



# **Summary Report for the Cyclical Program Review of the Associate of Arts Program at University Canada West**

June 19, 2023

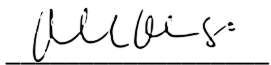
Office of the Vice President Academic

## **Territorial Acknowledgement**

*We acknowledge that the territories on which UCW and its campuses are situated are the traditional, ancestral and unceded territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) and Selilwitulh (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations. We thank them for having cared for this land since time immemorial, honour their graciousness to the students who seek knowledge here, and iterate our dedication to valuing the ongoing contributions of Indigenous peoples and communities.*

## Introduction

This public summary report for the Cyclical Program Review of the Associate of Arts (AA) degree at University Canada West provides a summary of the cyclical review process, the executive summary from the Report of the External Program Review Panel, and a list of the recommendations made by the panel. A summary of the program's response to each recommendation made by the External Program Review Panel has also been included, which provides details on how the program intends to implement the recommendations made. The Summary Report was prepared by the Office of the VPA and approved by UCW's Senate.



Dr. Maureen Mancuso

Vice President Academic

## Summary of the Cyclical Review Process

The cyclical program review of the AA program took place between April 2022 and March 2023. The review process was initiated with a Cyclical Program Review Orientation session for all Program Chairs; following that, the AA program struck a Self-Study committee, comprised of four continuing faculty members appointed to the program. Over the course of several months, the Self-Study Committee met regularly to plan their approach to the cyclical program review, collect relevant data, consult with, and collect information from relevant program and institutional stakeholders, and complete the Self-Study document.

The External Program Review Panel was selected by the Office of the Vice-President: Academic and was comprised of two external reviewers with disciplinary expertise, program administration experience, and an understanding of the provincial context in which University Canada West operates. The review committee membership included:

- Dr. Kedrick James, Professor of Teaching, University of British Columbia
- Dr. Lara Duke, Dean of the Faculty of Global and Community Studies, Capilano University

The site visit of the External Program Review Panel took place in person at the University Canada West campus in Vancouver on May 1-2, 2023. During the two-day site visit, the External Program Review Panel met with relevant university and program stakeholders, including the VP: Academic, the Director of Institutional Accountability, the AA Program Chair and Vice-Chair, members of the AA Self-Study Committee, program faculty, AA students, and representatives from UCW's Academic Leadership Team and Academic Support Services.

The External Program Review Panel used the information presented in the program's Self-Study and accompanying materials (e.g. course syllabi, faculty CVs), and the perspectives obtained from the site visit, to

prepare the Report of the External Program Review Panel, which includes their assessment of the program's operations across all required categories for the cyclical program review, along with related recommendations to improve the quality of the program and the student experience. The Executive Summary of the External Program Review Panel has been provided below, along with the list of recommendations made in the report, and the AA program's response to each.

## Executive Summary of the External Program Review Panel

This Cyclical Program Review external panel site visit took place on May 1-2, 2023, at the Vancouver House campus, and was the first program review of the rapidly expanding Associate of Arts (AA) program at University Canada West. The reviewers were provided with the program's recently completed self-study; UCW policies and procedures; AA course outlines; continuing faculty CVs; as well as review template and guidelines. During the on-site visit, reviewers met with administration, faculty, enrolled students, alumni, and were provided with a tour of the Vancouver House campus.

Program strengths include a steep increase in enrolments and strong post certificate employment of program graduates. The program offers a broad range of general, introductory arts courses. These courses meet requisite standards have substantial articulation but could be enhanced through an increase in experiential learning and more inquiry-based, multimodal projects and assessments. Courses offerings could be broadened or renewed through pathways aligned with other post-secondary institutions. A major strength is the growing number of highly qualified continuing faculty, and new initiatives to incentivize their loyalty and productivity. Another strength of the program is its reflexive practices, however, greater integration of different units and vested parties (from sessional instructors to recruiters), and integration with inter-institutional units would help to maintain program integrity and student opportunities. In addition, flexible structures under the guidance of senior leadership (such as deans) would help UCW to achieve its goal of being a leading post-secondary private business school in the Canadian context.

Several times during the review, reviewers mentioned a "both and approach." This means that the program could enhance skills readiness within the AA curriculum and work to prepare students toward internal transfer into other UCW bachelor's degrees. In addition, building on the strength of BCCAT articulation committees UCW may endeavor to nurture key external institutional partners to build 2+2 programs for students leaving UCW for public institutions to pursue a bachelors. Approaching these key partners with an eye to building transfer into UCW would be essential. One key element to student success is increasing English language support for students so that they are proficient at both business English and academic genres of writing. UCW has continued implementing student and academic support services since the AA consent renewal of spring 2021 and the reviewers provide suggestions on how to strengthen and align those activities with curriculum aspects of the AA.

