

ACADEMIC PLAN FOR THE UNIVERSITY OF KING'S COLLEGE

Prepared by the subcommittee of Planning and Priorities on Academic Planning
May 2014

Approved by the Board of Governors
June 2014

1. Introduction

The University of King's College has been educating some of the brightest young minds for 225 years. King's is home to the innovative Foundation Year Programme and one of Canada's top schools of journalism. In addition, King's has three combined honours degree programmes offered in conjunction with neighbouring Dalhousie University, in Contemporary Studies (CSP), Early Modern Studies (EMSP), and the History of Science and Technology (HOST). As such King's is home to innovative scholarship and top-level skills training.

We are especially well known for our small classes, welcoming environment, robust teaching, and faculty who are accessible and involved. It might be said that this is the King's advantage: the unique environment of an intimate, small college, vastly enriched by the presence of Dalhousie and the participation of King's students in the academic and social environments of both institutions.

Several years of shrinking government funding and, of late, enrollment challenges associated with both demographics and competing "copy cat" programmes, have placed our institution in a challenging financial position. A freeze in tenure-track hires, combined with the loss of seasoned faculty members, and the expansion of programs in journalism, have resulted in faculty numbers below optimal levels, where both untenured and tenured faculty bear a heavy teaching load and the College increasingly relies on sessional and part-time instructors. Academic support staff are also pressed to work longer and harder to keep the university's outstanding programmes afloat, attract students in an increasingly competitive environment, promote the college and raise money, manage the finances and maintain the physical plant. The challenge for King's is to address these and other issues in a sustained, systematic manner so as to retain our collegial identity and curricular integrity. Yet, we have some clear opportunities for expansion and growth. It is within this context that the university must plan its academic future.

That future requires faculty and programme renewal. It also entails the expansion and renewal of our existing offerings, new ways for students to encounter a King's education, and an enhanced relationship with Dalhousie.

2. The core of the plan: four priority areas.

This proposal addresses our vision for renewal, sustainability and the nurturing of new initiatives. It is broken down into four priority areas, each with identified goals, strategies for reaching those goals, and methods of assessment.

- The renewal of faculty
- The renewal of core programmes

- New pedagogical and programme initiatives
- A tighter relationship with our sister institution, Dalhousie.

We will discuss each in turn.

A. Faculty Renewal.

The goal: To renew the ranks of Faculty to support and enrich existing programmes, and to help develop new academic initiatives. To offer teaching support and professional upgrading opportunities to ensure our faculty remain intellectually and pedagogically fresh.

How we will reach the goal: Given the anticipated constraints on sources of revenue, the university has to be pragmatic and resourceful in faculty renewal.

- This will be accomplished through incentives that allow senior faculty to transition to retirement and possibly move to part-time status. This will open the door to new faculty members in the various programmes.
- The Planning and Priorities committee of Faculty will set out a process by which the university can prioritize new hires for programs that have outgrown current faculty levels.
- The Pink Book will be revised to recognize the long-term teaching needs of the University's programmes including the acceptable proportion of sessional and part-time teaching in relation to tenured faculty appointments, and to ensure that procedures and practices for faculty appointments and progress meet the highest governance standards.
- We will develop plans to raise money for one or more endowed chairs to support new programmes, including possible chairs in East-West Studies, Technology Studies, Medical Humanities and Digital/Investigative Journalism.
- As resources become available, we will invest in our faculty's individual development to enable them to engage more fully in the pedagogy of teaching through workshops and other methods.

How we will know we have succeeded: King's faculty will be re-energized through a combination of retirements, balanced workloads, and new full, and part time and term appointments. We will have transparent procedures and processes that allow for the university to plan for a financially sustainable teaching complement in all programmes. We will have faculty governance policies and procedures that ensure that King's faculty continue to meet the highest standards that support and nurture the primary mission of teaching.

To the extent they form part of our forthcoming capital campaign, endowed chairs will have formed the basis of important new programmes offered in full collaboration with Dalhousie to enhance the academic offerings of the King's – Dalhousie campus.

B. Programme Renewal.

The goal: To ensure that King's existing programmes continue to provide students with rigorous and demanding undergraduate and graduate experiences for which the university is known, while remaining up-to-date through regular, systematic and innovative review.

How we will reach the goal: Over the next five years, each program will ensure students continue to develop independence of mind, thus receiving "an education for life".

- King's will maintain and strengthen the Foundation Year Programme, its flagship programme, through regular external reviews and annual internal reviews within the academic unit. These measures will ensure that the mix of texts and of philosophical, cultural, scientific and historical content maintain the integrity and coherence of the programme. To this end, the number of students in the programme may be capped.
- We will reinforce the centrality of FYP to the four-year undergraduate journalism programme. Efforts will be made to better serve the presence of journalism students in the programme, both by including one or more lectures by journalism faculty, and better explaining to journalism students the value of their FYP studies.
- A FYP 1100 option (i.e. two electives, as science students are now permitted) will also be explored for journalism students.
- In the School of Journalism, we will consolidate changes in the Master of Journalism program and the Master of Fine Arts in Creative Non-Fiction. The school will undertake a review of its four year honours undergraduate and one-year post-graduate Bachelor of Journalism curriculum, and incorporate appropriate changes as recommended in the recent internal and external unit reviews.
- The combined honours programmes will review their curricula to ensure they are fulfilling their specific academic plans. They will work to embrace more fully encounters with the Eastern/Asian world in ways appropriate to the curriculum of each programme.
- All programmes will ensure through comprehensive course outlines that students know the aims of the courses and anticipated outcomes.

