was rescheduled to be a collection of online meetings using the web conferencing platform, Zoom.

The External Review Team consisted of Bryan Webber, Acting Dean, Faculty of Management, Vancouver Island University and Seth Downs, Chair, Business and Public Administration Programs, Coast Mountain College. The internal member of the review team was Jen Wrye, Instructor, Faculty Member, Humanities and Social Sciences, North Island College.

The External Review Team, in fulfillment of its responsibilities, met with:

- Executive Vice-President Academic and Chief Operating Officer: Lisa Domae per Tony Bellavia
- Dean, Faculty of Business and Applied Studies: Diane Naugler
- Program Review Chair: Norma Pelletier
- Department Chair: Ali Mayboudi

The External Review Team met with the following people involved in faculty supports:

### Office of Global Engagement

- Executive Director, International Education: Mark Herringer
- Manager, International Education: Jen Barth
- Manager, International Projects, Partnerships & Global Education: Romana Pasca
- Manager, International Enrolment and Recruitment: Junko Leclair
- Advisors, International Student Success: Angie Price and Li Yan

### Faculty and Program Support Areas

- Manager, Centre for Applied Research, Tech & Innovation: Naomi Tabata
- Director, Centre for Teaching and Learning Innovation: Liesel Knaack
- Manager, Human Resources Department: Danean Gray
- Director, Information Technology Department: per Fetze Elgersma
- Manager, Institutional Research and Planning: Wes Skulmoski
- Director, Marketing and Communications: Alex Khan

## Student Supports and Service Areas

- Associate Vice President, Student Services and Registrar: Kathleen Kuhnert
- Coordinator, Library Services: Lynette Gallant
- Coordinator, Learning Commons (Peer Tutors, Math & Writing): Caitlin Hartnett
- Learning Specialist, Accessible Learning Services: Niki Baird
- Assistant Registrar, Enrolment Services and Advising: Sarah Deagle
- Educational Advisor: Brooke McIntosh
- Coordinator, Student Employment Services: Anita Budisa-Bonneau
- Manager, Student Life: Dean Martin
- Director, Student Affairs and Campus Admin: Felicity Blaiklock
- Helpdesk Analyst, Student Tech Services: Tyler Dean

The external team also met with faculty and students (both current and alumni).

This final report is based on the PDD Self-Study, the External Review Report, and the responses from the PDD program faculty.

It is important to note that much has changed since the completion of the Self-Study and the External Review as the effects of the COVID pandemic have been felt across all post-secondary institutions. The following changes have occurred that will inform how the recommendations initially identified are interpreted and acted upon accordingly.

1. There has been a significant drop in the number of international students in the 2020-21 academic year due to ongoing travel restrictions (about 60% of IE headcount, which is almost equivalent to 30% of all headcounts).
2. During the 2020-2021 academic year and with the support of the Centre for Teaching and Learning Innovation, all courses were offered digitally in two formats: synchronous and asynchronous.
3. North Island College policy now states that students need a minimum GPA of 2.00 to receive their credentials.
4. There has been an increase in faculty workload due to transitioning to remote teaching, reducing the time available for course-specific professional development.
5. The Widening Our Doorways 10 Point Academic Plan was developed in the Fall of 2020 in response to the effects of the pandemic and to meet the needs of a rapidly evolving teaching and learning environment.
6. In April 2021, North Island College welcomed a new President, Dr. Lisa Domae, who has launched a new Build 2026 Strategic Plan that continues to be developed in consultation with and feedback from the community.
7. In June 2021, North Island College launched its first Indigenous plan called Working Together 2021-2026 to align with the Build 2026 plan.

## C. Program Characteristics

In 2008, in response to increasing demands by international students for post-graduate certificates, NIC created a one-year Post-Degree Diploma (PDD), with an aim to also increase enrolments in third and fourth-year business courses and overall diversity within the student population.