Reviewers were made aware of a strategic plan that is in development at UCW. With tangible priorities in place, the university can work to align the recommendations provided in this report within the initiatives to achieve objectives associated with the priorities UCW formulates. Improving curricular process through the institution, reducing ratio of student to academic advisor, and enhancing development and engagement in work-integrated learning will strongly enhance the learner and employee experience at UCW. There is a definite student-

centered commitment by the university employees and working proactively with plans and curriculum revision, development, and pruning will strengthen the current AA, 2+2 transfer opportunities, and ultimately the status of UCW.

## List of Recommendations and Program Responses

The following section provides a list of the recommendations made by the External Program Review Panel, the responses and suggested actions provided by the AA program, and a proposed timeline for implementation of the recommendations.

**Recommendation #1:** Consider staggering the three program's cyclical reviews to reduce likelihood of review fatigue at the institution and ensure differentiation among credentials and appropriate internal pathways.

**Response and Suggested Actions:** We agree with this recommendation. Staggering the four reviews (including the MBA) will make the process more efficient, and less stressful for the participants including students, faculty, administrators, as well as the respective review committees. It is suggested to have the upcoming reviews conducted such that no more than two program reviews are happening concurrently.

**Implementation Timeline:** This recommendation will be implemented as part of the next schedule of UCW cyclical program reviews.

**Recommendation #2:** With an emerging strategic and integrated plan for priorities at UCW, focus the cyclical review process, reviewer input, and resulting program action plans to these institutional priorities, to support student experience and manageable workloads for the UCW employees.

**Response and Suggested Actions:** An integrated strategic plan to inform the priorities at UCW, including those for the AA program, will be beneficial in alleviating the workload of UCW employees, as well as improving the student experience.

**Implementation Timeline:** We will work with the university leadership, and once the recommended plan is developed, it will guide the aforementioned processes.

**Recommendation #3:** Develop a curriculum map with existing courses to map the course learning outcomes to the AA and use the map to develop experiential learning threads and work-integrated learning opportunities. Use the map to identify irrelevant content and assessments and to improve course scheduling within a context of steep enrollment growth and ability to hire and train qualified faculty.

**Response and Suggested Actions:** The AA program has several forms of curriculum maps already, but they do not necessarily address all of the elements suggested by the External Program Review Panel. Additional curriculum mapping will be highly useful in visualising our students' journey and addressing any shortcomings, including any duplicate content in the course materials and better schedule the hirings and preparation of the new faculty.

**Implementation Timeline:** The AA program will review and expand its current curriculum maps by Winter 2024.

**Recommendation #4:** Add a faculty member from a local college, teaching-university, or institute to the program advisory committee to help build relationships with critical colleagues to develop necessary credential naming policy regarding needed specializations / concentrations for the AA.

**Response and Suggested Actions:** Partnerships with public institutions are essential for AA program to become eligible for offering specializations. This is a great suggestion and will help facilitate such partnerships. The Program Advisory Committee Policy # 5000 is currently under review, and it has already considered incorporating this recommendation.

**Implementation Timeline:** Fall 2023

**Recommendation #5:** Increase English language learner (ELL) support networks. Given the multilingual student population, create an environmental scan and program-wide discussion regarding student's performance with verbal instruction, reading comprehension, written assignments and exams in formal English; gather data on language related student attrition, and improve institutional support for faculty and ELL students related to language of instruction and academic integrity. Improve means of supportive intervention with struggling ELL students. Enhance writing curriculum through more creative purposes/genres.

**Response and Suggested Actions:** UCW acknowledges the importance of academic English development in students and will incorporate more learning opportunities such as more oral presentations, more creative type writing workshops or content in our curriculum. This will help with student retention as suggested and at the same time will help the students develop the "Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency" for academic success. The program will explore obtaining more granular data that can test the hypothesis that students with lower English language skills tend to struggle more, that can then be used to target interventions. Additionally, since this recommendation has an institutional focus, it will be shared by relevant academic support services at UCW.

**Implementation Timeline:** Winter 2025

**Recommendation #6:** Utilize flexible structures for curriculum, so that pathways align with UCW branding, develop a cluster of courses and faculty expertise under the interdisciplinary topic of Business, Environment and Sustainability in Global Contexts, and align this with recruiting efforts. This pathway may be explored as a specialization.

