

Undergraduate and Graduate Program Quality Assurance (QA) Review: 2024

Excerpted Report

Faculty of Agricultural, Life & Environmental Sciences (ALES)

Undergraduate Program Review

Programs: Bachelor of Arts in Environmental Studies; Bachelor of Science Honors in Food Science; Bachelor of Science Honors in Nutrition; Bachelor of Science in Agricultural/Food Business Management; Bachelor of Science in Agriculture; Bachelor of Science in Animal Health; Bachelor of Science in Environmental and Conservation Sciences; Bachelor of Science in Fashion Business Management; Bachelor of Science in Forest Business Management; Bachelor of Science in Forestry; Bachelor of Science in Human Ecology; Bachelor of Science in Nutrition and Food Science - Dietetics Specialization; Bachelor of Science in Nutrition and Food Science - Food Science and Technology Specialization; Bachelor of Science in Nutrition and Food Science - General Program

Date of Review: March 26 - 27, 2024

Reviewers: Dr. John Cranfield (Chair, Undergraduate), Ontario Agricultural College, University of Guelph; Dr. Derek Brewin (External Member), University of Manitoba; Dr. Sheryl Gares (Internal Member), University of Alberta

Program Strengths

- The committee commends ALES for their work to integrate programs across Departments and disciplinary areas. It was clear to the review committee that students appreciate the different disciplinary perspectives offered through their programs.
- The committee commends ALES for their tremendous work integrating experiential learning and internship opportunities into the undergraduate programs, and how ALES uses the physical resources in their Faculty and beyond that help make the classroom experience much more real by placing students, sometimes literally, in the field.
- The research programs of professors are cutting edge, internationally recognized and productive. ALES is renowned for great researchers who attract research dollars and deliver cutting edge research to inspire future generations.

- ALES maintains an impressive research engine that feeds an excellent student research experience. Many ALES faculty members are both research leaders and award-winning teachers. By the measures of exposure to cutting edge research, student enrollment, student success and satisfaction, the faculty has done very well in the face of budget cuts and the COVID-19 shutdowns.
- The committee witnessed collegiality among faculty and staff who are maintaining impressive research output and service to their students. Undergraduate students are quite satisfied with their training and proud of their faculty. ALES has many of the right people and infrastructure to address their goals and move towards their vision of the future as described in their own Strategic Plan.
- The people supporting undergraduate programs in ALES are of high quality. The faculty and staff are committed to the success of undergraduate students, and are passionate about learning and education, engaged and empathetic to the student experience, and want to see students and ALES thrive.

Program Structure

Recommendation: Invest in regular surveys from employers and graduates about the benefits of their current learning outcomes and the community needs. Share that information with reviewers and the Departments looking to explore curriculum change. This is especially important if ALES continues with Faculty-wide program ownership.

Faculty of ALES Response:

We thank the reviewers for this excellent suggestion. We will work with our Faculty, College and University colleagues to develop formal surveys in order to obtain this information.

Action Plan:

The Faculty will identify and liaise with the appropriate unit / individuals who can assist with the development of these formal surveys.

The Faculty will work with the program committees to identify industry and other employer stakeholders who will be surveyed.

The Faculty (or an appropriate unit) will administer these surveys and collate the results which will be shared with external reviewers, program committees and Departments contemplating curricular changes.

We will develop survey instruments and administer the surveys for the first two programs before the end of the 2025/26 academic year. We will follow this up with the rest of the programs, with one or two programs being surveyed each year. This will be part of our regular, periodic program reviews. All the surveys and periodic program reviews will be completed by 2030/31 just in time for the next scheduled

QAR so that we are able to provide both the survey and internal program review information to the QAR reviewers.

Recommendation: ALES should work together to adjust Departments and programs better suited to align resources for teaching the bulk of their most successful programs. Consider adding Food to the Faculty name and creating a Department of Nutrition and Food Science.

Faculty of ALES Response:

The Faculty of ALES works with the Departments to ensure that programs are resourced.

The Faculty of ALES underwent an arduous process of changing its name from Agricultural, Forestry and Home Economics several years ago to our current name. The University of Alberta also recently underwent significant structural changes which included the creation of colleges. We will consider these recommendations within the current University structure and other relevant factors. If it is decided to not change the name of the Faculty and /or create an additional Department, we will ensure that disciplines such as food, nutrition, dietetics and others are included in relevant discussions.

Action Plan:

We will continue to work with Departments to ensure that programs are adequately resourced.

We will discuss the viability of the recommendations for addition of “food” to the Faculty’s name and the creation of a new Department.

As noted above, appropriate stakeholders (e.g. food, nutrition, dietetics) are included in all discussions including those pertaining to recruitment.

In 2024/25 we will Initiate discussions with Department Chairs / CNAS on how to align resources better with programs. We will also begin consultations with stakeholders (e.g. U of A, CNAS) on the creation of a new Department and name of the Faculty. If the creation of a new Department is recommended, we will pursue the necessary action in 2025/26.

