Bachelor of Science Program Review Summary Report, (September 2026)

Programs Reviewed:

Bachelor of Science:

- Applied Mathematics Major
- Biological Sciences Major
- General Major

External Review Team Appointed by the Provost & Vice President Academic:

- Dr. Lisa K. Elfring, Vice Provost for Instruction and Assessment, University of Arizona
- Dr. Gregory S. Anderson, Professor and Dean, Faculty of Science, Thompson Rivers University
- Ms Amy Neumann, Academic Coordinator, Centre for Nursing & Health Studies, Faculty of Health disciplines (Internal Observer)

Key Milestones:

- Program Review Kick-off: November 18, 2025
- Self-Study Approval by Program Council: February 19, 2026
- Self-Study Approved by Faculty of Science and Technology Faculty Council: March 12, 2026
- Virtual Site Visit: June 24 – 26, 2026
- Receipt of External Reviewer Report: August 10, 2026
- Program Response Report to Faculty of Science and Technology Faculty Council: October 15, 2026
- Program Response Report to Academic Planning, Priorities and Standards Committee (APPSC) of General Faculties Council: November 2, 2026
- Public Posting of BSc Program Review Summary Report: following APPSC meeting
- Annual Program Update to APPSC: June 2028

Summary of Key Findings from the Self-study and External Reviewer Reports:

The Bachelor of Science Program Self-Study document outlined the program's strengths and weaknesses and put forward a list of recommendations for improvement. Program strengths

included the program's strong alignment with AU's core mission of providing accessible, high-quality education to diverse learners, program and course flexibility, high academic program quality and rigour, and strong student support systems. Program weaknesses were centered around financial considerations, requirements for students to attend some supervised labs in Athabasca, lack of peer community, the exam proctoring system, current faculty resources affecting course quality, and low graduation rates. The main recommendations offered by the self-study included securing additional faculty to assist in ensuring course currency and contributing to new program offerings, building strategies to increase program retention, developing additional program streams, creating additional opportunities for student community building, increasing partnerships to expand learner pathways and foster more research, and determining additional options for proctoring systems.

The external review team agreed with the conclusions of the self-study and offered twenty-one separate recommendations that emphasized student retention, student success strategies, exploration of AI-related assessment strategies, resource requirements, curriculum changes, and enhanced use of the chosen learning platforms. The external review team included the following observations at the conclusion of their report:

> "The BSc programs closely align with Athabasca University's institutional *Like No Other* Strategic Plan and with AU's core mission, because the programs provide access and opportunities to diverse learners who otherwise would have faced insurmountable barriers to a university education. Students and alumni report high satisfaction with the program's flexibility, advising, and admissions (particularly transfer credit assessment) processes. Advising was frequently described as knowledgeable, responsive, and supportive.
>
> Faculty and instructional staff demonstrate strong commitment to student support, advising, and responsiveness. Students and alumni consistently highlighted the quality of their educational experience and the positive influence of faculty. Instructional design expertise has contributed positively to modernization efforts. Students reported that some of the instructors were amongst the best they had in their post-secondary experience, and were genuinely caring, and very supportive, going well beyond the call."

Action Table for Implementation of Recommendations:

Action Plan:

	Recommendations (in order of priority for the program)	Proposed Action(s)	Timeline (include specifics)	Individual(s) Responsible for Leading the Action(s) (by role)	Responsibility for Resourcing Action(s) (if applicable; by role)	Dean's Response
1	**Student Retention**					
A	Develop AU-specific retention strategies	Work with the Program Officer to develop strategies. The framework is to be developed by the Program Development Working Group (PDWG).	2026-2030	Dean/ Associate Dean - Student experience/ Program Officer	Dean	The FST PDWG meets regularly to discuss retention strategies for AU students with student, faculty and staff representation. Strategies identified will be implemented over the next 4 years by faculty and staff.
B	Develop a video by the Dean welcoming new students	Develop a toolkit and orientation site with resources for new students. Work with University Relations (UR) on this initiative.	2026-2030	Dean/ Associated Dean - Student Experience/ Program Officer/ FST Student Services Team	Dean	FST will work with UR to develop an FST video in courses for students. The Office of the Dean will provide coordination support for the development of the toolkit and resource site.
C	Use of videos in courses	Implement videos in new courses and then expand. Begin pilot project using professor videos currently in existence and train professors on tools for video creation.	2028-2032	Dean/ Associate Dean – Learning and Assessment/ Course Production/ FST Faculty	Dean	FST faculty have developed some prior and this will form the basis of the pilot program which will be expanded in the future across FST.