**Response and Suggested Actions:** UCW is very resourceful in the area of sustainability given the expertise of our faculty and some of the courses already offered in this area. UCW is considering creating a specialization in the area of Sustainability in our other undergraduate programs. The cluster of courses created would be a good addition for our AA degree program students, who would also be eligible to take them as program electives.

**Implementation Timeline:** Since this recommendation relies upon the creation of courses and specializations in other units at the institution, it is difficult to predict an anticipated timeline for implementation.

**Recommendation #7:** Have faculty and staff dedicated to re-imagining experiential learning and work-integrated learning in 100 and 200 AA courses, so students may develop reflective practice and humanics skills while faculty and staff build their local and provincial networks to enhance course content and learning outcomes in a non-lecture-based course structure.

**Response and Suggested Actions:** There is certainly a need and a significant amount of demand for more experiential learning opportunities for AA students, who end up in the workplace upon graduation. Considering how many UCW faculty come from industry with well-built relationships, this will be considered an important opportunity for the program to improve its relevancy to the needs of the students.

UCW will do a scan of its current faculty pool and make an announcement for proposals for developing such courses by the interested faculty. UCW had added a few Accounting courses like Sage and Quickbooks after previous research has been conducted. More of such type of scans will be done and experiential learning and work integrated courses will be explored.

**Implementation Timeline:** Research related to this recommendation will start in Fall 2023 and we target to have it implemented by Fall 2024.

**Recommendation #8:** Increase accessibility of undergraduate student support and advising services, emphasizing individualized student academic support and accessible counselling services.

**Response and Suggested Actions:** The AA program recognizes the importance of student awareness of the resources available to them to support their academic success. The above services are currently provided on demand, however, there is a channel for faculty to refer the students who need them to the appropriate student support services including counselling services. UCW will take a note of this and ensure it is more widely promoted by the faculty as well as the service providing units.

UCW will more regularly remind the faculty, as well as students, about these support services, and at the same time will make the process more efficient and individualized for the students.

**Implementation Timeline:** Fall 2023

**Recommendation #9:** Balance continuity of courses with multiple instructors across various sections with creativity and imagination in assessment that authentically assess learning outcome of students.

**Response and Suggested Actions:** The implementation of the intent of this recommendation is already underway. The ACSS already started working on creating more consistency in the assessments of multi-section courses. As part of this process, the Subject Leads are consulting with the teaching faculty to improve such assessments and make them more creative.

**Implementation Timeline:** Summer 2023

**Recommendation #10:** Establish strategic priorities for admission and enrolment targets for the AA that include board, administrators, RO, and chairs in the decision-making.

**Response and Suggested Actions:** Setting a target enrollment or a cap for AA student admissions will help the program to be more proactive in creating a sense of “belonging” for the students as suggested, to introduce environments and opportunities that will help the students engage with those from other countries and create a sense of community. This coordination between departments will also help the AA program to better foresee the human resource needs in terms of administration and faculty hirings to better support the students. It should be noted, however, that the AA program is not responsible for setting its own enrolment targets; this is done centrally, so this recommendation will also be shared with those involved in strategic enrolment management at UCW.

**Implementation Timeline:** Fall 2023

**Recommendation #11:** Consider faculty “release” or service time allocation to explore bi-direction 2+2 partnerships with key institutional partners in Metro Vancouver. Specifically, those with matching and complimentary programs as well as those with well-established international student supports and easy transit access or on-campus housing. This work relies on good process in the RO and faculty relationships at the various articulation tables. In addition, if a Dean were in place they may broker relationships at the Provincial Deans Arts and Sciences meetings.

**Response and Suggested Actions:** This is a very feasible and attractive vision for AA to really help this program to establish its position in the province and create meaningful partnership with the suggested provincial institutions. Under the existing DOE model of work allocation, faculty could be assigned as part of their service allocation, responsibility for exploring bi-directional 2+2 partnerships. The VPA is currently reviewing the organizational structure of the University, including the creation of decanal positions.

**Implementation Timeline:** Fall 2023

**Recommendation #12:** Address work/life balance for continuing faculty. Clarify and incorporate faculty in processes leading to progress through ranks. Ranks should convey related benefits. Clarify workload negotiations for continuing faculty and equitable system of teaching release allocation for service and scholarship.

**Response and Suggested Actions:** As noted by the External Program Review Panel, the faculty rank structure is in its early stages at the institution. The VPA is working with a group of faculty members to establish the criteria to be used to assess faculty for the purposes of granting of continuing appointment, promotion, and biennial performance in the three areas of endeavour—teaching, scholarship, and service. All continuing faculty will have the opportunity to comment on the proposed criteria before it is finalized. The pay structure is transparent—each member of continuing faculty was shown the full salary grid in discussion of their rank placement, and it will be in the revised faculty handbook once completed.