Recommendation: For future Faculty-wide review and for upcoming program-specific reviews, present the data needed to make a fulsome review, especially with respect to surveyed alumni and community stakeholders and the details of the enrollment, learning outcomes and course in majors for which you are expecting comment.

Faculty of ALES Response:

Once again, the Faculty thanks the reviewers for this suggestion. We will obtain and present the suggested data including the stakeholder and alumni survey data and provide that material for subsequent Quality Assurance Reviews (QAR).

Action Plan:

As indicated in the action plan for recommendation (1) we will develop, administer and collect alumni and stakeholder survey data on a regular basis. We will also conduct regular program reviews following the timelines outlined for recommendation 1.

We will also consider departmental reviews prior to the next QAR.

We will compile the additional data regarding enrollment, learning outcomes and courses in the programs/majors that are being reviewed prior to a formal review (internal and / or mandated by CAQC) and provide that information prior to the scheduled review.

It is expected that the regular internal program reviews for all programs as well as the surveys will be complete prior to 2030/31. Other information required for QAR will also be compiled and provided to the reviewers for the next QAR scheduled in 2031/32.

Recommendation: Design programs (or minors within current programs) that meet the accreditation needs for the Professional Agrologist designation.

Faculty of ALES Response:

Thank you for this recommendation. We have already created streams within our Environmental and Conservation Sciences (ENCS) program- Land Reclamation major- to assist students in planning their program to be able to satisfy the Alberta Institute of Agrologists (AIA) requirements for the P.Ag. designation. Similarly, we have also made changes in the Agriculture program (major Crop Science) to be able to accomplish this.

Action Plan:

We will routinely adjust courses in relevant programs, on a yearly basis, to ensure a seamless pathway to obtain the P.Ag. designation. Additionally, the internal program specific reviews also will yield information that can be used to better align our programs with P. Ag. requirements. This may well be the introduction of majors or, more likely, the creation of streams within programs.

Recommendation: To the extent possible to maintain current accreditations, increase the flexibility of currently restricted programs.

Faculty of ALES Response:

The Faculty plans to maintain current accreditations and will ensure maximum possible flexibility within those (and all) programs so that students benefit from taking courses outside of those programs in order to broaden their learning.

Action Plan:

ALES program committees will take advantage of future accreditation / internal program reviews to ensure that we maximize flexibility in accredited, and for that matter, all ALES undergraduate programs. Accredited programs include BSc Dietetics Specialization, Food Science and Technology and BSc Forestry.

Recommendation: Be transparent about actual “Approved Program Elective” lists. Reduce the categories of restricted electives to match major teaching outcomes that are obvious to students and outside reviewers.

Faculty of ALES Response:

We accept this recommendation. Although we are constantly in the process of streamlining APE lists in order to achieve these objectives, there is definitely room for additional improvement to increase clarity for students and reviewers. Please note that all APE lists are reviewed on an annual basis.

Action Plan:

Program committees will ensure the recommended clarity in APE lists for all our programs. This recommendation will be passed on to the program committees. This is an ongoing process.

Program Measures and Comparative Analysis

Recommendation: Undertake periodic review of each program to explore where curricular change might strengthen programs and hold appeal to new audiences (both for students and employers).

Faculty of ALES Response:

The Faculty of ALES agrees with this recommendation. We currently do periodically review programs but this will be formalized in consultation with ALES leadership. Since these are internal program reviews, this is at the discretion of the Dean. As outlined in the Faculty response to recommendation 1, we will conduct program reviews on a regular basis. We anticipate reviewing one or two programs each year so that all our programs have undergone a full internal program review (including obtaining all the surveys recommended in 1) prior to the next scheduled QAR in 2031/32.

Action Plan:

In consultation with Department Chairs and Program Committee Chairs, establish a schedule for the review of all ALES undergraduate

programs.

Establish program review committees/task forces for the review of programs based on the established schedule. These review committees will have representation from appropriate stakeholders (e.g. employers, alumni, other Faculties / Colleges at the U of A).

The criteria for internal program reviews will be established by the ALES leadership group and the Academic Coordinating Committee (ACC) in 2024/25. Internal program reviews will begin in 2025/26 and conclude by 2030/31. This will ensure that all programs have gone through the same, rigorous internal review with external stakeholder input.

Recommendation: ALES should explore new ways to collaborate with central recruiting to capitalize on programs that are growing and to explore how to turn around declining enrollment trends.

Faculty of ALES Response:

The Faculty of ALES is already working very closely with the CNAS recruitment partner and Enrollment Management Specialist to explore novel recruitment initiatives. These partners are also in close contact with ALES Academic Coordinating Committee which is comprised of Department and Program Committee Chairs.

Action Plan:

We will continue to work with our recruitment and enrollment service partners to aid in student recruitment as outlined below.

