

Report from the Honours Committee

Prepared by:

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Chair of the Senate Honours Committee

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Purpose of this Report

- Share results of the honours committee survey conducted in May 2019
- Outline how the committee plans to act on the results
- Solicit feedback from faculty regarding plans

Survey Respondents

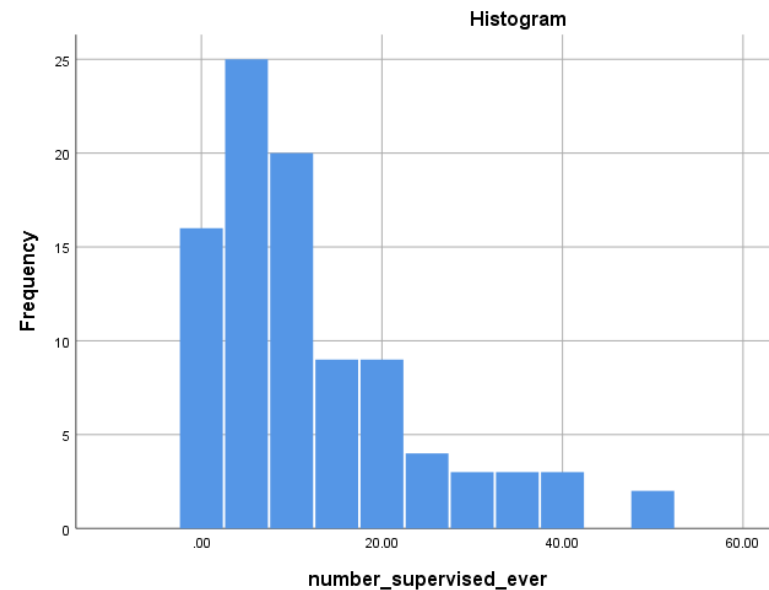
- 111 Faculty members at Acadia University, recruited via Acadia-Faculty listserv
 - 16 withdrew prior to completing the survey
- 95 Participants for data analysis

Faculty	Frequency	% of Respondents
Pure and Applied Science	31	32.6%
Arts	20	21.1%
Professional Studies	11	11.6%
Not Disclosed	33	34.7%

Rank	Frequency	% of Respondents
Full Prof	51	53.7%
Associate Prof	19	20.0%
Assistant Prof	13	13.7%
Lecturer	2	2.1%
Instructor II	5	5.3%
Instructor I	1	1.1%
Librarian IV	1	1.1%
Librarian III	1	1.1%
Other	2	2.1%

Supervisory Experience

- Have you ever supervised an honours student at Acadia University?
 - Yes (90.5%), No (8.4%)
- During your time at Acadia, how many honours students have you supervised? (or provide best estimate)
 - *Mean* = 12.17, *SD* = 11.56, *Median* = 8.5, *Range* = 0-50
- Did you supervise an honours student this past academic year (2018-19)?
 - Yes (51.6%), No (48.4%)



2019 Supervisors' Perceptions of the 2019 External Review

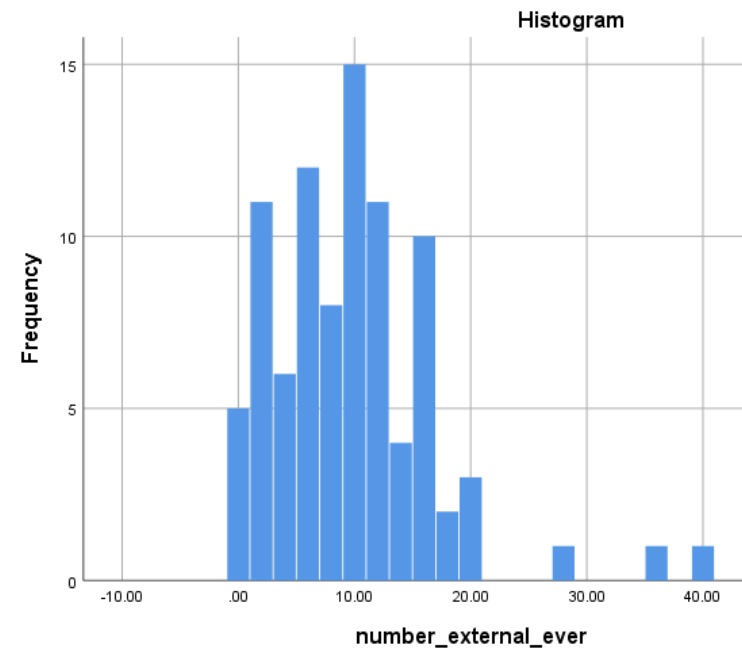
- As an Honours Student Supervisor (N = 49), to what extent would you agree that the external reader program helped improve the quality of your student's thesis(es) this year?

