

Final Assessment Report

Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP) Review
Philosophy Undergraduate Program
(Philosophy, Philosophy and Biology, and Philosophy and Mathematics)

Date of Review: April 26 – 27, 2012

Review Team Members: Dr. Amy Mullin, University of Toronto
Dr. Chris Viger, University of Western Ontario
Dr. Michele George, McMaster University

Summary:

The Reviewers noted that overall, the Philosophy program is a very good one, providing students with excellent critical thinking and communication skills, particularly writing skills. It was noted that a commendable and rare feature of the program is that instruction is provided almost entirely by regular faculty members, likely contributing to students being very satisfied with the quality of instruction they receive. Faculty are committed to integrating their research and teaching as evidenced in course design, from the topics covered to the choice of readings. Certain courses are able to make use of the Bertrand Russell Archives, providing students a unique learning experience. The Reviewers mentioned that instructors have been innovative in course design and delivery by integrating instructional technology into their classes, including current events local to Hamilton and more global in the curricula, and having experiential learning components. The Reviewers highlighted that the program, with its combined honours option, is very well suited to interdisciplinary studies. Students most often combine philosophy with English, history, or political science but in the last five years students have combined philosophy with over twenty-five other subjects. The Reviewers stated that they found the program to be consistent with the university's aims as outlined in the president's letter and strategic plans. It was noted that the courses are structured to meet degree level expectations with an appropriate progression of skills through the levels.

The Reviewers offered some insightful suggestions for improvements to the program, which are listed below.

On the whole, the Department and Faculty of Humanities are very pleased with the review and stated that they are delighted that the Review Team shares their conviction that the Program is well designed and administered to conform to the University's Mission and Academic Plan, and to provide students with excellent skills in critical thinking and writing.

Following a review of the IQAP Reviewers Report, the Chair's response and the Dean's response, the Quality Assurance Committee had no further recommendations. Program will be reviewed again following our normal quality assurance schedule.

Recommendation	Implementation Plan
<p>Interdisciplinarity and non-Western/non-analytic Philosophy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> incorporate courses in non-Western Philosophy being offered by other units strengthen connections with Biology and Mathematics 	<p>The Curriculum Committee will investigate the non-Western courses offered in the Faculty and report to the Department with a proposal; the Chair and the Undergraduate Advisor will investigate ways to strengthen the connections with Biology and Mathematics.</p>
<p>Student Requests</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> earlier training in writing and reasoning heighten engagements with graduate students and faculty career planning guidance attention to a graduated development of research skills 	<p>Invite Centre for Leadership and Learning to join in a teaching and learning workshop, to share ideas about offering common guidance in writing and reasoning in first year classes, and about how to offer more opportunities for oral presentations, especially in large classes</p> <p>Create a Faculty Liaison Officer position with responsibility for planning events involving undergraduate, graduate and/or faculty with a focus on course selection, careers and applying for grants.</p>
<p>Recruitment and Retention</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examine the cause of the high number of part-time students and focus on what can be done to access their unique needs and enhance their experiences. 	<p>The Undergraduate Advisor, in consultation with the Undergraduate Coordinator and the Faculty of Humanities, will take on this task</p>
<p>Teaching Assistants (TA)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> discipline-specific TA training 	<p>A faculty member, in consultation with senior TAs in the Department, will develop a plan for discipline-specific TA training and mentoring</p>