

Comprehensive Program Review

FINAL SUMMARY REPORT

Associate Certificate in Emergency Management

Associate Certificate in Emergency Management Exercise
Design

School of Public Safety, Emergency Management Division

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1. Self-Study Report Summary

Conclusions

The self-study process involved a divisional team analyzing a variety of materials to determine the status and viability of the Associate Certificate in Emergency Management (EMANAS) and Associate Certificate in Emergency Management Exercise Design (EMEDAS) programs.

During the program review, the self-study team determined the EMANAS program continues to address its initial purpose of developing applied emergency management knowledge and skills. Further, the EMEDAS program continues to fulfill the purpose of the program in that it provides a systematic and auditable methodology for developing emergency management exercises that are aligned with international exercise practices. Both programs continue to show good financial health, maintaining operating margins that fall within JIBC planning requirements.

The self-study team found the curriculum used in both programs continues to foster the development of applied skills that graduates can use in the workplace. However, emergency management practices have continued to evolve in recent years and the curriculum has not necessarily kept up. Some of these changes reflect structural changes that may take time and resourcing to reflect in curriculum, such as a shift to virtual emergency management offices. Other changes reflect broader societal changes that transform underlying themes in emergency management, such as the move towards Indigenizing practice. It was also identified that both programs have experienced some level of impact to hands-on nature of the curriculum with the shift to primarily online deliveries.

While graduates continue to find the program useful in their employment, EMANAS would benefit from focused program/course mapping to identify curriculum gaps in context of modern practice. This course mapping may also support the redevelopment of the EMANAS into a series “stackable” micro-credentials that contribute to a larger credential. Additionally, the level of overlap in courses between EMEDAS and EMANAS raises questions as to whether EMEDAS would be better served as a micro-credential that is somehow aligned with EMANAS (in its current form or reorganized as a series of micro-credentials).

The self-study team recognized recent activities focused on increasing enrolment and student graduation rates, including the development of an “accelerated” schedule allowing students to complete the EMANAS program within 4-5 months. The self-study team noted the work of program and divisional staff in maintaining responsive, supportive connections to students and a drive to implement continuous quality improvement in program courses.

Recommendations

The self-study report describes 17 recommendations that address opportunities and weaknesses identified by the self-study team. Two additional recommendations were identified in the financial report. These recommendations are:

1. Engage with the Office of Indigenization to develop an EMD-specific Indigenization plan for the programs.
2. Conduct a review of EMEDAS core courses to ensure they reflect current best practice in the field.
3. Explore opportunities to incorporate communication skills (oral and written) in the EMANAS curriculum.
4. Redesign EMD's curriculum development and review process to identify strategies that increase accountability for curriculum quality.
5. Review EMANAS course content, texts, articles, and multimedia resources to ensure currency and relevancy and adjust as needed.
6. Explore restructuring EMANAS and EMEDAS as a series of stackable micro-credentials.
7. Gather feedback on demand for face-to-face delivery in both EMANAS and EMEDAS.
8. Develop a new competency framework for the Associate Certificate in Emergency Management and a program map to assess alignment against existing competencies.
9. Explore interactive experiential-learning and/or work-integrated learning opportunities to enhance the applied learning elements of the programs.
10. Review assessment methods and adjust as needed to ensure an appropriate level of rigor in the assessments and/or marking and ensure that evaluation tools and strategies effectively measure achievement of learning outcomes.
11. Identify strategies to improve engagement with instructors, better articulating their responsibilities with students and providing ways to empower and engage instructors with program and course related decision making.
12. Promote and encourage faculty development.
13. Explore faculty dissatisfaction with Blackboard.
14. Evaluate services provided to students for opportunities to improve the student experience with JIBC.
15. Examine opportunities for greater technical support for students taking courses online.
16. Develop a new marketing plan for EMANAS and EMEDAS with comprehensive student profiles to target appropriate marketing channels for each program.
17. Explore means of proactively providing students with course outlines prior to the start of the course.
18. Work with Institutional Research to identify if/how contract offerings support program recruitment.
19. Review divisional cost centre structure to clarify program-related revenues/expenses.

Future Directions

Current program growth/development plans following the program review include:

- Completing a competency framework and program map for EMANAS to identify potential gaps in curriculum.
- Identifying logical course groupings and revisions to support the development of topic-specific micro-credentials.

- Continuing with efforts to Indigenize curriculum.
- Engaging with PAC members to identify potential new course topics.
- Incorporating low-level work-integrated-learning opportunities into the program.

2. External Review Team (ERT) Report Summary

The ERT indicated that overall, the site visit validated and supported the findings of the self-study report.

The ERT found students and graduates felt the programs equipped them with valuable information, knowledge, and skills applicable to their fields of work. For students entering the field, the programs were valuable in supporting future employment and providing guidance on further education. Overall, faculty and students expressed to the ERT they felt supported by program area staff.

