



# Cyclical Program Review of Cultural Analysis and Social Theory

## PROGRAMS:

Master of Arts in Cultural Analysis and Social Theory

## Final Assessment Report

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## PART ONE: EXECUTIVE RESPONSE

Please provide a brief response to each of the following.

### A) EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF REVIEW DOCUMENTS

(SELF-STUDY, REVIEWERS' REPORT, UNIT RESPONSE)

**From the Self-Study:** The Master of Arts program in Cultural Analysis and Social Theory (MA in CAST) was approved in 2007. It is a unique interdisciplinary forum for research and study in cultural analysis and social theory designed to further the studies of students whose intellectual and scholarly interests extend beyond the scope of a single social science or humanities discipline. The program draws its expertise from faculty members at both the Waterloo and Brantford campuses in such fields as Anthropology, Communication Studies, Global Studies, English, Languages and Literatures, Sociology, and Women and Gender Studies.

There are three OCGS approved fields in the program: (1) Globalization, Identity and Social Movements; (2) Body Politics: Gender, Sexuality and Embodiment; and (3) Cultural Representation and Social Theory. In contrast to programs with distinct streams, CAST students do not choose a field and follow a course of study within that field. On the contrary, students are required to take courses in at least two fields, and most take courses in all three. The three designated fields indicate the intersecting areas of scholarly inquiry in which we work, not distinct programs of study. All CAST courses are interdisciplinary in nature.

**From the Reviewers' Report:** "The three members of the review team are unanimous in their admiration of the CAST program and in their support for its continued growth. In providing a rigorous academic curriculum and graduate student training, it clearly aligns with WLU's stated desire, as stated often during the site visit, to develop and sustain niche programs that aid in differentiating WLU from other provincial and national universities. There is no other program in Canadian with this name, and very few with its kinds of academic emphases—a point that we believe WLU can make more of by embracing and highlighting CAST intellectually and institutionally. CAST's faculty members are a dynamic group of approximately 20 faculty from a range of cognate fields in the Faculties of Arts (Waterloo) and Liberal Arts (Brantford), all dedicated to the principle and the practice of integrated interdisciplinary work. As outlined in the self-study report, and as related to us a number of time during our visit, they are among some of the most adept teachers, productive scholars, and active colleagues at WLU—"leaders" at their university in every sense of the term. CAST's curriculum—both its core courses and the varied electives—reflects an intellectually demanding commitment to integrating cultural and theoretical inquiry with explorations of practices tied to social just, broadly conceived. Its students are passionate about the program and judging by the comprehensive self-study report, and our meeting with them during our visit, they thrive in their time there. We understand that

CAST is one of the few explicitly integrated multi-campus programs at WLU, an initiative we applaud for its forward thinking about the program's growth and future."

The reviewers made 11 recommendations grouped under the categories of:

- 1) Teaching
- 2) Curriculum: Structure and Administration
- 3) University wide

**From the Unit Response:** "On a final notes, CAST wishes to reiterate its hope that the University will accept the reviewers' recommendation that CAST be made a priority for WLU and its FGPS. We have worked very hard as a program to turn an honest and critical gaze on ourselves and our practices, and have taken the necessary difficult steps to address our concerns, and those of the administration. This report is evidence of the success of that work, and the high regard in which it is held by our peers at other institutions."

The program responded to each of the 11 recommendations in the reviewers' report.

## **B) IDENTIFICATION OF PROGRAM STRENGTHS**

The Cultural Analysis and Social Theory program has grown and developed considerably since its inception in 2007. Its strengths include interdisciplinarity in a multi-campus context. After a rather slow and tenuous start, it now has shown strong growth, attracting students from inside and outside the university. Among the fall, 2015, cohort, 13 of 18 students completed their undergraduate degree from institutions other than Laurier. The program shows good potential for further development and transformation as it establishes a strong presence on both the Waterloo and Brantford campuses.

## **C) OPPORTUNITIES FOR PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT AND ENHANCEMENT**

We feel strongly, as do the reviewers, that the fields create an arbitrary distinction among courses and areas of research interest. We encourage the program faculty to have a retreat to review the curriculum and consider eliminating the fields.

We also suggest that the faculty look to other graduate programs for courses that might be shared.

**D) RECOMMENDATIONS APPROVED FOR IMPLEMENTATION IN  
PRIORITY ORDER**

The main priority recommendation is that the program holds a retreat to review the curriculum. Are the courses still those that best reflect the learning outcomes of the program? Is it necessary to maintain three fields?

## PART TWO: IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Recommendation to be Implemented	Responsibility for Implementation	Responsibility for Resourcing (if applicable)	Anticipated Completion Date	Additional Notes
#1 Stable and reliable funding	Unit with deans of Arts and Liberal Arts	Deans of Arts and Liberal Arts	2017	Draft a 2-3 year course schedule to be negotiated with Arts and FLA deans; given financial conditions, reduce stand-alone CAST courses to 5 (3 of which would be funded by and taught on the Brantford campus; remainder by Arts in Waterloo where there are more courses that could be used from other programs); revisit this structure in 3 years to determine future; support interdisciplinary focus by sharing courses with other programs; distribute TAs between Waterloo and Brantford 40:60 respectively.
#2 Teaching assignments be fair, and equitably compensated	Deans of Arts and Liberal Arts		2017	To be discussed when a draft plan is produced.
#3 Teaching not done on overload	Unit and Deans		2016	To be discussed as part of plan
#4 Eliminate fields	Unit		2016	Discuss in a retreat
#5 Broaden curriculum	Unit		2016	Discuss with other programs about shared courses

#6 Take courses from other programs & universities	Unit		2016	Consider other programs' offerings; OVGS can only be accessed if a required course is not offered at Laurier
#7 Consider media project or policy analyses	Unit		2017	Discuss in a retreat
#8 Add Associate Director				There are no funds for this purpose; however, Faculty of Arts can provide office space for the graduate coordinator to meet with students on the Waterloo campus
#9 Augment website with information, profiles, etc.	Unit	Consult FGPS	2016	
#10 Increase funding				Funding has already been increased and there is no more money at the moment; we encourage faculty to fund students from research grants
#11 Shuttle bus	University	deans		We will explore the possibility of a ride-sharing program (possibly through an app)