Changes in Canadian immigration policy further allowed international students to remain and work in Canada after enrolment in a two-year study program and facilitated the creation of a two-year PDD Program. Up to the point of completion of the Self-Study in fall of 2019, the School of Business experienced exponential growth in the number of international students, with an overall increase of 156% in full-time international students. Over the same period, full-time equivalent faculty numbers increased from 7.5 FTE to 9.25 FTE.

The one-year Post-Degree diploma (PDD) has five options: General Management, International Management, Marketing, Accounting and Finance, and Human Resource Management. The two-year Post-Degree diploma has two majors: Global Business Management (GBM) and Pre-Professional Accountant (PPA). Changes to the PDD programs since 2012 have included:

- Required courses being added to support students who need greater math and English support
- Addition of a Human Resource Management option to the one-year PDD program
- Collaboration with the Aboriginal Education department to develop an Aboriginal Business education option within its programs

Courses are primarily offered at the Comox Valley campus and the Campbell River campus. Port Alberni and Mixalakwa campuses support online business courses and deliver a few business courses in class or through Interactive Television (ITV), a video-based conferencing environment. Students have access to various internship opportunities to gain work experience, along with the chance to take part in a mentorship program and gain Youth Leadership sponsored awards.

The School of Business currently consists of twelve full-time and approximately three part-time faculty members (2021 spring).



## D. Summary of Strengths and Challenges

Given the rapidly changing educational environment, the School of Business has expanded its offerings to include more remote and digital learning opportunities, broadening our ability to serve a wider cross-section of students.

Any action items coming out of the Self-Study and External Review Report will need to consider these changes in the post-secondary landscape.

### Strengths

The School of Business faculty are highly qualified and engage actively in professional development opportunities. A faculty-driven approach to curriculum development makes the most of faculty expertise.

Overall, the demand for PDD programs remains constant with a high interest in the Human Resources Management major. There is continued strong demand for the GBM program with a strong 83% of students achieving their diplomas. Demand for the PPA program has increased since its introduction and 3 out of 4 PPA alumni surveyed are working in a field related to their program. Local demand for business professionals has increased and those employing PDD graduates state that they are hardworking, creative, enthusiastic, have a good understanding of marketing and handling inventory.

Of the current PDD students surveyed, 94% would recommend their program to others and 71% of alumni responses expressed satisfaction with the overall quality of the instruction they received and the ability of the program to help them achieve their personal goals. Surveyed students offered suggestions to improve the programs including the ability to complete course evaluations, more accurate alignment between learning outcomes and assessment and a desire for additional on-line and weekend courses. An interest in more experiential learning opportunities and connections with local employers was also stated.

### General Challenges

#### Program specific Challenges

The PDD programs must maintain their relevance to students and local employers and ensure their competitiveness with local institutions offering similar programming. Student preparedness is an issue with the one-year PDD programs and together with low enrolments, presents challenges with program viability. Student preparedness in the PPA program, as well as different accounting practices in Canada and their home countries, is a concern for students and presents a challenge to complete the program in 2 years.

#### Faculty Concerns

NIC School of Business faculty are concerned with the currency of curriculum and learning outcomes throughout the programs and a general dissatisfaction with the programs' ability to impart the essential degree-level skills needed. Faculty felt that recent curriculum development has been more reactive than proactive. Of further concern is that students entering the programs are often under-prepared and do not have the required math and spoken communication skills to succeed. While student supports are available through the Library and Learning Commons, these services are generally underutilized among PDD students. There is also faculty dissatisfaction with technical/administrative support for teaching and an ongoing limited operating budget.

## Challenges that Fall Beyond the Scope of Program Review

Feedback from faculty noted concerns that, while falling beyond the remit of a Program Review, need to be discussed as part of program renewal and broader institutional planning. These included resources and capacity building within the department, facilities (e.g., physical building to provide coherence and sense of belonging for all in the School of Business), and concerns around increasing workloads because of the pandemic.

## E. Self- Study Recommendations

The Self-Study includes recommendations based on the review of the program, feedback from students, faculty, and various stakeholders, as indicated above. These recommendations recognize the need for the program to review curriculum design, learning outcomes, course delivery and design, and consider how the program can capitalize on current strengths and address identified challenges.

