

# Final Assessment Report for the 2018-2019 Cyclical Program Review of Business Technology Management

## INTRODUCTION

In accordance with Laurier's Institutional Quality Assurance Procedures ([Policy 2.1](#)), this Final Assessment Report provides a summary of the review process for the Business Technology Management Program prepared by the Quality Assurance Office, along with an identification of strengths of the program(s) under review authored by the Vice-Dean of the Lazaridis School of Business and Economics (LSBE). All recommendations made by the external review committee are listed in order, followed by a summary of the Program's response, and the Dean's response. Recommendations not approved for implementation have been identified, and those that have been prioritized are listed in the Implementation Plan.

The Final Assessment Report is reviewed and approved by the Associate Vice-President: Teaching and Learning and the Provost and Vice-President: Academic. Following completion of the Final Assessment Report, it is approved by the Program Review Sub-Committee and Senate Academic Planning Committee. Approval dates are listed at the end of this report. Final Assessment Reports are submitted to Senate as part of an annual report on cyclical reviews, and to the Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance for information. Final Assessment Reports and Implementation Reports are posted on the public-facing page of the [Quality Assurance Office](#) website.

The Implementation Plan for the recommendations prioritized in the Final Assessment Report can be found at the end of this report. Units will submit their first Implementation Report two years following approval of the Final Assessment Report at Senate. The Implementation Report will include comments from the unit on actions taken toward the completion of recommendations, comments from the relevant Dean(s) related to the progress made, and comments from the Program Review Sub-Committee, which is responsible for approving the Implementation Report and deciding if further reports are required. The Senate Academic Planning Committee will also approve the Implementation Report.

## SUMMARY OF REVIEW PROCESS

This was the first cyclical review for the Business Technology Management program, which admitted its first cohort of students in 2011. The unit offers a single Honours Bachelor of Business Technology Management program. The Self-Study was authored by the Program Director, Patricia McLaren, with feedback from participating program faculty. In addition to the Self-Study (Volume I), the Program also submitted a copy of faculty curricula vita (Volume II), a volume of course syllabi, and a list of proposed external reviewers (Volume III). A draft of the Self-Study was reviewed by the Quality Assurance Office and Vice-Dean of the Lazaridis School of Business and Economics prior to submission of the final version.

As per Laurier's IQAP, the external review committee for the review consisted of one external reviewer from outside the university, and one internal reviewer from Laurier but outside of the department. The review

committee was selected by the Program Review Sub-Committee on October 16, 2018, and the site visit was scheduled by the Quality Assurance Office for January 28-29, 2019.

The review committee consisted of Dr. Robert Basso from the Faculty of Social Work at Wilfrid Laurier and Dr. Ozgur Turetken from the School of Information Technology Management at Ryerson University. During the two-day site visit, the review committee met with the following individuals and groups:

- Drs. Robert Gordon, Provost and Vice-President, Academic, and Kathryn Carter, Associate Vice-President, Teaching and Learning
- Dr. Patricia McLaren, Area Coordinator: Business Technology Management
- Dr. Lisa Keeping, Vice Dean, Lazaridis School of Business and Economics
- Ms. Charlotte Innerd, Head of Collections and Ms. Yanli Li, Liaison Librarian
- Ms. Sara Neziol, Manager: Educational Advising, Ms. Lisa Neziol, Academic Advisor and Ms. Galina Garkova, Academic Advisor
- BTM Faculty: Drs. Josephine McMurray, Kevin McDermott, Oliver Masakure, and Akbar Saeed
- Mr. Michael Lisetto-Smith, Senior Administrative Officer in the Lazaridis School of Business and Economics
- Ms. Laurie Lahn, Associate Director, Co-op education and External Relations, and Mr. Tim Stedman, Manager: Co-op Education (Brantford Campus)
- Six students currently enrolled in the BTM program
- and a group of six BTM students (three in the 2nd and three in the 4th year).

The review committee submitted their completed report on February 8, 2019. The executive summary from the report is provided below.

### **External Reviewers' Report Executive Summary**

The Business Technology Management Program (BTM) is a small, but an important component of WLU and the Lazaridis School's success. It is successful in graduating students into careers directly related to their education. The subset of the learning outcomes included in the self study report are consistent with professional norms nationally. WLU Career Services data indicated over 92% of graduates were employed within months of graduation. BTM's Co-op program is an integral learning opportunity for the students. The BTM Program has a significant ratio of international students to Canadian students. As a technically oriented program of study, the BTM attracts a female to male ratio of 2 to 3, which is very good. The students are engaged and care a lot about their program just like the faculty do.