D	Introduce an early synchronous paced course	Explore the introduction of a paced course offered once or twice a year.	2030-2032	Dean/ Associate Dean - Learning and Assessment/ FST Faculty	Dean	Discussions will occur in the faculty regarding the benefit of this course given we serve both program and visiting students at AU. This type of course can benefit program students and create more community.
2	**Student Success**					
A	Availability of minors for General Science	Expand the BSc General Science program's access to minors. Make regulation changes working with Program Officers.	2026-2028	Dean/ Associate Dean - Student Experience/ Program Officer/ Program Director/ FST Faculty	Dean	The office of the dean is supportive of this recommendation which can be recommended in the next year or so.
B	Use strategies to promote "cohorts"	See above (section 1D).	2030-2032	Program Officer	Dean	FST will continue to discuss this more widely as there are many ways to create cohorts in person or online. These can be implemented based on these discussions in 2030-32.
C	Collect data from students on learning aids	Conduct surveys to collect data on resources students access. Provide students with reputable sources for external content that augments course materials.	2026-2030	Associate Dean – Learning and Assessment/ Program Officer	Dean	The Associate Dean Learning and Assessment will coordinate this work through our learning designers, faculty and staff and incorporate the results into curriculum design and renewal.
D	In advising communications, present pathways	Equip Advisors with better information regarding career pathways for students.	2026-2030	Dean/ Associate Dean – Student Experience/ FST Advising Staff	Dean, AVP Student Services	The FST undergraduate advising teams will work on this item in collaboration with FST and other central units at AU.
E	Student representation and venue for industry	Add students to all committees that do not already have student representatives. Explore inviting industry representatives to an industry forum, an external industry advisory group, or co-op programs.	2026-2030	Program Officer/ FST Faculty	Dean	FST has student representation on governance councils and PDWG but will expand opportunities for student representation on other committees and look to include industry representation or input on

						academic committees where beneficial.
3	**Assessment**					
A	Assessment strategies in the age of AI	Continuous review of our assessment strategies in the age of AI.	2028-2032	Dean/ Associate Dean – Learning and Assessment	Dean, AU	Continuous review and analysis of assessment strategies and student success is on-going in the faculty and is inclusive of many factors and developments, including AI.
B	Explicit statements on AI use for syllabus templates	Wait for the institutional policy and framework then develop course specific statements for course sites.	2028-2030	N/A	Dean, IT, Provost	FST will work with the university in the creation of guidelines that can be used in faculties.
4	**Resource Requirements**					
A	New course development and course updates	Work with the university and the budget process to establish a sustainable path.	2026-2030	Dean	Dean	Resource planning for course development and production is on-going in the faculty as well as working on approaches that are efficient and agile.
B	Upper-level electives	Explore the development of additional senior level courses in priority areas.	2026-2030	Dean/ Program Director / Program Officer	Dean	This will be an important focus of the faculty in the next five years in priority areas.
C	Program promotion	Work with UR to prioritize program promotion.	2028-2032	Dean/ Associate Dean – Student Experience	Dean	Work is on-going with UR to develop marketing and promotion for AU programs.
5	**Course Offerings**					
A	Revisit course lower/upper-level credit	Review course levels.	2030-2032	Dean/ Program Director/ Program Officer/ FST Faculty	Dean	In the next two years the faculty will look at this opportunity as there are a few examples for improvement.
B	No lower-level cell biology class	Review course numbering in biology.	2028-2030	Dean/ FST Faculty	Dean	The cell biology course BIOL 401 will be reviewed as it is labelled Intro to Cell Biology so likely the course number needs to be reviewed. FST will work with the faculty on this item in the next two years.

C	Proliferation of minors and degrees to areas with 1-2 faculty	Continue to advocate for resources in priority areas.	2028-2032	Dean	Dean	We will continue to work strategically to resource the faculty and our academic mission with careful planning and prioritization of key areas.
D	Consider a name change for the General Science program	Consider a name change for the General Science program.	2026-2028	Dean/ Program Director/ FST Faculty	Dean	This is an excellent suggestion as the program will be more successful with a new name and with the option of minors it should do really well. This will take some time with governance but we will start work on this shortly.
6	**Learning Platforms**					
A	Make full use of Brightspace capabilities	Work with IT to have Brightspace capabilities expanded to include features such as assignment submission notifications. Work with the Associate Vice-President (AVP) Learner Experience.	2026-2030	Dean/ Associate Dean - Learning and Assessment/ Course Production/ FST Faculty	Dean, IT, Provost	FST will work with the AVP Learner Experience to explore the expansion of capabilities to improve student engagement and success.
B	Increase internal training for Brightspace	Organize Faculty of Science and Technology (FST) Training sessions on Brightspace tools.	2026-2030	Dean/ Associate Dean - Learning and Assessment/ Course Production	Dean	The Office of the Dean will coordinate training sessions for FST faculty and academic support staff.
C	Re-examine laboratory experiences	Revisit discussions on 1-credit courses. Explore lab completion on other campuses.	2026-2030	Dean/ Associate Dean – Student Experience/ Lab Committee Chair/ FST Faculty	Dean	1-credit courses for labs were closed in 2017 due to low enrolments. FST will consider this recommendation and other methods to see if this is viable. FST will look into labs at other locations based on student demand.