



Accreditation Decision

Trent University

School of Education and Professional Learning

Substantial Change in Program pertaining to:

Consecutive program of professional education with areas of study in the Primary/Junior and Intermediate/Senior divisions, leading to a Bachelor of Education degree

Concurrent program of professional education that combines studies in Indigenous Education with areas of study in the Primary/Junior and Intermediate/Senior divisions, leading to a Bachelor of Education degree – Indigenous

**Transition Supervisory Officer
Ontario College of Teachers
June 21, 2021**

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Decision Regarding the Program Change Application Submitted by the School of Education and Professional Learning, Trent University

Introduction

The School of Education and Professional Learning at Trent University, the “School”, submitted a program change application on April 16, 2021 with two proposed changes.

The first proposed program change is to change the assessment practices to shift the process of documenting achievement from numerical grading to a pass/fail system for the following programs:

- Consecutive program of professional education with areas of study in the Primary/Junior and Intermediate/Senior divisions, leading to a Bachelor of Education degree
- Concurrent program of professional education that combines studies in Indigenous Education with areas of study in the Primary/Junior and Intermediate/Senior divisions, leading to a Bachelor of Education degree – Indigenous

The second program change is to add Environmental Science as an area of study in the Intermediate/Senior divisions of the following program:

- Consecutive program of professional education with areas of study in the Primary/Junior and Intermediate/Senior divisions, leading to a Bachelor of Education degree

The concurrent program is already accredited to offer Environmental Science as a teachable subject area to teacher candidates in the Intermediate and Senior divisions.

The Transition Supervisory Officer, by virtue of the authority granted under the Ontario College of Teachers Act, 1996, and Regulation 347/02, Accreditation of Teacher Education Programs, and, given that there was reason to believe that the provider substantially changed the character, duration or components of the programs of professional education, reviewed the programs to determine if they continue to qualify for accreditation.

In making this decision, the following were considered:

- the application for the review of the program change submitted April 16, 2021
- the Accreditation Decision dated April 8, 2014 related to the consecutive program
- the Accreditation Decision dated March 2, 2016 related to the concurrent program
- the regulatory requirements of Regulation 347/02, Accreditation of Teacher Education Programs

Accreditation Requirement Findings and Reasons

Unchanged Requirements

The attestation made by Trent University that there are no changes regarding the factual findings for requirements 1,1.1, 2, 3.1, 4, 6, 9,11,13 and 15 is accepted. These ten accreditation requirements remain fully satisfied.

Changed Requirements

Based on the information provided, the Transition Supervisory Officer finds that the program changes, as proposed, fully satisfy the remaining accreditation requirements 3, 5, 7, 8, 10, 12 and 14 as they read in the Accreditation Decisions dated April 8, 2014 and March 2, 2016 respectively.

The change to the grading system could be considered a substantial change to the components of both programs, affecting requirements 3, 7 and 14; the addition of Environmental Science is a substantial change to the consecutive program by the addition of a new area of study to an accredited program, affecting requirements 5, 8,10 and 12.

The findings and reasons for the decision on whether the programs continue to qualify for accreditation and the facts on which this decision is based follow herein. For ease of reference, where the changes affect both programs, they are described as “the programs”, and where the changes affect only the consecutive program, it is described as such.

Requirement 3

Based on the information reviewed, the programs, as modified, fully satisfy accreditation requirement 3.

The shift in assessment practices to a pass/fail grading system in the programs of professional education is based on current research in teacher education and higher education. The School cited research demonstrating that a pass/fail grading system improves candidates' autonomous motivation, reduces competition and stress, supports collaboration and fosters intrinsic motivation. Moreover, this approach to assessment shifts teacher candidates' focus from grades to professional development.

Current research indicates that grading system changes necessitate professional development for instructors to help them provide meaningful feedback and support for teacher candidates as they learn to develop skills in self-assessment. A mitigating factor in this instance is that feedback is already an integral feature of the programs. One of the existing principles of the School's Conceptual Framework is that effective teaching and learning are guided by on-going meaningful feedback. As well, the School already has a Pass/Unsatisfactory grading scheme for the practicum component of the programs.

The pass/fail grading system has been successfully adopted by Canadian Universities including the University of Prince Edward Island in 2002, the University of British Columbia in 2009 and the Faculty of Education at Western University in 2020.

Requirement 5

Based on the information reviewed, the consecutive program, as modified, fully satisfies accreditation requirement 5.

The Accreditation Decision of March 2, 2016 referenced evidence that the course content of the concurrent program included theory, method and foundation courses and appropriate provision for the application of theory in practice. The same conclusion was drawn about the consecutive program in the April 8, 2014 decision. Making Environmental Science available as an area of study in both the concurrent and consecutive programs will have no impact on the factual findings of these decisions.