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean	SD
Acadia	5	11	5	3	10	14	1	3.98	1.88
FPAS	2	6	3	1	3	4	0	3.47	1.81
FA	1	3	0	0	2	2	0	3.63	2.07
FPS	0	0	2	1	2	2	0	4.57	1.27
Not disclosed	2	2	0	1	3	6	1	4.53	2.03

Test of Differences among Faculties: $F(3, 45) = 1.24, p = .306, \eta^2 = .08$

Experience as Second Reader

- Have you ever served as an External Reader for an honours thesis at Acadia University?
 - Yes (94.7%), No (5.3%)
- Have you ever refused to serve as an external reader?
 - Yes (42.1%), No (57.9%)
- During your time at Acadia, how many times have you served as the External Reader for an honours thesis? (or provide best estimate)
 - *Mean* = 9.34, *SD* = 7.10, *Median* = 9.5, *Range* = 0-40
- Did you serve as an external reader this year?
 - Yes (49.5%), No (50.5%)



2019 External Readers' Perceptions of the 2019 External Review

- As an External Reader (N = 47), to what extent would you agree that you helped improve the quality of the thesis you read this year?

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean	SD
Acadia	3	6	3	4	8	16	7	4.79	1.86
FPAS	1	2	3	1	3	8	1	4.63	1.77
FA	1	1	0	1	1	0	2	4.33	2.50
FPS	0	1	0	0	1	2	0	4.75	1.89
Not disclosed	1	2	0	2	3	6	4	5.11	1.84

Test of Differences among Faculties: $F(3, 43) = .33, p = .804, \eta^2 = .02$

Test of Supervisor ($M=3.98$) vs. External Reader ($M=4.79$) perceptions of helpfulness of the 2019 external review: $t(94) = -2.12, p = .037, d = -.43$.

Issues Encountered by External Readers (N = 47)

Issue	No issues (1)	Slight issues (2)	Moderate issues (3)	Large issues (4)	Major issues (5)	Mean	SD
Overall readability	26	11	5	3	1	1.74	1.04
Syntax/grammar	15	22	4	2	3	2.04	1.09
Punctuation	20	16	5	3	2	1.93	1.10
Spelling	30	11	4	0	1	1.50	.84
Structure/ organization	30	10	5	1	0	1.50	.78
Reporting of methods	35	8	3	0	0	1.30	.59
Appropriateness of methods	40	3	1	0	1	1.20	.69
Reporting of results	40	5	1	0	0	1.15	.42
Appropriateness of analyses	34	7	3	0	1	1.38	.81
Thoughtfulness of discussion	32	5	7	1	1	1.57	.98
Formatting	29	13	3	1	0	1.48	.72
Referencing/ citations	36	7	1	1	1	1.35	.82

Attitudes Toward the External Reader Process

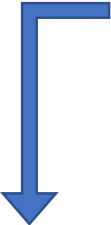
- 18-Item scale ($\alpha = .96$; $Mean = 4.50$, $SD = 1.39$, $Range = 1.72 - 7.00$)

- ANOVA


- 4(Faculty: FPAS vs. FA vs. FPS vs. N/D) x
2(Supervisor 2019: yes vs. no) x
2(External Reader 2019: yes vs. no)