While the students and graduates generally expressed a high degree of satisfaction with the programs, they did also highlight a desire for increased collaboration, discussion, and interaction with their fellow students, and between students and their instructors. The ERT also found there was a desire amongst students for more interactive, applied, and skills-based activities in the programs. The site visit findings support the need to review and update course content and resources, better aligning them with current trends, knowledge, and best practices in the field (e.g., addressing the Sendai Framework). The site visit findings also supported the need to review the overall design of both the associate certificates as well as the assessments used in each course.

Overall feedback on the programs was positive, and included areas for program improvement, updating and restructuring.

3. Self-Study Team Response to ERT Report

The findings of the ERT closely align with the findings of the self-study team. Of note are the focus on student experience and the potential impacts of reduced interaction with instructors and fellow students, particularly in online courses; the need to analyze curriculum to determine it is aligned with current practice, trends, and knowledge; to explore the potential restructuring of the EMANAS and EMEDAS programs as micro-credentials; and to examine ways to support students in identifying potential employers. The suggestions/recommendations of the ERT provide useful guidance in operationalizing the various recommendations.

The self-study team accepts the findings and suggestions/recommendations of the ERT and acknowledges the time and resource commitments of each of the ERT members.

4. Final Recommendations & Action Plan

The Program Review Team has developed a Quality Assurance Action Plan (QAAP) outlining timelines and implementation considerations for the final recommendations. (See separate document *Quality*

Assurance Action Plan.) The final recommendations have been organized into five groupings with each grouping having an overarching goal/output. These are:

- 1. Goal/Output: Implementation of strategic curriculum development initiatives.**
 - a. Engage with the Office of Indigenization to develop an EMD-specific Indigenization plan for the programs.
 - b. Conduct a review of EMEDAS core courses to ensure they reflect current best practice in the field.
 - c. Explore opportunities to incorporate communication skills (oral and written) in the EMANAS curriculum.
 - d. Redesign EMD's curriculum development and review process to identify strategies that increase accountability for curriculum quality.
 - e. Review EMANAS course content, texts, articles, and multimedia resources to ensure currency and relevancy and adjust as needed.
- 2. Goal/Output: Renewed program-related courses that incorporate applied training activities**
 - a. Explore restructuring EMANAS and EMEDAS as a series of stackable micro-credentials.
 - b. Gather feedback on demand for face-to-face delivery in both EMANAS and EMEDAS.
 - c. Develop a new competency framework for the Associate Certificate in Emergency Management and a program map to assess alignment against existing competencies.
 - d. Explore interactive experiential-learning and/or work-integrated learning opportunities to enhance the applied learning elements of the programs.
 - e. Review assessment methods and adjust as needed to ensure an appropriate level of rigor in the assessments and/or marking and ensure that evaluation tools and strategies effectively measure achievement of learning outcomes.
- 3. Goal/Output: A communication strategy that actively engages program faculty and students in program decisions, processes, and professional development opportunities.**
 - a. Identify strategies to improve engagement with instructors, better articulating their responsibilities with students and providing ways to empower and engage instructors with program and course related decision making.
 - b. Promote and encourage faculty development.
 - c. Explore faculty dissatisfaction with Blackboard.
 - d. Evaluate services provided to students for opportunities to improve the student experience with JIBC.
 - e. Examine opportunities for greater technical support for students taking courses online.
- 4. Goal/Output: A renewed marketing plan and associated materials that focus on highlighting student profiles.**
 - a. Develop a new marketing plan for EMANAS and EMEDAS with comprehensive student profiles to target appropriate marketing channels for each program.
 - b. Explore means of proactively providing students with course outlines prior to the start of the course.

- 5. Goal/Output: Divisional processes that more clearly track program related revenues and expenses.**
- a. Work with Institutional Research to identify if/how contract offerings support program recruitment.
 - b. Review divisional cost centre structure to clarify program-related revenues/expenses.

The ERT provided four additional suggestions/recommendations as part of their final report. These suggestions/recommendations are primarily operational in nature, describing considerations and processes for implementing the recommendations identified above. These will be incorporated into the operational planning of the program area. The ERT suggestions/recommendations are:

- Consider a more comprehensive list of potential employers for program graduates. Current materials are highly focused on government operations and ignore the private sector. This may be an area to explore within the proposed marketing initiatives.
- Investigate the standard requirements for job application in the field more broadly (not just within B.C.) and strategize alignment of the program to these requirements.
- Engage with employers with respect to micro-credentials should, as this may help to inform specific course groupings to meet common needs.
- Investigate current technologies that may be able to provide more realistic simulated Emergency Management scenarios and exercises (for example, using images from drones, etc.).

The recommendations related to financial considerations (see Goal #5: clarify divisional processes for tracking program related revenues and expenses) were developed as an output of the financial reporting process.