**Implementation Timeline:** The assessment criteria should be published by Summer 2023.



**Recommendation #13:** Clarify names of subject leads or course leads as well as the scope of work and responsibility as it relates to the work percentages of the distribution of work model for rank and promotion.

**Response and Suggested Actions:** The need to implement this recommendation has already been acknowledged by UCW administration and the necessary clarifications and improvements are already under discussion for final approvals.

**Implementation Timeline:** Spring 2024

**Recommendation #14:** Consider additional academic leaders to support the strategic directions of UCW with deans.

**Response and Suggested Actions:** As noted in Recommendation # 11, the VPA is conducting a review of organizational structure, including additional academic leadership positions.

**Implementation Timeline:** Ongoing into 2024

**Recommendation #15:** Consider additional lab science courses that offer virtual laboratories or OER labs until space can be enhanced for dry/wet labs.

**Response and Suggested Actions:** The program acknowledges that courses such as GEOG 101 and PHYS 101 would greatly benefit from such labs. The idea of OER labs seems a feasible option until the space enhancements can be made as a more permanent solution. The VPA will work with facilities to identify an appropriate space at the West Pender campus that can be converted to a lab.

**Implementation Timeline:** Fall 2023

**Recommendation #16:** For the library resources and workshops, include workshop use in the AA curriculum map to identify when students take workshops and ensure they are receiving the breadth of offerings necessary to enhance student success and persistence.

**Response and Suggested Actions:** Identifying Library workshops in the AA curriculum map will help the program better track where students have access to these learning resources. The AA program will look into this by seeking help from the course leads to identify and map courses where library resources and workshops are currently integrated into course curriculum.

**Implementation Timeline:** Fall 2023

**Recommendation #17:** Follow through on the hiring plan for the academic advisors and work to build the relationships between the advisor and the chair and vice-chair, or other faculty designate, to ensure program level information is consistent for students and those students are not bounced across different university units.



**Response and Suggested Actions:** Consistency in program level information is crucial for making sure the students receive the right information the first time they seek advice. The AA Chair and Vice-Chair will start having regular meetings with the advisors, to first maintain a positive relationship, and second to clarify any inconsistencies in advising processes.

**Implementation Timeline:** Summer 2023

**Recommendation #18:** Ensure faculty that teach experiential or work-integrated learning courses or activities have connection with career development center. Perhaps faculty can use existing resources to build out employment ready skills for students while earning credit. Building faculty to career development center relationship is essential.

**Response and Suggested Actions:** This is an excellent recommendation that is closely related to #7. We will explore this and will make sure we tap into the available resources with the Career Development Centre.

**Implementation Timeline:** Fall 2023

**Recommendation #19:** Work to build the co-curricular and student services virtual activities and spaces into the new Brightspace LMS as much as possible so students may have a one stop virtual shop for course work and the support services.

**Response and Suggested Actions:** ACSS will ensure such support service spaces are incorporated into Brightspace LMS to make it more readily available and convenient for the students. This recommendation will also be communicated to the academic departments.

**Implementation Timeline:** Fall 2023

**Recommendation #20:** Engage program wide review of admissions requirements and set standards for selection among eligible applicants. This should include means of assessing academic language proficiency but may also be more nuanced in terms of understanding the kinds of student interests the program wishes to foster. These focal areas and standards should be clearly outlined for recruiters to use.

**Response and Suggested Actions:** This proposal will be shared with senior administration for consideration, as it is not within the program's control to implement directly.

**Implementation Timeline:** Ongoing into Spring 2024

**Recommendation #21:** Continue to be reflective on the data gathered and report out to students and employees how UCW will shift and change to align with appropriate feedback as an institution.

**Response and Suggested Actions:** The AA program understands the importance of data-informed decision-making, as well as to keep stakeholders (including faculty, staff, and students) informed as to how data and

feedback are being used to improve program quality and the student experience. The cyclical program review provided the AA program and its faculty with an opportunity to review various data sets on student performance, as well as feedback from different stakeholder groups. Going forward, the program and institution will ensure that there are clear mechanisms for sharing this data, as well as how it will be used to inform positive changes aimed at continuous improvement.

**Implementation Timeline:** Ongoing/ Summer 2023

**Recommendation #22:** Ensure recruiters are correctly representing the AA Program to prospective students. Ensure external agents connect with the appropriate UCW personnel to provide an authentic student life cycle initiation with recruiting starts.