How we will know we have succeeded: King's programmes will have refined their curricula to adopt an appropriate mix of texts and pedagogical methods, and these will be clearly expressed in the course outlines. They will have robust enrollments, and as a result will maintain and build their national reputation. Our students will have been successful in winning academic and professional awards. They will have become confident and active members of society, whether they go on to graduate or professional schools or enter into business, education or public service or other post-university occupations.

C. Development of New Programme and Pedagogical Initiatives.

The goal: The programmes now extant at King's all had their start after 1970. They represented a startling reinvention of King's that connected the College intellectually and pedagogically at once to its past and to the student needs of the present. Going forward, King's intends to build on this reinvention by developing new initiatives to ensure it maintains this connection and supports the wider work of the King's-Dalhousie campus.

How we will reach the goal: Over the next five years, King's will explore a number of new programmes and pedagogical initiatives. They will include:

- A new programme focusing on exploring intersections of thought between the eastern and western worlds, as a complement to the existing humanities programmes.
- New summer programmes for academics, university students, high school students and adult learners in both the humanities and journalism, the latter possibly using the model of the existing King's Summer School in Data Journalism. In this regard we will explore the idea of offering diploma or certificate programmes.
- A new focus on e-learning (distance education) and other digital learning methods, especially (but not exclusively) in the School of Journalism;
- New minor programmes in areas such as aesthetics, and digital journalism to complement existing minors;
- A new final year course or courses for all King's combined honours students who have taken FYP; to this end, we will explore reviving the proposal for a School of Interdisciplinary Humanities.
- New study-abroad programmes, both credit and not-for credit.

Choosing among many such proposals will require prioritization to ensure the best mix of programmes for King's, consistent with available financial and other resources. The Faculty Committee on Planning and Priorities will develop a protocol for the introduction of new programmes and initiatives at King's, subject to available financial and other resources from time to time. Such a protocol would weigh the merits of various proposals and make recommendations to the faculty and administration as to the timing of their implementation, again subject to the availability of sufficient financial and human resources to permit changes to take place. This planning would clearly be done in collaboration with Dalhousie (see below).

How we will know we have succeeded: King's will have new and innovative programmes and courses that operate on campus year round and off campus mainly in the summer. Together they will attract all types of learners to King's, and help to ensure the strength of the institution well into the future.

D. Strengthening the Relationship with Dalhousie:

The goal: The relationship with Dalhousie is one of the cornerstones of King's ongoing success. As King's and Dalhousie today face many common challenges, it becomes all the more important to build the relationship in a way that strengthens collaboration and offers mutual support. This is especially true in the nuanced and vital relation of King's humanities programmes with the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (FASS).

How we will reach the goal: King's and Dalhousie can support one another in academic planning by taking the following steps:

- Develop structures and protocols to make more straightforward the routine practices of class approval, cross-listings, increasing faculty swaps between FASS and King's, and involving Dalhousie faculty in all King's programmes.
- Strengthen the role of King's faculty as adjuncts and members of the Dalhousie Faculty of Graduate Studies (the recent addition of a King's representative on ADC is a significant step in this direction).
- Work out with Dalhousie (FASS in particular) new protocols for developing new programmes and other academic initiatives.
- Develop at King's more effective ways to co-ordinate the offerings of the combined honours programmes and to respond to needs/opportunities within Dalhousie.
- Collaborate with Dalhousie to provide new study opportunities/ shared offerings with other universities in Halifax and beyond.

How we will know we have succeeded:

We will have succeeded when Dalhousie and King's have financial and administrative arrangements that allow for the mutually beneficial strengthening of programmes and courses at both universities, with the mutually supportive participation of faculty at both institutions.

5. Reporting on our Progress

Once the board of governors approves this Academic Plan, work will begin to implement it, with timelines and tasks assigned to ensure that these priorities are acted upon. Faculty members are key to ensuring continued excellence in interdisciplinary humanities and journalism education. The faculty, with support from administration, staff, students and the wider university community, will need to take ownership of this plan. To this end, the implementation of this plan will follow the normal approval procedures of Faculty and the Board of Governors.

The vice-president will provide quarterly updates to the board of governors, faculty, students and the community on our progress. King's is committed to demonstrating accountability in the realization of the Academic Plan.

5. Conclusion:

King's faces challenging circumstances, including those related to finances and the important relationship with Dalhousie. But the university surmounted other trials in its 225-year history, and each has presented corresponding opportunities. The same is true today, provided we do not leave our academic and pedagogical future to chance. We would like to thank the community for its valuable input as we have developed this academic plan and look forward to its implementation.