The Associate Dean (Academic) and the Manager, Student Services meet on a regular basis with the recruitment service partner and the enrolment management service partner. Normally, an initial meeting to set priorities is followed by another one to establish entrance averages. After that, enrollment is monitored on a regular basis and appropriate interventions recommended by the enrollment management service partner are put in place (if in agreement with ALES strategic priorities). Another meeting is held at the end of the recruitment cycle to go over the actions / results. We also invite both partners to our Academic Coordinating Committee (ACC) meetings where both program as well as department chairs are in attendance. Finally, these partners also attend program committee meetings at their invitation to provide information and seek their input into the recruitment process. These efforts will continue and will be intensified as needed for programs requiring additional efforts.

Recommendation: While the enrollment counts and admission, retention and completion rates are very useful, it would be helpful to have a more complete picture by knowing how application numbers for ALES' programs have changed overtime. Knowing total applications and applications across each program is a useful measure of potential demand and a gauge of program appeal. We would encourage

ALES to begin tracking more complete data on the enrollment funnel (applications, offers, acceptances, enrollments) as a way of further understanding program health.

Faculty of ALES Response:

We agree with the reviewers' that information on applications, offers, acceptances and final registrations will be very useful. This information is already available and is used on a regular basis to determine recruitment priorities and/or establishing admissions averages into the various programs. This information was not included in the QAR report and we will ensure that it is part of the information package provided to reviewers.

Action Plan:

We will continue to track the information and include it as part of the material provided to reviewers during regularly scheduled program reviews.

Recommendation: Undertake analysis of ALES' student financial support to ensure alignment of support with size of the respective programs, and where there are gaps, work with advancement to identify strategies to fill these gaps. Include assessment of supports for BIPOC students more generally in this analysis and planning.

Faculty of ALES Response:

Thank you for this recommendation. Financial support to students is provided through endowments that have significant conditions attached. This does create an incongruence between program size and the availability of financial support. As suggested by the reviewers', we will continue to work with our advancement team to pursue opportunities to set up new awards for students in high-demand programs and, specifically, for BIPOC students.

Action Plan:

Work with the advancement team on an ongoing basis to identify new donors and solicit gifts to establish new awards for students in high-demand programs and for BIPOC students. As an example, we are currently working with our advancement team to identify possible ways in which we can support our dietetics students during their unpaid, rural internship placements. Similar efforts will continue for supporting deserving students in other programs / settings.

Recommendation: Develop better metrics at the program and department level to understand volume (totals) and intensity (per faculty) enrollment and instruction and explore ways to use these metrics to guide resource allocation discussions.

Faculty of ALES Response:

Thank you for your recommendation. Information on the number of students instructed by a particular ALES department and the intensity of student contact per individual faculty member is available easily. Department Chairs are responsible for assigning teaching responsibilities and the CNAS office can easily provide the enrollment information, including trends, for every one of our course offerings. Currently resources, e. g. Teaching Assistants, markers, are assigned based on this enrollment information. Program enrollment is a significant factor which ALES uses to develop faculty renewal strategies. Program enrollment information is routinely provided to Department and program chairs.

Action Plan:

As stated above, the information (metrics) that this recommendation calls for is readily available and is currently used in resource allocation planning including faculty renewal.

ALES will continue to work with all Department Chairs and other internal stakeholders to ensure that this process continues and is improved upon where possible through discussions at Department, program, specialization and Faculty levels.

We will also adopt additional tools to gather information from ALES instructors with respect to their classroom instruction and student contact hours. This information at the course and program level will be made available to ALES.

Recommendation: Encourage ALES to develop projections based on program reviews and integrated planning.

Faculty of ALES Response:

We thank the reviewers for this recommendation. We are not entirely clear about the projections that are alluded to here but assume that they will be related to enrollment growth and resource allocation. We generally project enrollment based on historical information (3-5 year cycles) and adjust based on sudden changes in enrollment that may have occurred due to unforeseen global events (e.g. pandemic, changes in immigration procedures) and institutional growth priorities.

Action Plan:

The Faculty of ALES will develop growth and other projections (e.g. resource requirements) based on periodic program reviews and considering historical enrollment numbers. It is important to note that ALES has already developed projections for the next 10 years based on recommendations from our enrolment management service partner to contribute to institutional growth aspirations.

Recommendation: As part of future program reviews, explore the wider range of comparator programs and institutions. When undertaking curricular review, be sure to engage with people in those relevant comparator programs to ensure any recommendations reflect disciplinary and pedagogical expertise.

Faculty of ALES Response:

ALES is a diverse Faculty offering many unique programs. To the extent possible, appropriate comparator institutions and programs were chosen for self-study purposes. Potentially, each program committee could identify and track their own comparator programs. As per the recommendation, we will ensure that a wider range of programs are used during our internal program reviews as well as for the next QAR.