The program is structured with a mix of liberal arts/social sciences, business, and information technology/information systems courses. High impact activities include co-op, a capstone project in fourth year, and recently introduced case analysis activities. The class sizes are small at about 35 students per course allowing for

significant teacher - learner interactions. Student progression expectations are established for each year of study in the program. Students are promoted to the next year of study when they achieve the established expectations.

The library and technology support services are adequate. The distance between campuses impacts the connections among faculty and students of the Waterloo and Brantford campuses. The BTM students have requested more opportunities to attend events on the Waterloo campus. The dean has recently provided monies to encourage these connections.

Although the BTM faculty have diverse research and teaching interests, they indicated that they are building on common themes. They hope to leverage their group's strengths and expertise and build collaboration opportunities. There are not enough faculty resources to develop and deliver more technical course content, which is critical for the ultimate growth of the program.

Following receipt of the External Reviewers' Report, the Program Director wrote the Unit Response, which was submitted on March 12, 2019.

## RECOMMENDATIONS AND RESPONSES

The External Reviewers' Report included 10 recommendations, which have been listed verbatim below, followed by a summary of the program's response, and the decanal response.

**Recommendation #1:** The BTM team needs to build reputation by increasing gradually its admission standards to a point matching the admissions standards of the BBA Program.

**Unit Response:** We agree with the reviewers that the admission standards of the BTM need to be gradually increased for reputational reasons as well as to increase our retention rate. We have been slowly increasing the admission standards over the past five years, and we intend to continue to do so. This increase needs to be balanced with application numbers, as we want to maintain a viable program size. Our goal is to achieve an admission standard of 5% below the BBA program, which will bring in strong students and help us develop a reputation as an accessible and high-quality program.

**Decanal Response:** I agree with the unit's response to the recommendation that admissions standards should be increased commensurate with increases in application numbers.

**Recommendation #2:** Because business technology is fluid and developing, we believe that the program would benefit from the BTM faculty monitoring and updating its curriculum with relatively recent and highly in-demand topics such as predictive and prescriptive analytics, information/cyber security, and the business impact of emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, internet of things, and blockchain.

**Unit Response:** We agree with the reviewers that it is important for us to be monitoring and updating our curriculum. We work with the BTM Accreditation Council, which maintains up-to-date learning objectives for BTM programs. In September 2017, we formed the BTM Advisory Council, which is a group of industry

professionals who provide guidance and advice on the BTM program and curriculum. One of the fundamental goals of the BTM program is to provide students with a strong foundation in technology and help them develop the capacity to learn new technologies as they arise. This requires us to maintain a careful balance between foundational technology concepts and the newest trends.

**Decanal Response:** I support the program's approach to staying current with industry requirements through the development of its BTM Advisory Council. I also agree that it is important to ensure that the academic foundation stays strong with any curriculum updates derived from industry applications.

**Recommendation #3:** We recommend that the university find ways to better support the language learning needs of their international students prior to these students attending BTM classes. Related to this is that all BTM students receive assistance to improve writing skills.

**Unit Response:** We agree with the reviewers that if the university continues accepting substantial numbers of international students into the BTM program it needs to ensure that the students have strong enough capacity in speaking, writing, and understanding English to be successful when they arrive. The university also needs to provide the supports required to help students continue to strengthen their written and spoken English throughout their degree.

**Decanal Response:** I agree with this recommendation. The program and the Dean's Office are already working with Recruitment and Admissions to ensure that international students who are admitted to the program have stronger English language skills and that they be supported for the duration of the program.

**Recommendation #4:** The Co-op component is an essential part of this program. We recommend that the Co-op reviews be provided back to the BTM faculty after each and every cycle of student placements. This information, related to students' experiences, can provide significant data for program improvement and direction.

**Unit Response:** We agree with this recommendation. We would use employer feedback as part of our program assessment and curriculum planning work. We will also invite the Brantford co-op manager to one of our fall semester program meetings to update us on the past summer's job placement process.

**Decanal Response:** I agree with this recommendation and support the program in using co-op employers' feedback for program improvement, assuming the Co-Op Office is able to provide this information.

**Recommendation #5:** The BTM Program needs at least a part time administrative assistant who can provide a level of support to faculty and students. We also believe the organizational memory about the administrative processes of the program that lies with the current area coordinator should be formalized (e.g. through more detailed documentation) to the extent possible so the program is not too heavily reliant on one faculty member.

