

FINAL ASSESSMENT REPORT
Institutional Quality Assurance Program (IQAP) Review

Classics

Date of Review: March 4 - 5, 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 undergraduate **Classics** 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 Classics Program

In accordance with the Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP), the Classics department submitted a self-study in March 2014 to the Associate Vice-President, Faculty to initiate the cyclical program review of its undergraduate program. 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.

Two arms-length reviewers, one from Ontario and one from British Columbia, and one internal reviewer, selected from a set of proposed reviewers, examined the materials and completed a site visit on March 4 - 5, 2014. The visit included interviews with the Provost and Vice-President (Academic); Associate Vice-President, Faculty; Acting Dean of Humanities; Chair of the program and meetings with a group of current students, full-time faculty and support staff.

The Chair of the Classics Program and the Dean of Humanities submitted responses to the Reviewers' Report (July 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 since the significant problems that need addressing relate to faculty complement, and since the department is otherwise praised for delivering solid training for its students, QAC recommends that the program 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 Classics Program meets the Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP) evaluation criteria and is consistent with the University's mission and academic priorities. The Review Team found the Classics undergraduate programs to be very strong, offering students a good basic training in the many varied aspects of the discipline and enhancing key critical skills in reading, writing and oral expression. The Department is very well administered and continues to show itself a good citizen of the Faculty and University by offering a good number of seats each year for students from programs in other Departments and other Faculties. A number of the Classics faculty have started to integrate new teaching techniques and technologies into their courses, and especially in the upper levels their courses are often linked to their current research interests. The Review Team offered a number of recommendations in the hope that they will help the Department devise and implement strategies to strengthen an already impressively strong program.

The following program strengths and weaknesses were noted:

Strengths

- The department was commended in the report for its strong departmental culture; for the way its curriculum reflects the current state of the discipline, covering all four of the major areas of Classics scholarship; for the active engagement in scholarship of its members; for the way the faculty integrate their research with their teaching; and for the number of students it has attracted relative to Departments of Classics elsewhere in Canada.

Weaknesses

- The primary concern pertains to the literary stream in the department's offerings, a stream weakened by the failure of an appointment in this area to gain tenure, and likely to be exacerbated with the retirement within the next few years of another member.

The Chair of the Classics Department submitted a response to the Reviewers' Report (July 2014). The Dean, Faculty of Humanities submitted his response to the Reviewers' Report and the Program's Response in July 2014. Specific recommendations were discussed, along with follow-up actions to aid in addressing the recommendations.

The Dean, Faculty of Humanities in consultation with the Department Chair shall be responsible for monitoring the recommendations 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 Dean of Humanities' Responses

Recommendations

- 1. Consider expanding the literary offerings and think carefully about the subject matter of the curricular offerings in the literary stream. At the same time, the review recommends that the Department rethink modestly the traditional subject streams to allow more interdisciplinary courses at Levels 3 and 4 of the curriculum.**

Response: The Department notes that some of the reviewers' concerns can be addressed by clarifying course titles and descriptions, as suggested. The Dean recommended that as new appointments are not likely in the short term, the Department may need to review its subfield categories. The Dean suggested that the Department might consider whether or how it can manage the literary stream with the current complement, and also whether, given some of the courses currently included in this stream, the Department might rename or reframe it.

Responsibility for Following Up: Department Chair and Dean, Faculty of Humanities

Timeline: Update at 18-month follow up report

2. Improve the specificity of course titles to better represent the content of courses.

Response: The department acknowledged that this could be an incremental improvement and will discuss the possibility during the next curriculum round.

Responsibility for Following Up: Department Chair

Timeline: Update at 18-month follow up report

3. The Faculty of Humanities maintain TA funding at its current levels to the extent possible.

Response: The Dean advised that the Faculty intends to continue supporting BIU-funded MA and PhD graduate students with TAs and that the support will continue so long as the Classics Department maintains or increases its graduate enrolments.

Responsibility for Following Up: Dean, Faculty of Humanities and Department Chair

Timeline: Update at 18-month follow up report

4. Recommend a faculty complement of at least nine, replacement of position in Greek literature currently vacant, and replacement of position in Latin literature given impending retirement.

Response: The Dean's Office will be happy to work with the Chair on complement planning. In considering the appropriate size of the department, attention must be given to undergraduate and graduate enrolments, as well as the service teaching within and outside Humanities. The Faculty of Humanities has never automatically replaced any vacancy in a department (and here we differ from some other universities), and must consider the overall needs of the Faculty in allocating positions. We need to ensure that appointments match demand and Faculty priorities.

Responsibility for Following Up: Dean, Faculty of Humanities and Department Chair

Timeline: Update at 18-month follow up report

5. Review various aspects of the program's curriculum, including the role of prerequisites in the Art History and Archaeology courses, and the titles of lower and subject matter of some Ancient History courses.

Response: The Dean noted that the Faculty would encourage the Department to review its curriculum, to ensure that its courses are attractive. The Dean acknowledged that the Department already has responded to the incentives provided in the new budget model for teaching, and has made important revisions to make its courses more attractive. The result has been a significant increase in undergraduate units taught in the Department and the Dean noted that the Department clearly sees the value of continuing in this direction.

Responsibility for Following Up: Dean, Faculty of Humanities and Department Chair

Timeline: Update at 18-month report

6. Ensure a sufficient variety of courses for students to meet their Level III and IV requirements, and ensure that students have access to Ancient Philosophy courses.

Response: The Dean advised that the Faculty will continue to work with the Department on course management issues and he acknowledged that the Department's suggestion that it reduce its Level III and IV requirements and review prerequisites in those courses are good ones. Through the course management process, the Faculty will also encourage the Departments of Classics and Philosophy to cooperate in the offering of courses, while recognizing that there are limits to preventing timetabling conflicts given broader scheduling challenges at the University.

Responsibility for Following Up: Department Chair and Dean, Faculty of Humanities

Timeline: Follow up at 18-month report

7. Consider ways of sustaining the offering of language courses in the summer term.

Response: The Dean recognized the importance of the courses and the challenges this and other departments face at all times in offering language courses. The Dean commended the Department for its current approach to this challenge.

8. Work with Anthropology on cross-listing Archaeology courses.

Response: The Dean highlighted that the Faculty will encourage such discussions, especially because the new budget model provides greater transparency in the costs and benefits of cooperation between Faculties in the offering of courses.

Responsibility for Following Up: Dean, Faculty of Humanities and Department Chair

Timeline: Update at 18-month report

8. Consider integrating tutorials into Classics 1A03, Introduction to Classical Archaeology.

Response: The Department noted that it would discuss this recommendation; however, it also noted that it lacks the graduate cohort to do so. The Dean acknowledged that the Faculty is encouraging all departments to review the ways in which large classes are offered.

9. Make better use of online resources for grade and class management, and consider courses for online and blended learning.

Response: The Dean noted that the Department already has volunteered one introductory Ancient History course for online development, makes use of electronic resources in the teaching of Latin, and is considering other courses for potential online or blended development.

Responsibility for Following Up: Department Chair

Timeline: Update at 18-month report

Quality Assurance Committee Recommendation

McMaster's Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) reviewed the above documentation and the committee determined that since the significant problems that need addressing relate to faculty complement, and since the department is otherwise praised for delivering solid training for its students, QAC recommends that the program 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.