While some aspects of the following recommendations may fall beyond the scope of a Program Review (e.g., faculty appointments), these points are essential details that can form part of discussion and advocacy work for longer-term planning that includes broader institutional planning.

As outlined above, much has changed since writing the Self-Study recommendations. The strategic vision created in current programs has evolved and no longer reflects the new reality. It is acknowledged that change is needed to ensure programs are relevant and responsive, specifically there is a need to broaden delivery methods and strengthen pathways available to students.

The following were the recommendations listed in the PDD Self-Study.

### Commitment to Learners

*Focus: This area focuses on the program's commitment to student learning by reflecting on the underlying values and philosophy of the program. This includes the alignment of program commitments with the needs and expectations of students, the institution, and the broader discipline, industry, or profession.*

1. Appoint a faculty member familiar with each PDD to develop PDD-specific learning outcomes to better facilitate further reviews, to aid in development of the PDDs and to meet student and employer needs. This process should be aligned with a similar process for the BBAs.

### Program Structures

*Focus: This area focuses on the roots and design of the program as well as how and why the program has evolved over time, highlighting key milestones, developments and accomplishments as it relates to the student learning experience. This includes the evolution itself, as well as the mechanisms in place for identifying and responding to emerging needs and changing realities.*

1. Change the NIC School of Business policy of having every regular full-time instructor teach in the intersession every second year, to a policy that is responsive to the workloads of regular faculty.
2. Increase the chair release to 75%.
3. Once the learning outcomes are developed, each program should be reviewed for redundancies and gaps. At this time, program requirements such as admission and program requirements can be addressed.
4. Explore the feasibility of students combining two one-year diplomas to meet the PWGP or discontinue the one-year diplomas.
5. Before committing significant resources to the development of any new PDDs, we recommend that the department form an Advisory Committee to benefit from industry/stakeholder guidance and determine which, if any, new PDDs are wanted and needed.
6. Assign a dedicated administrative person for chair/faculty (possibly for all three "NIC School of Management" departments) in one visible location close to the chairs of the departments.

## Learning Community

*Focus: This area focuses on the program as a learning community. This includes interactions and relationships between and among faculty and students within the program, as well as engagement with broader communities (e.g., institutional, regional, discipline, industry or profession specific relationships).*

1. Explore the feasibility of an online course/instructor evaluation tool for instructors to have continuous feedback on what is and what is not working in their courses.
2. Amalgamate the Business, Tourism, and Offices Administration departments under the one roof called the “NIC School of Management.”
3. Open the buildings/classrooms at night for students.
4. Establish an Immigrant Welcome Center on campus.

## Practices

*Focus: This area focuses on teaching and learning practices, including assessment and evaluation methods and the alignment of these approaches to supportive practices. This includes the methods or approaches members of the department engage in to fulfil the stated commitments while engaging in reflective practice.*

1. Offer in-house professional development to improve crucial aspects of courses, including a) use of technology to enhance learning, b) testing that accurately assesses what students are learning, and c) curriculum relevancy to entry-level experience. The in-house professional development should be focused on sharing, communication, and coordination amongst faculty.

## Collective Impact

*Focus: This area focuses on the accomplishments and contributions of faculty and students from the program. This includes learning experiences, opportunities and outcomes related to the program. This also includes mechanisms in place to help faculty and students reflect upon and recognize accomplishments.*

1. Direct marketing resources at high schools, the NIC website and activities that entice personal visits to the College.
2. Conduct a market survey for new PDD majors that align with the BBA programs. This process should include the consideration to either rename or cancel the GBM major.

## F. Summary of Key Findings from the External Reviewers

The External Review Team appreciated the well-designed external review process and applauded the dedication to the continued success of the Post-Degree diploma programs. The School of Business faculty were commended for their depth of understanding of the PDD programs and their strengths, as well as their commitment to address challenges within the programs.

The review team identified several key areas to focus on such as the formation of program advisory committee(s) to provide industry feedback on program enhancement and potential development, active collaboration with support areas including OGE and marketing to ensure a mutual understanding of perspectives and expectations and a comprehensive approach to the construction of quality curriculum and assessments based on defined student learning outcomes.

