

Comprehensive Program Review

FINAL SUMMARY REPORT

Certificate in Fire Officer (FOFF1)

School of Public Safety, Fire and Safety Division

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1. Self-Study Report Summary

Conclusions

The Certificate in Fire Officer (FOFF1) links the professional standards and certification of NFPA 1021 Fire Officer Professional Qualifications with an academic credential that allows students to ladder to higher credentials. Because of the NFPA 1021 certification, student demand for the FOFF1 remains strong as the program is part of a fire department's promotional process, and prospects for the future of the profession are high on the occupation forecast for future job opportunities. However, there is room to improve and update the curriculum and support for students and faculty. As an accredited program, FOFF1 is also subject to review by Pro Board and IFSAC. Both these reviews have been recently successfully completed. Re-accreditation confirms that the program is meeting the required NFPA standards, and thus, the program is strong from a competency perspective.

There are plans to continue to create online options where courses are currently only offered face-to-face to further expand accessibility. There are also plans to explore marketing initiatives, particularly in underrepresented markets. Finally, the program will explore the 30-credit structure of the program to determine if dividing it into shorter programs would improve program completion, especially as enrolment in the program has been declining.

Efforts to improve connections with external groups through reviewing the membership of the Program Advisory Committee, and work with other post-secondary institutions on articulation agreements will begin in the short term.

As JIBC puts new strategic focus on Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion, another avenue to pursue with the Certificate is how to encourage greater diversity in the student demographic. The male to female student ratio in the program is not a surprise and reflects the firefighter population. The challenge before JIBC is how we encourage greater diversity among students and faculty.

Finally, the shift to predominantly online delivery over the last two years has put greater pressure on student and faculty technical support. There is no question that the accessibility afforded by online learning is important to maintain. The challenge now is how we support the success of students online, whether that be in course design, technical support, or helping our faculty become better online instructors.

Recommendations

Recommendations that emerged from the Self-Study Report are as follows:

1. Review the terminal objectives of the job performance requirements (JPR) in each NFPA standard to ensure the evaluations adequately and appropriately assess the JPRs and then ensure alignment with course learning outcomes for all courses that are meeting and providing certification to a NFPA standard.
2. Develop marking rubrics for evaluators to use when marking assignments to ensure inter-rater reliability.

3. Review the membership of the PAC, to ensure broad representation with individuals who can provide strategic advice and assistance and re-establish an annual meeting calendar to ensure consistency and frequency of meetings.
4. Explore ways to work more collaboratively with other Divisions and Schools on the scheduling and management of courses impacting FSD programs and students.
5. Explore removing EMRG-1200 through EMRG-1240 Incident Command System from the program and adding them as prerequisite courses. This would provide an opportunity to add courses addressing current issues in the fire service.
6. Review EMRG-1334 Information Officer for continued relevance to the FOFF1.
7. Work with SHSCJ on ways to increase content related to critical incident stress management and mental health awareness.
8. Explore opportunities for articulation agreements with appropriate programs at other post secondary institutions.
9. Review program marketing strategies for opportunities to attract Indigenous students and students from regions outside of Vancouver Island and Lower Mainland of BC.
10. Explore feasibility of creating a fully online pathway through the program to attract students from across the province.
11. Review scheduling practices and assumptions to determine if grouping face-to-face courses into blocks of activity would increase participation of students from outside the Lower Mainland of BC.
12. Review curriculum to find opportunities to incorporate Indigenous perspectives in content and activities.
13. Ensure learning outcomes are clear, course readings and resources are up-to-date, and assessments are clearly linked to course outcomes in all courses.
14. Review process for orienting faculty on course outlines, content, and activities to ensure familiarity with links between content, skill development opportunities, and learning outcomes.
15. Conduct an analysis to determine the market for a new credential and the appropriate area of focus for such a program.
16. Review student communications practices and processes to improve the overall quality, timeliness, and consistency across courses.
17. Review online learning orientation materials and explore ways to better prepare students for online and virtual learning.
18. Review online courses to ensure effectiveness of design, ease of use, and consistency across courses.
19. Continue to develop the online facilitation skills of faculty through a new professional development series focused on teaching and learning in an online environment.
20. Review the balance of applied and theoretical assignments to ensure students gain the practical skills required of their work and the academic skills to succeed in their studies.
21. Review the structure of the FOFF1 with the possibility of redesigning into one or more shorter Associate Certificates or micro-credentials.
22. Increase faculty involvement with curriculum development and review with a mechanism for faculty to review and provide feedback throughout the process.

23. Explore student issues and concerns related to the learning management system and the availability of technical support.
24. Gather specific feedback from faculty about their concerns and needs for faculty development.

Future Directions

The Fire & Safety Division plans to continue to create online options where courses are currently only face-to-face to further expand accessibility. There are also plans to explore marketing initiatives, particularly in markets currently underrepresented. Finally, the program will explore the 30-credit structure of the program to determine if dividing it into shorter programs would improve program completion.

2. External Review Team (ERT) Report Summary

The findings from the External Review Team align with the recommendations and conclusions of the Self-Study Team. Supporting the 24 recommendations from the Self-Study Report, the External Review Team identified three major themes for program improvement. The three themes identified by the ERT include the following:

1. Quality and timeliness of communication with students
2. Increase opportunities for feedback and evaluation
3. Evaluate the resourcing and staff support for the program.

The External Review Team's recommendations provide the program area with some valuable focus areas, such as a review of internal and external communication to improve the experience of students and faculty. These thematic suggestions reaffirm the recommendations set out in the Self-Study Report and are included in the Quality Assurance Action Plan.

3. Self-Study Team Response to ERT Report

The Self-Study Team accepts the findings of the External Review Team with much gratitude. There is reassurance that the internal understanding of the strengths and shortcomings of the program are consistent with the External Reviewer's findings. The findings of the External Review Team provide the program area with some valuable focus points such as a review of internal and external communication to improve the experience of students and faculty. Additionally, program staff will explore the feasibility of aligning the program with micro-credentials to more effectively meet student needs and improve completion rates. The findings and recommendations from the External Review Team reaffirm the recommendations presented in the Self-Study Report.

4. Final Recommendations & Action Plan

The External Review Team Report validated the 24 recommendations that were identified in the Self-Study Report; all recommendations are included in the Quality Assurance Action Plan (QAAP). (See separate document *Quality Assurance Action Plan*.) In creating the plan, the program grouped the recommendations thematically, creating broader recommendations under which the specific recommended actions are captured.