- Main effect of Faculty, $F(3, 80) = 1.92$, $p = .133$, $\eta^2 = .07$

- Supervisor x External Reader, $F(1, 80) = 3.61$, $p = .061$, $\eta^2 = .04$



Faculty	Mean	SD
FPAS (n = 31)	4.10	1.59
FA (n = 20)	4.52	1.31
FPS (n = 11)	5.10	.53
Not Disclosed (n = 33)	4.66	1.36



	Supervised in 2019	Did not Supervise in 2019
Served as External Reader in 2019	4.28 (1.54) n = 30	5.14 (1.42) n = 17
Did not serve as external reader in 2019	4.45 (1.12) n = 19	4.38 (1.34) n = 29

Attitudes Toward the External Reader Process

- 18-Item scale ($\alpha = .96$; $Mean = 4.50$, $SD = 1.39$, $Range = 1.72 - 7.00$)
 - Means for the full pattern of

	Supervised a Thesis in 2019	Did not supervise a Thesis in 2019
Served as external reader in 2019	FPAS = 3.77 (1.64) n = 13 FA = 3.50 (1.44) n = 4 FPS = 5.28 (.61) n = 4 N/D = 4.93 (1.39) n = 9 <u>TOTAL = 4.28 (1.54) n = 30</u>	FPAS = 4.95 (1.84) n = 6 FA = 5.89 (.08) n = 2 FPS = --- (---) n = 0 N/D = 5.10 (1.32) n = 9 <u>TOTAL = 5.14 (1.42) n = 17</u>
Did not serve as external reader in 2019	FPAS = 4.07 (1.17) n = 6 FA = 4.19 (.93) n = 4 FPS = 5.26 (.50) n = 3 N/D = 4.60 (1.37) n = 6 <u>TOTAL = 4.45 (1.11) n = 19</u>	FPAS = 4.00 (1.68) n = 6 FA = 4.79 (1.32) n = 10 FPS = 4.81 (.48) n = 4 N/D = 3.98 (1.34) n = 9 <u>TOTAL = 4.38 (1.32) n = 29</u>

Endorsement of Alternatives

- Nothing (i.e., no alternative, just scrap the external reader process).
 - Mean = 3.18, SD = 2.06
- A mandatory within-department second reader for any department offering an honours degree.
 - Mean = 5.47, SD = 1.69
- An honours conference in which all honours students present posters or give short talks.
 - Mean = 4.88, SD = 1.72
- A relatively brief showcase of the best honours thesis from each department (as nominated by departments).
 - Mean = 3.73, SD = 1.92

Summary of Quantitative Results

- A lot of ambivalence toward the external review process for honours theses
 - Overall neutral attitudes in Arts and Science
 - Mildly positive attitudes in Professional Studies and among those who did not indicate their Faculty
- External Reviews > Supervisors on evaluations of the helpfulness of the process in 2019
- Serving in both roles in 2019 (supervisor and external reviewer) produced lowest attitudes
 - Unless they were in Professional Studies or did not specify their Faculty, who maintain generally positive attitudes
- Serving only as external reviewer in 2019 produced high attitudes

Brief Summary of Open-Ended Commentary

- Positive Impressions
 - Provides rigor
 - Good experience for students
 - Enjoy reading Theses from other departments
- Negative Impressions
 - Inconsequential, no teeth
 - Inappropriate comments from external (no expertise, rude)
 - Waste of time/resources, burden on RGS and faculty
- Ambivalence
 - Need someone else to read, but second reader already does
 - Process is needed, but would be better conducted within faculty/units

Recommendations from the Honours Committee

- Guided by goal to strengthen honours processes while minimizing administrative burden
- Recommend replacing the external reader with a mandatory internal reader for any department/unit offering an honours program
- Offer supports/resources for internal processes
 - Developing a checklist/rubric for internal readers
 - Collecting sample honours handbooks
- Goal is NOT to infringe upon departmental practices, but to empower departments/units to strengthen internal processes independently

Feedback

- We are seeking feedback from the membership before bringing these recommendations to Senate
- Questions/Comments?
- Express your opinion by contacting me (jhayes@acadiau.ca) or one of your Faculty representatives on the Senate Honours Committee
 - Anne Quema (English)
 - Cynthia Alexander (Politics)