The reviewers supported many recommendations and noted their high degree of interdependency which will require a thoughtful and strategic approach to any action plan. Faculty from the School of Business should not be confined by an all or nothing approach and should consider other options to enhance the programs. With the release of NIC's new strategic plan, Build 2026, strategies to embed curriculum with social values such as Indigenous rights and TRC, systemic oppression and climate change should be considered.

## G. Program Response to External Reviewers' Recommendations

This section outlines each of the recommendations from the External Review Team (ERT) per the categories used throughout the Self-Study document. After each recommendation, the School of Business provides its response.

### Commitment to Learners

*Focus: This area focuses on the program's commitment to student learning by reflecting on the underlying values and philosophy of the program. This includes the alignment of program commitments with the needs and expectations of students, the institution and the broader discipline, industry, or profession.*

#### Recommendation 1

\* The ERT supports the development of program-specific learning outcomes. A focus on knowledge and skills appropriate for current and future careers should be consistent with industry trends. This process should be aligned with a similar process for the BBAs. It is recommended that the School of Business embed assurance of learning as a supporting principle and philosophy into its program renewal work, including construction of good quality curriculum, assessments, and the measurements of success in meeting students' learning needs.

**Response:** The School of Business members agree with this recommendation. Curriculum mapping requires initial consultations with program stakeholders, including but not limited to Program Advisory Committee, alumni, NIC advisors and recruiters to inform a broader scope of work exploration by faculty on curriculum development. We should review all programs for redundancies and gaps. Also, review admission, course and completion requirements. These activities will provide a solid foundation for later program development decisions.

#### Recommendation 2

\* It is recommended that the department further embed education related to social values into the PDD programs' structure and course content, as supported through NIC's strategic plan, Build 2026, Widening our Doorways, and BC's DRIPA.

**Response:** The School of Business members agree with this recommendation. This recommendation will be undertaken in conjunction with Recommendation 1.

#### Recommendation 3

\* Existing Indigenous education activities within the department should be developed and Indigenous groups in the region should be included to ensure programming serves Indigenous communities' needs. The School of Business should explore strategies for hiring Indigenous people into faculty positions. This recommendation is supported by NIC's strategic plan, Widening Our Doorways, and BC's DRIPA.

**Response:** The School of Business will focus its upcoming work on incorporating varied perspectives, including Indigenous, into the curriculum, teaching and learning strategies and activities within all courses. The hiring processes will need review by the Human Resources department in conjunction with the work of Working Together, NIC's Indigenous Plan.

## Program Structures

*Focus: This area focuses on the roots and design of the program as well as how and why the program has evolved over time, highlighting key milestones, developments and accomplishments as it relates to the student learning experience. This includes the evolution itself, as well as the mechanisms in place for identifying and responding to emerging needs and changing realities.*

### Recommendation 4

\* The ERT supports the recommendation to change the NIC School of Business policy of having every regular full-time instructor teach in the intersession every second year, to a policy that is responsive to the workloads of regular faculty.

**Response:** The School of Business realizes this is out of scope of this review and rests with the employer and the NIC Faculty Association.

### Recommendation 5

\* The ERT supports a full review of operational requirements (including structure, delivery schedule, and admission requirements) once specific learning outcomes are adopted for Post-Degree Diploma programs. The opportunity to reduce barriers to admission by removing the math admission requirement for PDD program(s), as suggested by OGE, is not supported by the ERT at this time.

**Response:** The School of Business will be doing a full review of the PDD program offerings looking at all elements including the math admission requirement.

### Recommendation 6

\* It is recommended that the department keep one-year PDDs but look closely at their structure. This may include stackable programming with other departments or examining the School of Business' PDDs so that two can be stacked together.