Action Plan:

When possible, additional comparator institutions offering programs of a similar nature will be identified and information collected from them will be used in program reviews.

Appropriate disciplinary experts will be consulted to ensure that any recommendations arising from curricular reviews indeed reflect disciplinary and pedagogical expertise.

Teaching and Learning Environment

Recommendation: As part of onboarding, teaching loads and evaluation expectations should be clarified along with research and service goals. Mentorship should be highly regarded service and poor mentors should be sanctioned.

Faculty of ALES Response:

As the reviewers' noted in their report, internal mentorship initiatives to assist new faculty members exist. During the initial meetings Department Chairs have with individual faculty members, their teaching, research and service expectations are clearly communicated. These are also reiterated during the required, annual meetings that Assistant Professors have with the Department Chairs. All Department Chairs in ALES offer ongoing mentorship of this nature to those junior colleagues who seek them out. Although several activities that address the recommendation exist in ALES, greater efforts to improve communication will be undertaken. There are also central resources such as the Centre for Teaching and Learning who offer insights on pedagogy to improve teaching.

Action Plan:

The Faculty of ALES in collaboration with Departments will ensure that available mentorship opportunities are communicated to members of the Faculty. The Faculty Evaluation Committee in ALES will consider mentorship as a significant service contribution. Mentorship will be broad including providing advice for new staff members in dealing with challenging situations they may face, especially as it pertains to classroom instruction.

The Faculty of ALES will explore the possibility of developing a peer evaluation of teaching to assist junior colleagues during their initial years of teaching. This will be similar to a now defunct University Teaching Services peer consultation process. Alternatively, we will seek assistance from the Centre for Teaching and Learning at the U of A to develop a Faculty-specific peer evaluation / mentoring program for ALES.

Recommendation: Department heads should be limited in adjusting course offerings especially without posting a reasonable progression path for students in the middle of their program.

Faculty of ALES Response:

Changes to required courses when adjusted without adequate notice and/or the identification of alternate courses causes challenges to students and student advisors. Our ALES student advisors reach out to Program Committees who are then able to address such issues by finding appropriate course substitutions to enable program completion.

Department Response:

Departments may face significant challenges in being able to deliver a specific course and, even though every attempt is made to deliver a required course, unavoidable situations (e.g. instructor illness, sudden departures) may arise necessitating the cancellation of a course. Care is taken to minimize these types of events and Departments, through consultation with program committees and Student Services Office, identify and communicate alternate options for students to successfully complete their program.

Action Plan:

Departments, Program Committees and Student Services Office will ensure that when a cancellation of a required course is necessitated due to unforeseen circumstances, alternate course(s) will be identified and communicated to students and to the broader ALES community in a timely manner.

Student Services advisors will work closely with the affected students, the Associate Dean (Academic) and program committees to assist affected students.

Recommendation: Internal processes to monitor course offerings and program changes should be explored to see if adjustment in individual student programs can be more transparent and reduce the stress for students and workload for student services.

Faculty of ALES Response:

The Faculty of ALES has recently implemented “Academic Requirements”, a feature on BearTracks that empowers students to follow program progression. This change permits students to approach student advisors with specific questions should there be a scheduling conflict and/or issues that are the result of adjustments to their program. Our advisors are constantly improving their processes and this will continue. ALES also uses other mechanisms to communicate relevant program changes (e.g. via newsletters, student clubs, email) to students.

Action Plan:

The Faculty of ALES will continue to improve its processes to ensure transparency and to further minimize stress experienced by students. We will work with the Manager of Student Services to reevaluate all our communication with stakeholders and make necessary changes.

Faculty Profile

Recommendation: ALES is a large and globally diverse Faculty with great potential to contribute to advancement of the U of A in the areas of EDI and Indigenization. As soon as possible, strike EDI and Indigenous working groups to inform the work of ALES in hiring and program renewal.

Faculty of ALES Response:

We are restructuring our EDI&I committee at the faculty level and we have CNAS resources and support for this. We follow the College EDI and its guidance in hiring and teaching / research. These are now in place and we are seeing them in action already (e.g. we use the CNAS hiring guidelines).

Action Plan:

Restructure Faculty EDI&I Committee and other groups in consultation with other stakeholders (e.g. CNAS). We will ensure that students, staff and faculty are represented on the EDI&I committee. This will be completed in the current (2024/25) academic year.

Recommendation: Alongside program review and renewal, identify the existing or new disciplinary areas that critically require new faculty hires to support teaching and research and strike recruitment/hiring committees.

Faculty of ALES Response:

As part of the Faculty's renewal plan, instructional gaps in existing discipline(s) and the development of new disciplinary areas are discussed at the Dean's leadership team meetings to identify areas for new faculty recruitment. Hiring committees are constituted comprised of staff members from the appropriate Department

Action Plan:

The Faculty and Departments will continue to work together to recruit new colleagues as recommended.