**Unit Response:** The administrative support provided to the BTM program has increased significantly during the current year and faculty members are actively learning what support is available and making sure that we make

use of it. All of the support provided is based on the Waterloo campus, and our assumption for this recommendation is that the reviewers are recommending part-time administrative support located in Brantford. We have recently set up a hoteling office in Brantford for Lazaridis School staff to use when they work in Brantford, and we will have administrative staff on location for multiple student events this year, including case competitions and our advisory council reception. Staff in Waterloo are helping us with many tasks, including hiring, marketing, recruitment, and planning and running events. It is not clear what day-to-day tasks the reviewers and students are referring in the review report (see page 4, “Students noted that a support person would lighten the day-to-day tasks of the administrator and facilitate connections between students and faculty”), or how administrative support in Brantford would help facilitate connections between students and faculty.

In the fall of 2017, the area coordinator compiled a BTM Area Coordinator Handbook, detailing all of the coordinator tasks, when they should be done, and important notes and lessons learned. The area coordinator will continue to update this handbook.

**Decanal Response:** Due to financial constraints, the Lazaridis School is unable to provide additional administrative support in Brantford. I appreciate the program’s willingness to work with staff in Waterloo and agree that the administrative supports and awareness of these supports have improved. Because the resource implications prevent this recommendation from being implemented at this time, this recommendation has been excluded from the Implementation Plan.

**Recommendation #6:** The review team recommends further investment in the BTM program as a way to distinguish the program. Areas of investment include full time faculty resources as well as expanding knowledge and experiences through better connectedness to the Waterloo campus, the use of virtualization, and participating in the UXD program.

**Unit Response:** We agree with the reviewers that we need to develop a stronger differentiation for the BTM program, both from the BBA program at Laurier and from other business programs in Ontario and across Canada. We are working to better integrate the program into the Lazaridis School and we are working with the Coordinator of the User Experience Design program on ways that BTM and UXD students can take courses across programs.

**Decanal Response:** I agree that differentiation is important, however, any significant financial investment to this end is not possible in the near future. Non-financial investment, such as working to ensure we emphasize the unique characteristics of the BTM program and finding ways to connect with the UXD program are supported. This recommendation has not been included in the Implementation Plan.

**Recommendation #7:** We recommend that the BTM program use other Laurier faculty resources as much as possible for more standard business courses so that the BTM faculty can teach in their specialized areas where they can be the most effective.

**Unit Response:** We agree with the recommendation as we struggle offering a full business degree with only five full-time faculty members. In many of the business disciplines, we offer only one or two courses, so it is difficult

to create a teaching load for a full-time faculty member outside of the technology management area. The program would be stronger if our foundation courses that are outside of tech management (i.e. law, accounting, finance, operations management, marketing) were taught by faculty who are experts in the respective areas. We do, however, understand the difficulties of asking full-time faculty members to teach across campuses and the resourcing constraints that the Department of Business faces across all programs.

**Decanal Response:** I appreciate the recommendation and agree with the unit's response that it is difficult to ask full-time faculty in Waterloo to teach in Brantford. We also have a shortage of full-time faculty on the Waterloo campus in many business disciplines. We do staff some foundational business courses in the BTM with limited term or contract academic faculty to supplement the tenure-track and tenured faculty members. This recommendation has not been included in the Implementation Plan.

**Recommendation #8:** We recommend that any possible future hire be a technically oriented scholar.

**Unit Response:** We agree with the reviewers that the next faculty member hired in the BTM program will need to be technically oriented while still having a strong business foundation.

**Decanal Response:** I agree that a new faculty member hired for the BTM should be technically orientated. Due to financial circumstances and the current enrollment of the program, however, it is unclear when this might occur; therefore, it has not been included in the Implementation Plan which involves those recommendations that can be implemented in the short to medium term

**Recommendation #9:** The BTM faculty need to continuously review all of their courses to eliminate overlaps and make room for new and innovative material. Space in their curriculum for new courses can be accomplished by eliminating any overlap in course content, consolidating courses such as the required Foundations courses and some business foundation courses such as Accounting.

**Unit Response:** We agree with the reviewers that continuous review of the BTM curriculum is critical to the success of the program. We did a complete review of the BTM curriculum and a corresponding set of major curriculum changes in the 2017/2018 academic year, with changes effective for 2018/2019. We will continue to conduct annual reviews as the new curriculum changes roll out over the next four years, and we also conduct major reviews as part of our BTM Accreditation, AACSB Accreditation, and the cyclical review process. The BTM program has a large number of required courses, as we cover business and technical foundations and in-depth instruction of technology and innovation management. It has been a consistent struggle, and we expect it always will be, to balance all of the requirements, to keep up to date with new content, and to leave some space for student choice. We will continue to assess all of the required courses, including the Foundations courses and the business foundation courses, as we see the results of our most recent set of curriculum changes.

