

# Comprehensive Program Review

## FINAL SUMMARY REPORT

# Certificate in Fire Fighting Technologies (FFTE1)

School of Public Safety, Fire & Safety Division

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## 1. Self-Study Report Summary

### Conclusions

The Certificate in Fire Fighting Technologies (FFTE1) equips learners with National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 1001 *Standard for Fire Fighter Professional Qualifications* (Fire Fighter II) certification, ensuring that they are ready to join a fire department and start a career as a fire fighter. Student feedback on the program is positive, particularly as it relates to the practical training component, and admissions to the program remain strong. However, FFTE1 has poor graduation rates, with most students exiting upon completion of NFPA 1001 certification, without completing the remaining nine credits of Liberal Studies electives that would lead to the full 30-credit certificate. The primary finding of the Self-Study report is that FFTE1 should be substantively changed, removing the nine credits of electives to focus on the NFPA 1001, thus reducing the program to 21.5 credits. This change will also support keeping the program competitive in a market where other programs are shorter and less expensive.

Other findings from the self-study process related to the ongoing need to ensure curriculum reflects current and changing standards, both provincial and international, and to ensure there is regular consultation with both faculty and employers regarding industry expectations. Opportunities to improve curriculum as it relates to best practices in mental and physical health, Indigenization, and online learning were also identified. In addition, making better use of data in decision making and aligning more closely with wider JIBC systems and structures will help make the program more predictable and effective. And renewed marketing efforts will support FFTE1's profile in the marketplace.

### Recommendations

The following recommendations emerged from the Self-Study Report:

- **Recommendation #1:** Ensure FFTE1 meets the new (2022) BC Minimum Training Standards.
- **Recommendation #2:** Evaluate FFTE1 against the new consolidated standard NFPA 1010 Standard for Firefighter, Fire Apparatus Driver/ Operator, Airport Firefighter, and Marine Firefighting for Land-Based Firefighters Professional Qualifications and revise as appropriate (replaces NFPA 1001).
- **Recommendation #3:** Resume FFTE1 marketing and promotional efforts including Information Sessions at the Maple Ridge Campus, partnering with Vancouver Fire Rescue for their recruitment efforts, attending Career Fairs, and presentations to key stakeholders.
- **Recommendation #4:** Explore more effective part-time programming options to better serve prospective students unable to complete the program on a full-time basis.
- **Recommendation #5:** FFTE1 program staff meet annually with Training Officers from various career departments to ensure the program continues to meet the needs of employers.
- **Recommendation #6:** Restructure FFTE1 to the competencies required to achieve Fire Fighter II certification.

- **Recommendation #7:** Work with Communications & Marketing to review and update the marketing strategy for the program.
- **Recommendation #8:** Review application, admission, and enrolment data to determine opportunities to improve admission yield and rate.
- **Recommendation #9:** Explore ways to integrate more learning opportunities for, and best practices around, mental health, physical fitness, and nutrition into the FFTE1/ pre-employment program.
- **Recommendation #10:** Explore the opportunity to implement an aligned physical fitness assessment or adapt a current industry standard test to administer as part of the application process.
- **Recommendation #11:** Align FFTE1 admissions and scheduling to JIBC fall, winter, and spring/summer semesters and create a map for students that illustrates program structure and timelines.
- **Recommendation #12:** Conduct an in-depth review of HZMT-1110 to ensure alignment of content, materials, and activities to learning outcomes.
- **Recommendation #13:** Collaborate with Institutional Research as they conduct their Course Evaluation Enhancement Project to identify student feedback opportunities and implement appropriate evaluation processes.
- **Recommendation #14:** Collaborate with Institutional Research to engage faculty and gather feedback as it relates to the FFTE1 curriculum, instructional design, and resources.
- **Recommendation #15:** Explore ways to integrate resources from Resilient Minds into the FFTE1/ preemployment program.

## Future Directions

The immediate priority for FFTE1 is restructuring (shortening) the program to remove the liberal studies courses. 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 examine the scheduling model and refresh marketing materials and plans. 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

In June 2023, the *External Review Team*, comprising Brian Vinje (Maple Ridge Fire Department), Chris Senaratne (Lakeland College), Dave Burgess (BCIT & JIBC), and Melanie Chernoff (JIBC), conducted a site visit with program staff, faculty, and students.

In their ERT Report (Appendix 1), the *External Review Team* confirmed the scope and the findings of the Self-Study Report. Discussions with students and faculty validated the overall quality of the program and its value in preparing students for entry level positions in the fire service both in BC and across Canada. In addition to supporting the proposed reduction in length and credit value of the program, the ERT recommended exploring whether the HAZMAT courses, currently taken after the 7-week practical

component, could be scheduled while students are taking the other practical courses. Further, they suggested creating opportunities for students to complete complementary programs that would enhance their employability, such as Emergency Medical Responder. That being said, the ERT also suggested that program staff take time prior to making substantive changes to consider how the institution wishes to position the program in relation to the competition.

Other recommendations by the ERT included enhancing data collection on student employment rates, matching admission criteria to hiring criteria, increasing supports to instructors, marketing the program more aggressively across the country, and pursuing student accommodations on or near the Maple Ridge campus.

### 3. Self-Study Team Response to ERT Report

The FFTE1 Self-Study Team greatly appreciates the time and attention of the ERT in their external review. The discussion during the site visit was validating and motivating. Their enthusiasm for the program, its future, and the improvements that could be made to support both students and on-going program success was gratifying. The recommendations presented in the Self-Study Report have been refined with input from the ERT, and additional recommendations by the ERT have been included in the Quality Assurance Action Plan (QAAP; Appendix 2). Of note was support to restructure FFTE1 to focus on NFPA 1001 certification. This represents a significant shift in approach and thus agreement that review findings supported this change is valuable. As suggested in the ERT Report, FFTE1 program staff will work with Institutional Research to better leverage data collection tools for both students and faculty; more data will help program staff make informed on-going decisions about the program.

### 4. Final Recommendations & Action Plan

In the process of building the QAAP, the 15 recommendations from the Self-Study Report were refined and focused, and then enhanced by the ERT's feedback. Recommendations were translated to actionable tasks grouped under five goals:

1. FFTE1 curriculum reflects current standards and best practice in fire fighting.
2. FFTE1 has an increased profile in a competitive market.
3. FFTE1 is structured to meet the needs of students and employers and ensure program sustainability.
4. JIBC's Fire & Safety Division is better able to leverage data to inform future program and curriculum improvements.
5. FFTE1 faculty are engaged and supported.

The resulting QAAP is ambitious, but manageable. It focuses on key activities to improve student completion rates and maintain curriculum currency. Over the next five years this plan will be monitored and updated to respond to changes in industry and competitive context. Annual reviews will be important to monitor admissions, enrolment, and graduations, with planned actions being adjusted in response.

## 5. List of Appendices

- Appendix 1: External Review Team Report
- Appendix 2: Quality Assurance Action Plan (QAAP)