Recommendation: Consider increasing the number of teaching stream instructors to more rapidly increase the teaching capacity in programs with current and anticipated critical faculty shortages.

Faculty of ALES Response:

ALES has started to invest in Academic Teaching Staff members and this will be an ongoing process. A recruitment plan was recently requested by the Dean of the College (CNAS) and has been developed to align with the strategic plans of the university and to enhance linkages within CNAS and bridge with other faculties across campus. The plan is consistent with the vision of ALES to "solve global problems together" by enhancing the student experience, turning science into solutions, and increasing connections to our community. The plan was developed through engagement of the leadership team in ALES in two "mini-retreats" focused on recruitment planning and is informed by the Quality Assurance Review (QAR) of the programs. Each department also gathered information on their expected future needs through their own processes. This recruitment plan will form the basis for further discussions including the development of a faculty strategic plan.

Action Plan:

On an ongoing basis, ALES will review the teaching needs in programs and devise strategies to provide teaching capacity in programs. The Faculty of ALES has developed a recruitment plan. This will serve as the starting point for internal discussions, engagement of external stakeholders and the development of a Faculty strategic plans.

Recommendation: Continue endorsing research and endowed chairs and consider including a modest teaching load into the endowment criteria.

Faculty of ALES Response: The Faculty continues to value research and endowed chairs and will facilitate their success. The Faculty will also respect the terms of endowments that provide funding for the chair positions.
Action Plan: As per the recommendation, the Faculty will, when possible, include a modest teaching commitment in the terms of the endowment. As noted earlier in this document, the Faculty will also adopt tools that can better document teaching workload and student contact hours, as used at other institutions.
Recommendation: Review onboarding practices for new professors and update or prepare documents that can be deposited into shared Department or Faculty drives for ease of access.
Faculty of ALES Response: We thank the reviewers for this recommendation. We will ensure that our onboarding and mentorship activities are formalized.
Action Plan: The Faculty and Departments will work together to develop and formalize onboarding practices for new professors and prepare documents that can be shared with them. We anticipate that this can be completed in 2024/25 because many such activities currently exist in ALES departments.
Recommendation: Delegate ALES faculty members to work with the U of A Recruitment Centre to modernize branding and better disseminate information about the breadth of programs offered by ALES.
Faculty of ALES Response: Thank you for the recommendation. The College recruitment partner and recruiter already works very closely with Faculty members. Branding and marketing belong to the specific groups tasked with those responsibilities. The Faculty is consulted and program committees (therefore Departments) are consulted for feedback. The current structures do not permit the delegation of faculty members to work with the recruitment team formally but, as indicated above, the recruitment service partner is in regular touch with our program committee chairs and, through them, the committees themselves.

Action Plan:

The Faculty of ALES will continue to work with our recruitment and enrollment service partners.

Recommendation: Explore ways to explicitly recognize Human Nutrition and Dietetics as health fields (with a connection to food and agriculture) and seek ways to forge connections with other health science units.

Faculty of ALES Response:

We thank the reviewers for their comments. Connections between Human Nutrition and Dietetics already exist with other health fields. For example, professors in Human Nutrition and Dietetics are located in a different building on campus, together with other health science disciplines. As for the program itself, efforts are underway to ensure that the BSc Dietetics Specialization is visible when prospective students ponder their future education.

Action Plan:

Continue working with appropriate individuals in health science related Faculties to realize these recommendations.

Our incoming Dean has already initiated discussions with the Dean of the College of Health Sciences, and Dean of the Faculty of Kinesiology, Sport, and Recreation about building stronger relationships with ALES. We will ensure that these discussions are followed up (by division director(s) and department chair) and an action plan developed in 2024/25.

Recommendation: Improve communication across ALES and the broader University community to improve awareness of administrative processes that will improve workflow.

Faculty of ALES Response:

This recommendation appears not to be related to undergraduate programs. Administrative changes continue to happen at the University of Alberta since the initial structural changes that have recently taken place. To the extent possible, these changes are regularly communicated across ALES.

Action Plan:

Maintain timely communication of process/administrative changes and continue to improve workflow on an ongoing basis.

Recommendation: Find ways to add administrative support personnel to “take back” the administrative work of the Faculty and departments and reduce the burden of current support personnel. This will relieve some of the increased workload that rank-and-file faculty members are currently enduring.

Faculty of ALES Response:

This is not possible under the current university structure and budget position. Nevertheless, the Faculty continuously strives to leverage existing resources at the College and Central level to alleviate the increased workload experienced by rank-and-file faculty members. Within the context of programs, our student advisors provide superior service to assist faculty members.

Action Plan:

We will continue to find innovative solutions to provide support to professors including potentially providing additional resources to ALES student services.

Program Environment

Recommendation: Begin (if they have not already) to plan for expanded enrollment – focus on understanding utilization of existing instruction and classroom/lab capacity, identify where there is excess capacity and where resources are at capacity, and develop a strategy to manage expanded enrollment through creative use of instruction modalities, central resources, and where needed, investment in new capacity.