**Response:** The School of Business will work closely with the Office of Global Engagement, the dean's office along with Program Advisory Committee to consider the best structures to meet the needs of both domestic and international students. At present the College does not allow 2 different one-year PDDs in the School of Business. There are 5 one-year PDDs that could be options. For the latter part of this point, the admission requirement for these programs is a bachelor's degree. Students sometimes do not have a solid foundation to be successful in these programs, hence the need to revisit admissions requirements. The challenges around one-year PDDs require much further discussion.

### Recommendation 7

\* The ERT supports this recommendation to implement a Program Advisory Committee for the School of Business.

**Response:** The School of Business members agree with this recommendation. This recommendation aligns with the Build 2026 Strategic Plan.

## Recommendation 8

\* It is recommended that the School of Business consider changes to the internship piece of the PDD program, including making it an optional rather than a mandatory course to complete the program.

**Response:** The School of Business is going to work closely with the Office of Global Engagement, the Dean's office along with Program Advisory Committee to look at what are the best structures to meet the needs of both domestic and international students. It is recognized that the nature of the Internship needs to be explored to ensure it's an experience that is more responsive to student needs in terms of developing skills.

## Recommendation 9

\* It is also recommended that more attention needs to be given to understanding the balancing of domestic vs international student audiences, given the realistic employer markets. OGE's understanding of the international student market must be integrated into the department's activities and the department members' expectations must be integrated into OGE's activities.

**Response:** This is not something that is in control of the faculty in the School of Business. The School of Business will work closely with the Office of Global Engagement, the dean's office along with Program Advisory Committee to consider the best structures to meet the needs of both domestic and international students.

## Learning Community

*Focus: This area focuses on the program as a learning community. This includes interactions and relationships between and among faculty and students within the program, as well as engagement with broader communities (e.g., institutional, regional, discipline, industry, or profession specific relationships).*

## Recommendation 10

\* In terms of an online course/instructor evaluation tool for instructors to have continuous feedback on what is and what is not working in their courses, the External Review Team agrees that feedback – from students, colleagues, and others – is a critical component of improvement and development. However, this recommendation, as written, is too broad for the External Review Team's endorsement and may have Collective Agreement implications.

**Response:** The School of Business members agree with this recommendation. While a separate "faculty evaluation" process is outlined by the Collective Agreement, we wish to engage in formative student feedback about our programming, courses and learning experiences via a "Student Learning Experience Survey" in development from the Centre for Teaching and Learning Innovation.



## Practices

*Focus: This area focuses on teaching and learning practices, including assessment and evaluation methods and the alignment of these approaches to supportive practices. This includes the methods or approaches members of the department engage in to fulfil the stated commitments while engaging in reflective practice.*

### Recommendation 11

\* The ERT supports the recommendation of offering in-house professional development and notes that the creation of the Centre for Teaching & Learning Innovation in 2019 should have addressed many of these concerns.

**Response:** The School of Business agrees with this. They are engaging in more opportunities to build their teaching practices and design of learning experiences as much as is possible.

## Collective Impact

*Focus: This area focuses on the accomplishments and contributions of faculty and students from the program. This includes learning experiences, opportunities and outcomes related to the program. This also includes mechanisms in place to help faculty and students reflect upon and recognize accomplishments.*

### Recommendation 12

\* New programs should be identified through Program Advisory Committee processes rather than a market survey. The recommendation is also to rename the GBM by removing the word, "Global" from program title.

**Response:** The School of Business will work closely with the Office of Global Engagement, the dean's office along with Program Advisory Committee to consider the best structures to meet the needs of both domestic and international students.

## H. Summary

The impact of this self-study on faculty has been extensive. For many years faculty have been working in mini silos, working hard to improve courses, student experiences and the quality of the credentials that our courses are a part of, basically on their own.

As a result of the self-study process, the faculty of the NIC School of Business have come together to form a single force determined to rethink, revalue, and recreate our credentials – especially the PDD programs.

The twelve recommendations from the external reviewers not only support those presented in the School of Business PDD self-study but challenged the faculty to celebrate not only the success of our students but the faculty and the work they do to enrich the lives of those students.

The accompanying Action Plan document outlines the actions and next steps the School of Business will take for both the BBA and Post-Degree Diploma programs.