**Response and Suggested Actions:** We agree with the External Program Review Panel that it is important that UCW recruiters are marketing the AA program (and other programs) accurately. The AA Chair and Vice-Chair will consult with students about their experiences with recruiters and discuss their findings with UCW senior management, and ultimately GUS Canada.

**Implementation Timeline:** Spring 2024

**Recommendation #23:** Have faculty members join ACE-WIL and/or CEWIL associations as part of their professional development. Have an administrator request membership to the BC WIL Council, which is a UCW presidential appointment to the committee.

**Response and Suggested Actions:** This is a very important suggestion for more work-integrated learning in AA, but may be applicable on a more institutional, rather than program-specific, level.

**Implementation Timeline:** Fall 2023

**Recommendation #24:** Once university priorities are determined, compare them to ministry DQAB processes and the Skills for the Future Workforce and build a transparent and robust process for program and course development, revisions, and discontinuance that include appropriate pan-institutional consultation.

**Response and Suggested Actions:** This is another important recommendation, but one that is more institutional than specific to the AA program. The VPA is finalizing the curriculum process for new program and course proposals, minor and major modifications, and the discontinuation of courses.

**Implementation Timeline:** As Ministry DQAB processes are soon to be updated, UCW will adjust their internal policies and processes accordingly.

**Recommendation #25:** Consider revision to the program review process and templates once DQAB launches the anticipated revised degree standards for all credentials.

**Response and Suggested Actions:** UCW is aware of the changes being made to the DQAB degree level standards, which will undoubtedly inform revisions to the cyclical program review process.

**Implementation Timeline:** Once new DQAB standards have been published, UCW cyclical program review processes and templates will be updated to align with them.

**Recommendation #26:** Once university priorities are established, then the program priorities must align the goals above and identify to the extent possible parallel activities to implement for achieving the maximum number of goals while including feedback loops from faculty, students, and other university relevant constituents.

**Response and Suggested Actions:** One of the themes in several of the recommendations made to the AA program is to ensure alignment between its activities and the forthcoming institutional strategic plan. All of the academic programs and academic support units have reported to the VPA initiatives they have underway that align with and move forward the identified strategic directions for the next five years. They have also provided metrics by which progress on the initiatives can be assessed and reported.

**Implementation Timeline:** AA has submitted their initiatives and the VPA will roll up all of the initiatives under the four strategic directions and will publish them in a University-wide Integrated Planning Report Card. This is scheduled to be implemented by Fall 2023.

## Next Steps

The Report of the External Review Panel had many positive things to say about the quality and focus of the Associate of Arts degree program, noting that its strengths include its “strong post certificate employment of program graduates,” “the growing number of highly qualified continuing faculty,” and its “definite student-centred commitment” (Report of the External Program Review Panel, p. 2). The External Program Review Panel provided the AA program with 26 recommendations to consider, many of which speak to similar themes such as the importance of English language preparedness and resources to ensure student success, as well as ways to further strengthen the program’s commitment to experiential learning and graduate employability. In their Program Response, the AA program has embraced the recommendations that were made, indicating how and when those within their control will be implemented.

Over the course of the next 12-24 months, the AA program will work to implement those recommendations identified as priorities and submit a Progress Report in 2024 that provides an update on the actions taken to implement these recommendations. A Renewal of Consent for the AA degree will be submitted to the Degree Quality Assessment Board (DQAB) in August 2023, and the program’s next cyclical program review will take place as scheduled in accordance with Ministry guidelines.

It was evident throughout this cyclical program review process that the AA program was engaging in it authentically and was interested in leveraging the process as a mechanism for identifying what is working well in

the program, as well as acknowledging opportunities for improvement and seeking input from program stakeholders on how to work collaboratively to address these areas.

The list of recommendations provided by the External Program Review Panel provide solutions to the challenges currently being experienced in the AA program, some of which relate to rapid program growth, as well as to ensure that as the program expands, it maintains its high-quality standards and focus on graduate employability. In addition to clear and specific recommendations that will enable the AA program to engage in continuous program improvement, the Report has also highlighted areas for institutional focus in the coming months and years, such as the completion of a strategic plan which will influence the future activities of all of UCW's academic programs, and ensuring that with the positive institutional growth that UCW has experienced in recent years is accompanied by the faculty and staff resources necessary to support students' academic success. Both the AA program and UCW will benefit from the recommendations of the External Program Review Panel as it looks ahead to continued program expansion and a further strengthening of the student experience at the institution.