Faculty of ALES Response:

The Faculty is already working with our Enrollment Service Partner to develop enrollment projections over the next 10 years. All these recommendations are valid and the Faculty/Departments are already engaged in these types of discussions. For instance, the development of faculty renewal plans previously mentioned in this document undertook such an exercise. A new Faculty strategic plan will be developed soon after our new Dean arrives which will further consider and develop strategy to manage our enrolment growth. .

Action Plan:

Continue to work with ALES Departments to develop strategies to address enrollment increases and to develop creative instructional approaches / investment in new capacity.

A strategic plan for the Faculty will be developed and will further inform our faculty renewal process.

We will work with central units to secure appropriate technology / infrastructure to be able to expand our capacity (e.g. for distance delivery).

Recommendation: Launch ALES student listening sessions and form a student academic advisory group to help surface issues students encounter systematically and to better understand the student experience in navigating academic processes.

Faculty of ALES Response:

The Faculty of ALES has student representation on all program committees and on the Academic Coordinating Committee. The Faculty also works closely with the undergraduate student organization (FAUnA) in order to listen to student experience and provide assistance to students experiencing similar issues while navigating their programs. Additional events are co-sponsored by FAUnA and ALES Student Services where students and faculty members socialize and informally chat about the various issues confronting them. This has been extremely well-received by both students and faculty members alike.

Action Plan:

The Faculty of ALES will continue to provide opportunities for students to help students bring issues to Student Services and / or Departments in order to assist them in navigating their programs.

We will formalize regular meetings with student leadership with ALES leadership to further engage and hear from students regarding their experience in ALES.

Recommendation: Use the first advising session with students to coach them on processes and provide resources to help them navigate the academic processes they may encounter during their studies. Reinforce this coaching throughout the year. We recognize this may create further workload issues for advising staff and would encourage the Dean's office to explore additional resources to support this activity.

Faculty of ALES Response:

Despite the workload, our student advisors indeed adopt an approach that is outlined in this recommendation. We thank you for reinforcing this and our advisors will be pleased to hear that what they have been doing all along is indeed recommended.

Action Plan:

The Faculty of ALES Student Services will continue to work with students to assist and empower them to navigate their programs with the least amount of stress.

The Faculty of ALES will also consider adopting technological solutions in use at peer institutions (e.g. UBC, Faculty of Land and Food Systems) to further support students with their transition to ALES.

Recommendation: Work within ALES and between Faculties to further build relationships and trust that enable conversation about developing clearer lines of communication within ALES and with other Faculties.

Faculty of ALES Response:

The Faculty thanks the reviewers for this recommendation. The Faculty of ALES works collaboratively within and outside of the Faculty. Collaboration between Faculties within CNAS and outside occurs at various levels (e.g. Dean, Associate Dean, Chairs) through formal and informal opportunities to meet and exchange ideas.

Action Plan:

As indicated previously, ALES will develop a Faculty strategic plan. We will also ensure a more robust communication strategy within ALES, CNAS, university and with our external stakeholders.

Recommendation: Review and modify where appropriate communication approaches with students regarding course, program, and curricular changes.

Faculty of ALES Response:

The Faculty accepts this recommendation.

Action Plan:

The Faculty will review processes and make improvements on an ongoing basis. Please see our response to the previous recommendation.

Recommendation: Further reinforce importance of awareness raising amongst students, staff and faculty of mental health supports for students, and reinforce the availability of these resources throughout the year.

Faculty of ALES Response:

The Faculty of ALES / the university does this on an ongoing basis. Students have access to university counseling resources and employees also have access to mental health support through their benefit plans. ALES student services staff are also trained in

supporting students and directing them to appropriate resources / support.

Action Plan:

The Faculty of ALES will continue to reinforce among students, staff and faculty the available mental health support.
ALES will explore options / resources for a dedicated ALES wellness counselor.

Additional Notes from the Faculty of ALES

Graduate Program Review

Programs:	Master of Agriculture (AFNS); Master of Science course-based and thesis-based (AFNS); Doctor of Philosophy (AFNS); Master of Arts in Material Culture, course-based and thesis-based; Master of Science Family Ecology & Practice, course-based and thesis-based; Master of Science in Textiles & Clothing, course-based and thesis-based; Doctor of Philosophy (HE); Master of Science (RR); Master of Forestry (RR); Master of Agriculture (RR); Doctor of Philosophy (RR); Master of Business Administration / Master of Forestry Combined Program; Master of Business Administration / Master of Agriculture Combined Program; Master of Agriculture (REES); Master of Science (REES); Doctor of Philosophy (REES); Master of Business Administration / Master of Agriculture Combined Degrees Program
Date of Review:	March 26 - 27, 2024
Reviewers:	Dr. Jennifer Clapp (Chair, Graduate), University of Waterloo; Dr. Lesly Wade-Woolley (GPS Member), University of Alberta

