

FINAL ASSESSMENT REPORT
Institutional Quality Assurance Program (IQAP) Review

Department of English and Cultural Studies

Date of Review: April 29-30, 2013

*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 programs delivered by the **Department of English and Cultural Studies**. This report identifies the significant strengths of the program, together with opportunities for program improvement and enhancement, and it sets out and prioritizes 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 Department of English and Cultural Studies
Undergraduate and Graduate Programs**

In accordance with the Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP), the Department of English and Cultural Studies submitted a self-study in March 2013 to the Associate Vice-President (Academic) and Dean of Graduate Studies to initiate the cyclical program review of its undergraduate and graduate 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.

Two arm's-length external reviewers from New Brunswick and Ontario and one internal reviewer, selected from a set of proposed reviewers, examined the materials and completed a site visit on April 29 – 30, 2013. The visit included interviews with the Provost and Vice-President (Academic); Associate Vice-President (Academic); Associate Vice-President and Dean of Graduate Studies; Dean of Humanities, Associate Dean (Graduate Studies and Research) Faculty of Humanities, and the Chair of English and Cultural Studies. The reviewers met with the English and Cultural Studies Committee, Undergraduate Curriculum Committee, and the Teaching and Learning Committee as well as with faculty members, departmental administrative staff and current undergraduate and graduate students.

The Chair of the Department of English and Cultural Studies and the Dean of the Faculty of Humanities submitted responses to the Reviewers' Report (July/August 2013). 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 agreed with the reviewers that faculty complement planning for the future is essential for the continued success of the existing graduate and undergraduate programs and that, unless additional hirings are made, the launching of new programs is inadvisable. At the same time, QAC shared the reviewers' sense that this remains a "high-achieving" department with "a satisfied and quite successful

student body.” The Final Assessment Report was prepared by the QAC to be submitted to Undergraduate Council and Graduate Council and Senate (December 2014).

In their report (May 2013), the Review Team provided feedback that describes how the Department of English and Cultural Studies meets the Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP) evaluation criteria and is consistent with the University’s mission and academic priorities. The Review Team was very impressed with the clear and thorough documentation provided, as well as the thoughtful engagement of departmental administrators, faculty, students, and staff. The Department has undertaken significant planning exercises in the 18 months between the release of Forward with Integrity (FWI) and the submission of its review materials, and has proposed (and in some cases already begun implementing) a number of promising changes to the undergraduate curriculum and structures. In some significant areas (interdisciplinarity, internationalization, and community engagement, in particular) the Department already had anticipated the curricular directions FWI is designed to implement. The Review Team noted that in articulated learning outcomes for its undergraduate programs and mapping the outcomes onto the entire undergraduate curriculum, the department has gained an extraordinarily detailed (and enviable) understanding of what it assumes, teaches, and evaluates in each course. The Review Team’s overall impression was of a collegial, high-achieving department that takes its instructional mission, both at the undergraduate and graduate level, very seriously, and that functions as an effective community in liaison with its staff and graduate students to offer strong undergraduate programs.

The Dean of the Faculty of Humanities, in consultation with the Department Chair shall be responsible for monitoring the 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 and the School of Graduate Studies.

The Review Team noted some strengths and weaknesses of the program below:

Strengths

- The Department’s pedagogies and curricular orientations to the study of English literature and of culture and critical theory already positioned it, (and several of its members in particular), well along the road to a practice of interdisciplinarity and internationalization as understood in FWI, and these practices can be expected to continue and to deepen.
- Community engagement, another FwI priority, is woven into many faculty members’ teaching, research, and outreach activities, and self-directed learning is supported by the independent research students are trained to do.
- The curriculum in both streams is progressive, visionary, and in tune with leading-edge research in both disciplines, the co-existence of the two streams in a medium-sized department that also supports three graduate programs has put some pressure on both of the undergraduate programs.
- The Department is populated with effective, innovative, and committed teachers who use a variety of pedagogical approaches suggest that the Department is reinforcing its pedagogical goals with appropriate teaching and assessment modes and also striving to accommodate students with different learning styles and/or skill sets.
- Student satisfaction with courses and quality of supervisory and supervisory committee support is very high in the graduate programs

- Impressive time to completion rates for MA and PhD students

Weaknesses

- Experiential learning is an area that has not been fully developed in the Department
- There appears to be unresolved tension between considering English and Cultural Studies and Critical Theory (CSCT) as separate streams and considering them as integrated
- Cultural Studies courses tend to be clustered at the contemporary end of the spectrum, with some notable exceptions (e.g. strong courses in 18th Century literatures and cultures)
- The continued pressure to grow graduate programs could compromise undergraduate education (and the priority given to it by FwI) further. Undergraduate students commented frequently on the non-availability of courses of interest and/or the concurrent timetabling of courses they needed or hoped to take.

Summary of the Reviewers' Recommendations with the Department's and Dean's Responses

Recommendations for Undergraduate Programs

- 1. The Review Team recommended that consideration be given to loosening the BA English coverage requirements, to more firmly structuring the CSCT curriculum, and to developing new non-cross listed CSCT courses.**

Response: The Department outlined that over the 2013-14 academic year, the Curriculum Committee will work to rationalize and balance the programs. The Department recognized that the English offerings could be reduced and coverage requirements could be loosened. The Department noted that mounting new non-cross-listed CSCT courses could be a challenge due to the size of the program; however savings made through restructuring the English BA offerings may help to support CSCT, but only if the Faculty would permit the offering of some smaller classes.

The Dean highlighted that the Faculty is asking all Departments to review program requirements to ensure that they provide students with a quality education while not making unnecessary demands on the teaching and supervisory capacity of the Department.