**Decanal Response:** I agree with the unit's response that the BTM program currently engages in regular curriculum review and makes changes accordingly.

**Recommendation #10:** The Lazaridis School of Business and Economics needs improved visibility on the Brantford campus.

**Unit Response:** We agree with the reviewers that the Lazaridis School needs improved visibility on the Brantford campus. This has been under discussion for two years. The current status in regard to outside signage is that the Laurier Brantford campus will be conducting a full signage review for the entire campus, and once the review is complete and recommendations have been made as to design facets such as size, colour, location, etc., Lazaridis signage will be placed on the exterior of the SC Johnson building. We have started the process of putting up internal signage, with a Lazaridis sign now in the SC Johnson basement, and plans to order signage for the SC Johnson lobby and 3<sup>rd</sup> floor (where the BTM offices are located).

**Decanal Response:** I agree with the recommendation. Signage was identified as an issue by the program and the Lazaridis School has already made improvements in this regard.

## STRENGTHS OF THE PROGRAM(S)

The BTM program in the Lazaridis School is the first greenfield program of its kind in Canada, designed with a focus on technology management right from the beginning. Significant strengths include:

- Dedicated faculty members who work to ensure the program continues to stay current with technological advances. Faculty go above and beyond to deliver a high calibre program despite the small faculty complement.
- Excellent leadership from the area coordinator who works to ensure that the relationship within the Lazaridis School is maintained.
- Continuous improvements to the program since its inception.
- Strong focus on immersive learning in the program through the use of cases, assignments, and competitions.
- Staying consistent with the Lazaridis brand and capitalizing on it where possible by adding and modifying elements such as developing an external case competition team and modifying progression requirements.

## OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT AND ENHANCEMENT

- Attracting more students and continuing to increase admissions requirements.
- Developing a brand within the Lazaridis School that is equal to, but distinctive from, the larger BBA program.

## SIGNATURES

Dr. Lisa Keeping

October 29, 2019



Dr. Kristiina Montero

October 31, 2019



Dr. Maureen Mancuso

November 5, 2019



Approved by Program Review Sub-Committee:

November 22, 2019

Approved by Senate Academic Planning  
Committee:

December 18, 2019

Submitted to Senate (for information):

March 11, 2020

Implementation Report Due Date:

March 11, 2022

## RECOMMENDATIONS PRIORITIZED FOR IMPLEMENTATION AND ACTION PLAN

Recommendation to be Implemented	Responsibility for Implementation	Anticipated Completion Date	Responsibility for Resourcing (if applicable)	Additional Notes
<b>Recommendation #1:</b> The BTM team needs to build reputation by increasing gradually its admission standards to a point matching the admissions standards of the BBA Program.	Program, Recruitment and Admissions, and Dean's Office	Ongoing		Balance with admissions numbers
<b>Recommendation #2:</b> Because business technology is fluid and developing, we believe that the program would benefit from the BTM faculty monitoring and updating its curriculum with relatively recent and highly in-demand topics such as predictive and prescriptive analytics, information/cyber security, and the business impact of emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, internet of things, and blockchain.	Program	Ongoing		
<b>Recommendation #3:</b> We recommend that the university find ways to better support the language learning needs of their international students prior to these students attending BTM classes. Related to this is that all BTM students receive assistance to improve writing skills.	Program, Recruitment and Admissions, and Dean's Office	Ongoing		

<p><b>Recommendation #4:</b> The Co-op component is an essential part of this program. We recommend that the Co-op reviews be provided back to the BTM faculty after each and every cycle of student placements. This information, related to students' experiences, can provide significant data for program improvement and direction.</p>	<p>Program</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>		
<p><b>Recommendation #9:</b> The BTM faculty need to continuously review all of their courses to eliminate overlaps and make room for new and innovative material. Space in their curriculum for new courses can be accomplished by eliminating any overlap in course content, consolidating courses such as the required Foundations courses and some business foundation courses such as Accounting.</p>	<p>Program</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>		
<p><b>Recommendation #10:</b> The Lazaridis School of Business and Economics needs improved visibility on the Brantford campus.</p>	<p>Dean's Office</p>	<p>May 2020</p>		