Program Strengths

The academic staff at ALES are dedicated faculty members who are highly committed to training their graduate students at a very high level at the forefront of their scholarly fields. As a faculty, ALES is producing world class research and delivering 16 distinct graduate degree programs across its four academic departments - Agricultural, Food and Nutrition Science (AFSN); Human Ecology (HE); Renewable Resources (RENR); and Resource Economics and Environmental Sociology (REES). Each department offers several graduate programs that are grounded in extensive research activity that takes place in a faculty that boasts \$50 million in externally funded research in the past year (roughly equivalent to \$500k per faculty member). The research and graduate training that takes place at ALES is highly relevant to addressing the key resource, agriculture and sustainability challenges facing the world today. Graduate students are pleased with their training and ability to conduct research at ALES and appreciate the opportunities available to them.

ALES is a top performing faculty in terms of its research profile and it delivers a diverse range of graduate programs that are providing excellent student training and experiences.

There is much to celebrate about the achievements and stature of the research and training that takes place within ALES.

Teaching and Learning Environment
Recommendation: Discussions should take place within each department about which master's programs they wish to continue to deliver, and to ensure those programs are well resourced and that efforts are made to increase and maintain enrolments.
Faculty of ALES Response: Thank you for this recommendation. Indeed the Departments offer a number of Master's level programs and many can be consolidated and others suspended and then terminated.
Action Plan: Departments in the Faculty of ALES will do a review of all Master's offerings within two years and arrive at a decision with respect to those that will continue to be offered and those that will be suspended and then terminated. This will be considered along with new course-based programs being contemplated at the CNAS-level.
Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (GPS) Response: GPS supports the Faculty's action plan and is available for consultation on course-based master's programming to support the Faculty.
Recommendation: The departments in ALES should consider making more of a differentiation between course-based masters and thesis-based master's programs. This can be accomplished by incorporating professional training and work experience into the course-based master's programs, and maintaining the thesis-based master's programs as more research track degrees.
Faculty of ALES Response: Thank you for this recommendation. The Departments in ALES are indeed currently working to distinguish between course-based and thesis-based Master's degree programs precisely as recommended by the review team.
Action Plan: We will review all our offerings and, if such a distinction is lacking, work with the Departments to incorporate elements such as work integrated learning into the course-based Master's. We will review the names / designations of our graduate programs, especially our course-based programs.

Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (GPS) Response: GPS supports this action plan and can provide advice on the variety of work-integrated learning opportunities, including capping exercise models available on campus.

Student Experience

Recommendation: Establish clear norms and guidance for graduate students regarding expectations for their TA duties and access to adequate, regular research space.

Faculty of ALES Response:

The collective agreement with the Graduate Students' Association (GSA) dictates the hours a graduate student can be employed in TA-related duties. It is valid to recommend that course instructors employing graduate TAs provide clear guidelines about what is expected from their assigned TA. Access to research space is a separate recommendation and all ALES graduate students are provided with adequate research space.

Action Plan:

Working with Departments, we will ensure that graduate students are provided with clear directions with respect to their TA duties and we will also ensure that no graduate student is lacking in any way with respect to research space. Our communication will be improved.

Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (GPS) Response: GPS recommends the use of the [Graduate Assistantship Time Use Guideline Form](#) as stated in articles 8 and 9 of the [Graduate Student Assistantship Collective Agreement](#). It is a requirement for the Faculty to maintain a copy of the Graduate Assistantship form for all the graduate students who hold a TAsip.

Recommendation: Ensure appropriate support is available for graduate students facing challenges, including both domestic and international students.

Faculty of ALES Response:

The Faculty of ALES and the four Departments work very effectively to assist graduate students (both domestic and international) with challenges they face while pursuing their programs. The Faculty maintains close relationships with the ALES Graduate Student Association (ALES GSA) and supports them in their activities to better the student experience.

Action Plan:

We will continue to listen to our graduate students and provide necessary support and/or direct them to appropriate university resources. We will organize regular meetings with ALES GSA to ensure communication with our graduate student leadership. We will also continue to meet with them outside of these regular meetings as needed.

Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (GPS) Response: GPS supports these actions and also provides advice and support for graduate students (both domestic and international) to improve their personal and academic experience. The ALES Associate Dean is a member of the GPS Graduate Leadership Advisory Committee (GLAC) to ensure that student needs are addressed at an institutional level. GPS and ALES AD will continue to work closely to address and resolve student challenges and concerns. GPS is currently working on a graduate student experience and graduate and postdoctoral journey mapping project to provide a coherent and holistic perspective of their academic and personal experiences on campus and in their programs. Once completed, graduate and postdoctoral journey maps will be shared with the faculty to support them in enhancing graduate and postdoctoral experience.

Recommendation: Increase support staff support for graduate programs.

