

Comprehensive Program Review

FINAL SUMMARY REPORT

Associate Certificate in Exterior Fire Fighter Operations

Associate Certificate in Interior Fire Fighter Operations

Certificate in Full Service Fire Fighter Operations

School of Public Safety, Fire & Safety Division

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1. Self-Study Report Summary

Conclusions

The comprehensive review of the EFFOAS, IFFOAS, and FSFO1 programs highlighted the complexities and challenges inherent in their structure, delivery, and administration. Most program delivery occurs at arm's length from JIBC. Students are volunteers for their community's fire department (therefore post-employment), admitted to the program at the direction of their Training Officer. Their progression is determined by their department, and JIBC has little ability to influence their retention. The delivery model has made the administration of the programs complex, as it does not align well with JIBC systems, procedures, and processes designed with more conventional credentials in mind. Further, in aligning FSFO1 with the core 21.5 credits of the Certificate in Fire Fighting Technologies program and NFPA 1001, FSFO1 (and therefor also EFFOAS and IFFOAS) is less able to respond to changing requirements as defined by the BC Minimum Training Standards, which are the standards BC fire departments must adhere to. And in fact, while the curriculum mirrors the BC Minimum Training Standards, it is not perfectly aligned. Students who complete one, or multiple levels of JIBC's programs do not achieve full compliance with the provincial Standard of the same level, as they are components of the Standard that JIBC does not teach.

In consideration of these complexities, and in consultation with the Vice-President, Academic and Director, Academic Affairs, the Dean determined the need to transition these programs from credentials to professional certificates. With this decision, the Program Review Team requested permission to change direction, and rather than conduct an External Review Team (ERT) site visit, as directed by JIBC procedure, hold a Program Advisory Committee (PAC) meeting to discuss the findings of the Self-Study Report (SSR) and confirm the Dean's recommendation to transition the programs to professional certificates. This request was granted.

While the decision to change the programs to professional certificates was the most substantive recommendation to come out of the SSR, it was by no means the only. The SSR also identified the need to update curriculum to align with the current BC Minimum and Training Standards, as well as the new National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 1001 Standard for Fire Fighter Professional Qualifications (Fire Fighter II). Additional recommendations included the need to continue to review and improve administrative processes, find ways to facilitate Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition, and ensure appropriate feedback mechanisms are in place to gather student and faculty feedback.

Recommendations

The following recommendations emerged from the Self-Study Report:

- **Recommendation #1:** Review and update EFFOAS, IFFOAS, and FSFO1 programs to meet the new (2022) BC Minimum Training Standards, adding any missing components to ensure equivalency with the Province. Rename the programs to avoid confusion with Provincial service level designations.

- **Recommendation #2:** Evaluate FSFO1 against the new consolidated NFPA 1010 Standard for Firefighter, Fire Apparatus Driver/ Operator, Airport Firefighter, and Marine Firefighting for Land-Based Firefighters Professional Qualifications and revise as appropriate.
- **Recommendation #3:** Review opportunities to improve registration and student record systems and processes to better serve the needs of students.
- **Recommendation #4:** EFFOAS, IFFOAS and FSFO1 program staff meet face-to-face with Training Officers from various volunteer departments annually to ensure communication and quality control are maintained within EFFOAS, IFFOAS, and FSFO1.
- **Recommendation #5:** Explore opportunities to recognize equivalent industry training.
- **Recommendation #6:** Review and update program competencies as part of broader review to ensure alignment with revised BC Minimum Training Standards.
- **Recommendation #7:** Collaborate with Institutional Research to identify student feedback opportunities and implement appropriate evaluation processes.
- **Recommendation #8:** Work with Institutional Research to develop a mechanism for collecting feedback from Training Officers on the curriculum, resources, services, and facilities of the EFFOAS, IFFOAS and FSFO1 programs.
- **Recommendation #9:** Review the administration of EFFOAS, IFFOAS and FSFO1 programs to continue to build on new processes and efficiencies and to ensure the programs operate in a manner that supports the needs of fire departments in BC.
- **Recommendation #10:** Explore ways to better use the Mobile Live Fire Trailer as part of the EFFOAS, IFFOAS, and FSFO1 programs.
- **Recommendation #11:** Explore Blackboard and Questionmark support deficiencies in collaboration with Technology Services.

Future Directions

The immediate priority for the EFFOAS, IFFOAS, and FSFO1 programs is transitioning them to professional certificates. Given the timelines necessary to affect a substantial change of this nature, implementation is anticipated to be in one year. During this time will be an opportunity to further examine the delivery model and program management. Also important in the near term is updating curriculum to ensure it reflects current BC standards and is aligned with changes to NFPA 1001.

2. External Review Team (ERT) Report Summary

As noted above, with approval of the Vice-President, Academic and Director, Academic Affairs, the Program Review Team held a PAC meeting to discuss the findings in the SSR. Historically, EFFOAS, IFFOAS, and FSFO1 have shared a PAC with the Certificate in Fire Fighting Technologies program. In reviewing the PAC membership, the team identified the need to convene a new committee that better represented the volunteer fire departments across the province. The discussion at the meeting focused on three primary questions:

- Would the Exterior, Interior, and Full-Service Fire Fighter programs be better situated as professional certificates, not academic credentials?
- Should the programs be adjusted to separate it from the Certificate in Fire Fighting Technologies and align it with the BC Minimum Training Standards?
- How can we improve program management and administration?

The PAC supported the recommendation to transition to professional programs. Most volunteer fire fighters are mandated to be trained for the fire service but have no desire to be a career fire fighter, and thus an academic credential is of little interest to them. As departments typically acknowledge and celebrate when students complete their courses, not attending JIBC convocation would not be seen as an issue. Further the change to professional programs would allow more flexibility to respond to the needs of the field, although the PAC acknowledged a layer of governance was still required and constrained in some ways by accreditation requirements.

Views on strict alignment to the BC Minimum Training Standards and the value of accredited programs varied. However, the PAC agreed that the names of the programs caused confusion, particularly given the disconnect between JIBC curriculum and the provincial Standards. Renaming the programs was agreed to be a good solution.

Consensus was that there was an ongoing place for JIBC in province-wide training of volunteer fire fighters. However, the PAC felt that increasing regional training activities, being more responsive to communities, improving administrative processes, and offering options (evaluation only versus instruction and evaluation) were key to sustainability.

3. Self-Study Team Response to ERT Report

The Program Review Team was very pleased with the discussion at the PAC meeting and appreciated the input of those present. The Fire & Safety Division is committed to formally creating a separate PAC for vocational programs, and this has been included in the action items in the Quality Assurance Action Plan (QAAP, Appendix 1). Overall, the PAC's recommendations aligned with those of the SSR and confirmed a path forward.

4. Final Recommendations & Action Plan

In the process of building the QAAP, the 11 recommendations from the Self-Study Report were refined and focused, and then enhanced by the feedback from the PAC and further internal discussions.

Recommendations were translated to actionable tasks grouped under three goals:

1. Vocational fire fighter programs are structured and delivered to meet the needs of BC's volunteer fire departments and their members.
2. EFFOAS/IFFOAS/FSFO1 curriculum reflects current standards and best practice in fire fighting.
3. FSD is better able to leverage data to inform future program and curriculum improvements.

The resulting QAAP details substantial changes to vocational fire fighter training programs at JIBC. This represents an opportunity to ask further questions on how this training fits within the broader provincial context and what additional steps might be required to ensure ongoing sustainability.

5. List of Appendices

- Appendix 1: PAC Meeting Minutes
- Appendix 2: Quality Assurance Action Plan (QAAP)