

FINAL ASSESSMENT REPORT
Institutional Quality Assurance Program (IQAP) Review

Arts & Science Program

Date of Review: April 8 - 9, 2014

In accordance with the University Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP), this final assessment report provides a synthesis of the external evaluation and the internal response and assessments of the Arts and Science program. This report identifies the significant strengths of the program, together with opportunities for program improvement and enhancement, and it sets out the recommendations that have been selected for implementation.

The report includes an Implementation Plan that identifies who will be responsible for approving the recommendations set out in the Final Assessment Report; who will be responsible for providing any resources entailed by those recommendations; any changes in organization, policy or governance that will be necessary to meet the recommendations and who will be responsible for acting on those recommendations; and timelines for acting on and monitoring the implementation of those recommendations.

Executive Summary of the Cyclical Program Review of the Arts & Science Program

In accordance with the Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP), the Arts & Science Program submitted a self-study in March 2014 to the Associate Vice-President (Faculty) to initiate the cyclical program review of its programs. The approved self-study presented program descriptions, learning outcomes, and analyses of data provided by the Office of Institutional Research and Analysis. Appendices to the self-study contained all course outlines associated with the program and the CVs for each full-time member in the Department.

One arms-length reviewer from the University of Bristol and one internal reviewer, selected from a set of proposed reviewers, examined the materials and completed a site visit on April 8 - 9, 2014. The visit included interviews with the Provost and Vice-President (Academic); Associate Vice-President (Faculty); Associate Vice-President (Teaching and Learning); Assistant Director, Student Recruitment; Director of the program and meetings with a group of current students, full-time faculty and support staff.

The Director of the Arts and Science Program and the Associate Vice-President (Faculty) submitted responses to the Reviewers' Report (Oct/Dec 2014). Specific recommendations were discussed and clarifications and corrections were presented. Follow-up actions and timelines were included.

McMaster's Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) reviewed the above documentation and the committee determined that the program is functioning well and that there are no significant academic issues that have not been addressed. The QAC recommends that the program should follow the regular course of action with an 18-month follow-up report and a subsequent full external cyclical review to be conducted no later than 8 years after the start of the last review. The Final Assessment Report was prepared by the QAC to be submitted to Undergraduate Council and Senate (February 2014).

In their report (May 2014), the Review Team provided feedback that describes how the Arts & Science Program meets the Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP) evaluation criteria and is consistent with the University's mission and academic priorities. The Review Team highlighted that the Arts & Science program is a truly innovative and exciting initiative that should be held in the highest esteem and central to the University's internationalization strategy. The reviewers noted that the program is driven by the clear, purposeful and visionary leadership of the director and the program benefits from a truly innovative pedagogical program that is unique in North America and beyond. The decision to bring together Arts & Science into a coherent framework for intellectual study provides students with a broad range of skills and competences that allows them to follow many diverse career paths. The report also highlighted that the program places the University at the center of many of the truly interdisciplinary pedagogical debates today which demands that we appreciate the science of the arts, along with the poetics of scientific enquiry.

The following program strengths and weaknesses were noted:

Strengths

- In addition to the strengths listed above, the reviewers drew attention to the "shared sense of pride [in] and belonging" to a vibrant academic program evidenced among faculty, students, staff, and alumni alike. They noted the successful linking by faculty of their research with their teaching; the serious way in which student feedback is taken; and the way in which the Discovery initiative has created a volunteering ethos.

Weaknesses

- Recommendations made by the reviewers to address perceived weaknesses have been embraced and acted upon. There appear to be no overriding concerns apart from the inevitable dependence of the program's vitality on a strong director.

The Director of the Arts & Science Program submitted a response to the Reviewers' Report (October 2014). The Associate Vice-President (Faculty) submitted her response to the Reviewers' Report and the Program's Response in December 2014. Specific recommendations were discussed, along with follow-up actions to aid in addressing the recommendations.

The Associate Vice-President (Faculty) in consultation with the Program Director shall be responsible for monitoring the recommendation implementation plan. The details of the progress made will be presented in the 18-month Follow-up Report and filed in the Associate Vice-President (Faculty)'s Office.

Summary of the Reviewers' Recommendations with the Program's and Associate Vice-President, (Faculty)'s Responses

Recommendations

1. Explore the possibility of introducing introductory modules that address the science of the arts and the poetics of science

Response: The Director advised that the program will discuss the noted curricular lacks and consider the idea of a set of introductory lectures or a core module on the science of the arts and the poetics of the sciences.

Responsibility for Following Up: Director of Arts & Science Program

Timeline: Update at 18-month follow up report

2. Employ a dedicated marketing member to the support staff to focus intently on improving the international reputation of the program

Response: The Director advised that a Digital Communications Specialist was recently hired to assist with developing a web and social media presence and that plans are underway to engage students especially in developing marketing materials.

Responsibility for Following Up: Director of Arts & Science Program

Timeline: Update at 18-month follow up report

3. Continue to develop the unique and productive relationship with MIIETL

Response: The Director highlighted that the program will continue to develop its unique and productive relationship with MIIETL. The partnership is promising and valuable, particularly in the opportunities it opens up for Arts & Science students, and the program will endeavour to involve greater numbers of Arts & Science faculty members in ongoing and new collaborative ventures with MIIETL.

Responsibility for Following Up: Director of Arts & Science Program

Timeline: Update at 18-month report

4. Consider a Student-led Arts and Science Journal

Response: The Director noted that a consultation meeting would take place to discuss the possibility of a student-led Arts & Science journal.

Responsibility for Following Up: Director of Arts & Science Program

Timeline: Follow up at 18-month report

5. Hold a consultation meeting on the development of a Graduate program that would appeal more to an international student base.

Response: The Director indicated that the program will begin consultations about the possibility of developing a graduate program in Arts & Science, especially one that would appeal to an international student base.

Responsibility for Following Up: Director of Arts & Science Program

Timeline: Follow up at 18-month report

6. Faculty Renewal

Response: The Director advised that faculty renewal continues to be one of the program's top priorities. The program will continue to negotiate new three-year secondments of faculty members from various departments and Faculties, and will continue to work collaboratively to create new shared appointments, as we have done in the case of our two CLA positions shared with MIIETL and other units. The Director further noted that the program has recently reduced its reliance on retired faculty (though they affirm the tremendous value of some degree of emeritus engagement) and they are committed to a healthy balance of regular faculty members and sessional instructors.

Responsibility for Following Up: Director of Arts & Science Program

Timeline: Update at 18-month report

7. Move the program to a more suitable location that will make it more visible on campus and reflective of its esteem.

Response: The Director highlighted that the program is eager to explore possibilities of the moving the Program to a more prestigious and spacious setting on campus. At the same time, the Director noted that the program would gladly join in discussions about prospects for expansion of McMaster's downtown campus, with an eye to establishing a base for some activities (e.g. the McMaster Discovery Program) there.

The Associate Vice-President, Faculty noted that space on campus is at a premium, but highlighted that the program is willing to consider an increased presence in Hamilton's diverse downtown core, which would augment its commitment to internationalizing efforts and to community engagement.

Quality Assurance Committee Recommendation

McMaster's Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) reviewed the above documentation and the committee determined that the program is functioning well and that there are no significant academic issues that have not been addressed. The QAC recommends that the program should follow the regular course of action with an 18-month follow-up report and a subsequent full external cyclical review to be conducted no later than 8 years after the start of the last review.