Faculty of ALES Response:

The Faculty of ALES thanks the reviewers for this recommendation. We agree that, with projected enrollment growth, we may need to provide additional support to the graduate support team.

Action Plan:

The Faculty of ALES will reevaluate our student services team and take appropriate steps to ensure superior levels of graduate student support. This may include increasing the resources available to our student services team.

Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (GPS) Response: GPS supports the Faculty's action plan on streamlining graduate administration support for students. GPS is hiring a Graduate Student Recruitment Partner to support graduate recruitment at an institutional level. This role will be able to provide recruitment and enrolment expansion support for the Faculty.

Faculty and Supervision

Recommendation: Consider developing and implementing a strategic faculty renewal plan through a deliberative process to ensure faculty wide buy-in for the identification of priority areas for new hires.

Faculty of ALES Response:

Thank you for the recommendation. The Faculty of ALES is working with the Department Chairs and Vice-/Associate Dean(s) to develop a Faculty-wide renewal plan. Consistent with this recommendation, we are in the process of identifying priority areas for the next phase of faculty renewal.

Action Plan:

Continue working with Faculty leadership to identify priority areas for new hires.
Recommendations made in the QAR reports will also play a significant part in our deliberations.

Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (GPS) Response: GPS supports the action plan.

Recommendation: Consider strengthening mentorship of new faculty members in graduate supervision and lab management and encourage established faculty members to upgrade their own supervision and lab management training.

Faculty of ALES Response:

Thank you for this recommendation. The Faculty of ALES and all four departments are committed to the student experience and will work with new and established faculty members to be able to deliver a superior learning environment for our students. As outlined in our response(s) to the recommendations made for undergraduate programs, we will formalize our mentorship and onboarding activities for new faculty members.

Action Plan:

ALES Departments will continue to mentor new faculty members in graduate supervision and, where appropriate, lab management.
ALES Departments will encourage established faculty members to seek out professional development opportunities to enhance their own supervision and, where appropriate, lab management skills.
ALES will formalize mentorship and onboarding for new faculty members.

Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (GPS) Response: GPS supports this recommendation and has developed the Graduate Supervision Development Training Program for new faculty members. The Program seeks to advance and support strong graduate supervision while ensuring that all new faculty appointees know where to access support, information, and resources related to graduate supervision. It provides information and education about universal principles related to high quality supervision and creates awareness and understanding about university policies, procedures and resources. New faculty members must complete this training within the first two years of their appointment at the University of Alberta.

Action Plan: GPS will provide a list of new faculty members in ALES who will be participating in the Graduate Student Supervision Development training.

Resources

Recommendation: Standardize student funding packages for PhD students along the lines of the University of Alberta norms.

Faculty of ALES Response:

The University of Alberta has recently approved a minimum funding guarantee for PhD students (25K minimum per year for four years). Departments in the Faculty of ALES will be providing this minimum level of funding. Some PIs may provide more than the established minimum as has been the practice in the Faculty of ALES.

Action Plan:

Review and ensure that all students are supported as recommended on an ongoing basis.

Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (GPS) Response: Beginning in Fall 2025 and in line with the new GPS Minimum Guaranteed Funding for doctoral students, current and new doctoral students will receive minimum guaranteed funding of \$100K CAD over four years and not less than \$25K CAD in year one.

- GPS awards and Scholarship teams meet with new graduate students in August and January every year to provide a comprehensive introduction to awards and scholarships.
- GPS holds multiple workshops and events throughout the year for students to advise them on how to apply for various institutional, provincial and federal funding opportunities.

GPS works closely in partnership with the faculty to support the implementation of the minimum Guaranteed funding initiative beginning Fall 2025.

Action Plan: GPS will bridge funding as well as a graduate funding data dashboard to support the faculty in conducting longitudinal and predictive planning.

Recommendation: Consider ways that TA funding might be utilized as part of standard support packages for PhD students or as part of back-stop funding for PhD students whose supervisors lack full funding for them.

Faculty of ALES Response:

Thank you for this recommendation. Considering the fact that the Faculty of ALES is not a service-teaching faculty, we have limited TA funding. Nevertheless, with the aforementioned guaranteed minimum funding requirement for PhD students at the University of Alberta, we will work with the Departments to ensure that available TA funding is part of the financial support package for all graduate students, especially PhD students. It is worth noting that, generally, all students in ALES are funded by their supervisors.

Action Plan:

We will initiate discussions to explore whether it is possible to deploy TA resources more strategically to support funding packages for PhD students. These discussions could be completed within one year.

Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (GPS) Response: The GPS Minimum Guaranteed Funding initiative will provide a sustainable framework for considering TAs as an integral part of financial support for PhD students. GPS will work with the faculty to achieve this goal.

Action Plan: The GPS graduate funding data dashboard will provide a framework that the Faculty can utilize to strategize how TA appointments can be planned.

Additional Notes from the Faculty of ALES and GPS