



Bachelor of Arts in Individualized Studies (BAIS)

Program Review Summary

Program Overview

The Bachelor of Arts in Individualized Studies (BAIS) program underwent an external review in May of 2025. Three external reviewers were asked to review and comment on the program: Elizabeth D. McCausland (Douglas College), Wayde Compton (University of Victoria), and Heather K. Cyr (Kwantlen Polytechnic University), respectively. The review observed that the liberal arts content of the BAIS program is of great benefit to students' ability to obtain jobs as well as perform and excel at those jobs. Therefore, their common recommendation is to expand recruitment to local students and use the new Oakridge location to do so. What follows is a summary and response organized around the key themes that emerged.

Program Strengths

The reviewers commended the Bachelor of Arts in Individualized Studies program for its innovative blend of liberal arts education and career-focused concentrations, its flexibility, and its strong faculty commitment. With small classroom sizes and focus on supporting students from a diverse array of academic, professional and cultural backgrounds, FDU Vancouver is well positioned to offer the kind of personalized and practical education experience that is attractive to both domestic and international students.

The program's thoughtful approach to Indigenization and Decolonization, emphasizes sustainability, trust, and long-term relationship-building with Indigenous communities. The reviewers supported FDU Vancouver's approach to move slowly and work toward trust, rather than quickly and risk further exacerbating existing tensions with host

nations. It was noted that institutional support with funding and resource allocation would be key to realizing FDU's ambitious goals.

FDU Vancouver's integration of work-integrated learning (WIL) has a genuine opportunity to provide students with valuable real-world experience, and reviewers hoped to see this program expanded to other fields. Further, the ability to leverage institutional resources and faculty competencies across campuses were identified as key strengths.

Priorities, Challenges, and Opportunities

Student Support & Safety

Reviewers suggested that international students require stronger support on workplace and housing rights, and the absence of an overdose amnesty policy raises student safety concerns.

The recommendation to establish an overdose amnesty policy is deeply appreciated. The tragic death from overdose event at UVic reminds us that compassionate, student-centered policy must also include harm reduction and clarity about the limits of disciplinary action. We will be reviewing our student conduct and emergency response policies with this recommendation in mind, including public education about federal law and institutional policy related to drug use and emergency intervention.

Recruitment & Sustainability

Low enrollment threatens course variety and long-term program viability. Reviewers consistently encouraged FDU Vancouver to focus on local recruitment, with particular attention to domestic students and underrepresented populations. The upcoming move to the Oakridge campus was seen as a major opportunity, where FDU could position itself, with small classroom sizes and a close net community, as a viable alternative for students coming out of Langara College. This shift in geography could support stronger transfer pathways and increased visibility within the local community.

The committee's concern regarding student recruitment aligns with FDU Vancouver's strategic priorities as we transition to Oakridge campus. Since Spring 2024, we've launched targeted marketing campaigns to local learners, emphasizing small class sizes,

faculty access, and skills that are resilient to automation (i.e. leadership, critical thinking, and communication). In addition to Langara, we are exploring articulation agreements and outreach to local school districts and community organizations, with particular attention to second-generation Canadian, immigrant, and working-class student populations for whom the liberal arts can be both transformational and practical.

Faculty & Administrative Burden

External reviewers noted that a small number of full-time faculty face significant administrative and teaching responsibilities, which constrain their ability to plan and develop program level responses to trends in higher education. They emphasized the need for increased transparency and predictability in professional development funding, particularly as conference costs, research travel, and related costs continue to rise. Reviewers questioned FDU's commitment to provide commensurate funding increases.

We acknowledge this and are currently reviewing our professional development policies to ensure that faculty can plan effectively and access support equitably. This is especially critical for adjuncts and early-career faculty who may not have other sources of institutional support. The visibility of our faculty's research is a clear strength of the program, and we want to ensure that they are supported in sustaining that work.

International Student Preparedness

The IELTS 6.0 admission requirement may leave some students underprepared for university-level coursework. Some reviewers expressed concern about the current IELTS requirement (6.0 overall, no band below 5.5) for incoming students. They noted that in-house testing and remedial supports are useful but should not diminish the importance of robust language screening, if the goal is to ensure that students can thrive in the university learning environment.

We appreciate this observation. Selective admissions is an area we are monitoring closely, especially in light of the program's strong emphasis on reading, writing, and discussion. A new Coordinator for the Writing Center has been named, and a full-time Tutor has been hired. Both are highly qualified with PhDs in relevant fields and

committed to making the Writing Center and in-house testing responsive to student need. Our in-house placement tests have just undergone the first stage of discussion and revisions. As we gather more data on student outcomes, we will revisit these requirements to ensure alignment with academic success indicators.

Employment Outcomes Tracking

Limited WIL opportunities outside business and hospitality. Reviewers saw our existing work placements as promising, particularly our tracking systems for student success, and encouraged us to expand WIL beyond the hospitality and business sectors into fields more directly tied to liberal arts competencies, such as government, policy, education, healthcare, and the non-profit sector.

We agree and have already begun to pursue new partnerships to expand the range of placements. At the same time, we are building on our WIL tracking infrastructure, integrating student feedback, employer evaluations, and post-graduation outcomes into a longitudinal data set that can inform recruitment, advising, and curricular adjustments.

We also appreciate the suggestion to track the long-term impacts of the liberal arts components of the degree, particularly as they relate to multicultural work, marketing, gender equity, and Indigenous relations. This data will help tell the story of the BAIS not just as a credential, but as a formative educational experience.