Teacher candidates will learn about the most recent advances in theory and research relative to environmental science education from faculty with experience in the domain. Appropriate provision for theory into practice and environmental programming offered in the concurrent program includes mandatory environmental workshops and outdoor experiences. This provision will be extended to the consecutive program. Teacher candidates are also encouraged to take part in the voluntary Eco-Mentorship Certificate Program and alternative placements. Learning from the Land and Indigenous People is one such alternative. The course outline for Environmental Science, to be used in both programs, includes ample evidence of theory to practice connections. For example, assignments include a case study involving the impact of environmental issues on Indigenous communities and a culminating task in the form of a Unit Plan based on the Ontario Curriculum.

Requirement 7

Based on the information reviewed, the programs, as modified, fully satisfy accreditation requirement 7.

Teacher candidates will continue to be assessed and informed of their progress on an ongoing basis throughout the programs. Instead of a numerical grade, candidates will receive a pass or fail. A pass will be equivalent to 77% as opposed to the existing passing grade of 70%. All other assessment criteria, including feedback and expectations, will remain in effect. Candidates must pass all course assignments to receive a pass in the course.

Adoption of a pass/fail system for course assignments enables instructors to concentrate on providing teacher candidates with constructive feedback to help them develop the professional knowledge, skills and competencies that they need to thrive in the teaching profession. Further, this aligns the assessment approach in coursework with the existing Pass/Unsatisfactory grading scheme for the practicum component of the programs.

Requirement 8

Based on the information reviewed, the consecutive program, as modified, fully satisfies accreditation requirement 8.

There are no changes regarding the factual findings for the practicum requirements.

The School of Education will work with partner school boards to provide opportunities for teacher candidates to complete placements in secondary schools offering environmental

classes, including those which offer innovative environmental course offerings, such as the Specialist High Skills Major.

Requirement 10

Based on the information reviewed, the consecutive program, as modified, fully satisfies accreditation requirement 10.

The proposed change to add Environmental Science as an area of study to the consecutive program does not affect satisfaction of requirement 10, as determined in the most recent Accreditation Decision, dated April 8, 2014.

The Accreditation Decision of March 2, 2016 found that the concurrent program teaching method courses, including Environmental Science, were appropriate in relation to the division to which they relate. The existing Environmental Science teaching method course in the concurrent program will be added to the selection of courses for Intermediate/Senior teacher candidates in the consecutive program so that it will be available as an area of study option in both programs.

The course outline for the Environmental Science course confirms that candidates reference the Ministry of Education's curriculum documents for the area of study as well as relevant texts and readings. Candidates consider instructional and learning strategies and complete assignments that are appropriate and meet the needs of all students.

Requirement 12

Based on the information reviewed, the consecutive program, as modified, fully satisfies accreditation requirement 12.

There are no changes regarding the factual findings pertaining to the combination of faculty members teaching the programs. The addition of the Environmental Science area of study in the consecutive program requires no significant change in the combination of faculty. Current faculty have the expertise required to deliver this course given the environmental content that already exists in the programs.

At least three tenured faculty members hold qualifications and experience appropriate to teach Environmental Science. Specifically, these faculty members bring expertise in sustainability education and leadership in environmental and eco-justice educational studies.

Requirement 14

Based on the information reviewed, the programs, as modified, fully satisfy accreditation requirement 14. While there are no changes regarding the factual findings pertaining to the institution's commitment to continuous improvement and quality assurance, the proposed change from a graded assessment system to one of pass/fail is evidence of that commitment.

The change from the percentage grading system to pass/fail assessment was proposed by the School of Education's Bachelor of Education Program Committee during the 2019-2020 academic year. The change was approved by all full-time faculty members, the Dean of Education and all members of the Teacher Education Advisory Committee. Taken altogether, these approvals are evidence of strong support for the change across the academic community

and stakeholders. After approval by the Undergraduate Academic Policy Committee, the Senate, on February 23, 2021, adopted the change from a numeric grade to a pass/fail grade, where a pass would be the equivalent of 77% or greater.

The School intends to implement the pass/fail grading system with candidates new to the program in the fall of 2021. Candidates in the second year of the consecutive program and candidates in the last year of the concurrent program will stay on the numeric grading system to complete their degrees.

The proposal to add Environmental Science as an area of study to the consecutive program was approved by the Undergraduate Studies Committee on September 24, 2020, when it reviewed the existing course outline. On October 20, 2020, Trent University's Senate approved the new course, Environmental Science, as a teachable for teacher candidates in the consecutive program, whereby permitting this area of study to be offered in both the concurrent and consecutive programs.

Decision of the Transition Supervisory Officer

For the reasons set out in the Accreditation Requirement Findings and Reasons above, the following programs, as modified, qualify for general accreditation without conditions until the existing expiry date of March 2, 2022 or for an amended period of time that is in accordance with Section 15 of Regulation 347/02, Accreditation of Teacher Education Programs:

- Consecutive program of professional education with areas of study in the Primary/Junior and Intermediate/Senior divisions, leading to a Bachelor of Education degree
- Concurrent program of professional education that combines studies in Indigenous Education with areas of study in the Primary/Junior and Intermediate/Senior divisions, leading to a Bachelor of Education degree – Indigenous

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