Responsibility for Following Up: Department Chair and Curriculum Committee

Timeline: Follow up at 18-month report

- 2. The Review Team recommended reviving the proposal for the Creative Writing and Community Engagement specialization.**

Response: The Department advised that it would work with the new Acting Dean in 2013-14 to establish this specialization. The Department will work on ways to support the new specialization through savings in its English undergraduate offerings and by seeking other sources of funding.

The Acting Dean will work with members of the Department to make the model sustainable and he noted that he sees the potential for the proposal to be expanded beyond the English Department so as to engage and benefit students in other programs.

Responsibility for Following Up: Department Chair with Acting Dean

Timeline: Follow up at 18-month report

- 3. The Review Team recommended that further consideration be given to development of experiential learning opportunities (e.g. the creative writing specialization, internships, cross-listings with courses offering practicum components).**

Response: The Department highlighted that the CWCE specialization has internship and practicum components. The Department also noted that it will work to develop a 6-unit, level 3 or 4 Experiential Education Course, building on ties with the Hamilton Public Library and the Hamilton/Wentworth District School Board. The Department and Acting Dean both advised that the Department will work in tandem on this with the new Humanities Target Learning and Experiential Education Centre, which is mandated to develop these opportunities across the Faculty.

Responsibility for Following Up: Department Chair with the Humanities Target Learning and Experiential Education Centre

Timeline: Follow up at 18-month report

- 4. The Review Team recommended that efforts be made to plan and make known its course offerings (however provisionally) on a two-year cycle, and to avoid timetabling conflicts.**

Response: The Department advised that it would be in a better position to commit, in the Timetable and Calendar to a provisional two-year cycling of undergraduate offerings following the reduction and restructuring of the English BA offerings.

The Dean noted that the Faculty will work with the Department to help establish the two-year cycling course offerings and to see whether they can identify key timetabling conflicts that may be of particular concern to students.

Responsibility for Following Up: Department Chair and Office of the Dean

Timeline: Follow up at 18-month report

Recommendations for Graduate Programs

- 1. The Review Team recommended that a “theory and methods of cultural studies” half course be developed for MA and PhD students entering from more traditional English programs.**

Response: The Department outlined that the Graduate Studies Committee, the CSCT Executive, and Graduate Caucus will work together to survey new graduate students to determine the demand for such a course, to be offered in Term 1 each year. If there is sufficient interest to fill a class, we will design and pilot such a course for 2014-15.

Responsibility for Following Up: Department in collaboration with Graduate Studies Committee, CSCT Executive and Graduate Caucus

Timeline: Follow up at 18-month report

- 2. The Review Team recommended that a credit/non-credit “professionalization” half-course be developed for third year doctoral students.**

Response: The Department advised that it would survey the graduate students about repackaging the professionalization seminars into a pass/fail doctoral 3-unit course.

Responsibility for Following Up: Department Chair

Timeline: Follow up at 18-month report

3. The Review Team recommended that (subject to staffing), the historical depth of the cultural studies courses be extended.

Response: The Department responded that that the Graduate Chair would work with graduate instructors to enhance the historical depth of the course offerings. The Department noted that some courses on medieval and early modern culture take on issues of gender, sexuality and class in light of contemporary cultural theory. The Acting Dean suggested that perhaps more could be done to alert students in the Cultural Studies and Critical Theory program about the number of courses dealing with medieval and early modern culture.

Responsibility for Following Up: Graduate Chair

Timeline: Follow up at 18-month report

4. The Review Team recommended that efforts be made to facilitate the cross-appointment of faculty members from related units (e.g. Theatre and Film Studies, Communication Studies and Multimedia, Music, and Art History).

Response: The Department advised that it will press annually for the loan of faculty from elsewhere, many of whom have expressed strong interest in teaching for the program.

The Acting Dean noted that the Faculty is very interested in facilitating the interaction of programs that can contribute to one another's undergraduate and graduate teaching. The Acting Dean suggested that the Faculty would do what it can to support faculty members design courses that can meet the requirements of students in several programs.

Responsibility for Following Up: Office of the Dean and Department Chair

Timeline: Follow Up at 18-month Report

Recommendations for Undergraduate and Graduate Programs

1. The Review Team recommended that serious attention be given to complement planning for DEC, given impending retirements, and to replacements in core areas (e.g. Early Modern and African diasporic literatures/cultures).

Response: The Department noted that it has prepared a list of hiring priorities as part of its five-year plan of 2012. The Department is keen to work with the new Acting Dean on complement planning.

The Acting Dean suggested that the Department should be thinking about complement planning at the same time as it considers making changes to the structure of its undergraduate programs.

2. The Review Team recommended that further efforts be made to create teaching fellowships for senior PhD students.

Response: The Department highlighted that it remains active in pressing for Teaching Fellowships for senior PhD candidates.

The Acting Dean noted that the University was in the process of negotiating an agreement with CUPE Unit 2 (representing sessional instructors) and that he hopes that the contract will better accommodate the hiring of current PhD students as instructors. The Faculty will continue to work with Departments to find ways to provide students with this crucial professional development experience.

3. The Review Team recommended that a senior Teaching Assistant be appointed annually to train and advise newer Teaching Assistants.

Response: The Department advised that beginning in September 2013, it will dedicate a .5 senior teaching assistant annually to lead Term 1 TA training and to serve as a resource and support person to all new TAs.

The Acting Dean noted that the Faculty will explore this and other proposals to improve the uses of tutorials and teaching assistants.

Responsibility for Following Up: Department Chair

Timeline: Follow Up at 18-month Report

4. The Review Team recommended that the Department retain control of its communal spaces (e.g. seminar rooms and lounge).

Response: The Department advised that it saw no immediate danger of losing its valuable communal work and teaching spaces.

Quality Assurance Committee Recommendation

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.