



2016-2017
Cyclical Program Review of
Cultural Studies

PROGRAMS:
Honours BA Cultural Studies in Combination

Final Assessment Report

Submitted by: Dr. Richard Nemesvari, Dean of Arts; Dr. Kathryn Carter, Associate Vice-President: Teaching and Learning; Dr. Paul Jessop, Vice-President: Academic

Date: September 29, 2017

PART ONE: EXECUTIVE RESPONSE

A) EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF REVIEW DOCUMENTS

Self-Study

- The self-study describes the program's evolution since the last review, and highlights the successes as well as how the program has met resource challenges. The self-study preparation was coordinated by the program director, Dr. Jeremy Hunsinger, in collaboration with faculty and CAS members. The document responds to the previous review's recommendations and contextualizes how the salient recommendations have been adopted into the current program. The document asks reviewers to respond to questions around the program's recent administrative merger, furthering their interdisciplinary connections, community service learning, and curricular revisions to consciously strengthen the program.
- The document articulates the program-level learning outcomes and describes the process by which they were developed. Degree level expectations are clearly articulated for the program. Since the Cultural Studies program is not a direct entry program, admission requirements are set by the Faculty of Arts and the Admissions office.
- Curriculum in the program draws from diverse critical cultural resources and provides a broad, interdisciplinary perspective. The curriculum flows logically through the program, and courses are sequenced to introduce, reinforce, and provide mastery of learning outcomes for students. Courses in the program are taught in a mixture of face-to-face lectures, small group tutorials, class discussion, community service learning, capstone courses, residence learning communities, and blended/hybrid and online courses. The program supports a significant amount of service teaching, and has increased course caps while still providing high-impact experiences for students. The program is currently developing two additional online courses to further expand their offerings.
- The document discusses the impact of the administrative merger with Communication Studies and notes the excellent quality of the administrative support it receives currently. Faculty appointments are an ongoing issue for the program, and the merger with Communication Studies has changed some formal cross-appointments but the program hopes it will result in a wider breadth of faculty to teach in the program. Physical space for the program and other support services at Laurier are described and Cultural Studies' use of them is articulated.
- Faculty involved in the program publish widely in their fields and provide much needed service to the program. Teaching evaluations have been strong and are consistently at or above the faculty and University averages. Alumni report high degrees of satisfaction and are consistently employed after graduation or go on to pursue graduate degrees.

- Cultural Studies is at an important juncture in its history. Through the program's administrative renaissance, it seeks to expand its interdisciplinarity and engage in strategic planning to ensure that the high-quality classroom experiences which are the hallmark of the program are retained.

External Reviewers' Report

The external reviewers for the Cultural Studies cyclical review were Dr. Milo Sweedler from the Department of Languages and Literatures at Wilfrid Laurier University and Dr. Will Straw from the Department of Art History and Communication Studies at McGill University. The site visit took place on March 6-7, 2017 at the Waterloo Campus of Wilfrid Laurier.

Executive Summary

As reviewers, we found a program characterized by high levels of enthusiasm among its affiliated faculty, a strong national reputation, and a clear pertinence to the directions in which Faculty of Arts are developing in most universities in Canada and internationally. We found, as well, a program which has confronted ongoing challenges since its launch, most of these of an administrative nature. It is important, in our view, that the value of the program be considered separately from the historical difficulties it has found in building a place for itself within the Faculty. The move into the Department of Communications Studies represents, in our view, a guarantee of the program's administrative stability and a chance to grow in terms of enrolments and visibility. The service role of KS courses, which makes them of high value to the Faculty, should be leveraged to increase recruitment into the program's Honours and Minor programs. We believe the program should enhance its innovative character in at least three ways: by highlighting the opportunities it offers students to build a customized humanities degree around an intellectual core; by making the program a locus of innovative approaches to pedagogy, student work and community engagement; and by building up curricular areas, like indigenous art and culture, which are important to the future mission of the university and would find a natural home in Cultural Studies.

List of Recommendations

1. We recommend that program objectives be made clearer. At the moment, they represent an accumulation of different objectives which, while not incompatible with each other, do not necessarily combine to provide a clear message to potential students. The objectives of the program should be described in ways that emphasize the opportunity for interdisciplinary work drawing on objects and methods from across the humanities, and the commitment to student work which engages with issues and communities outside the university. A concern for social justice should be integrated within the broader program curriculum and made manifest in the opportunities provided to students for the production of scholarly work of which employs different kinds of outputs and multiple forms of engagement with broader communities.
2. We recommend that first-year KS courses emphasize innovative, interdisciplinary approaches to culture rather than focusing so strongly on the intellectual traditions of Cultural Studies. First year courses should be designed with the possible recruitment of Honours and minors students in mind, and should emphasize the unique place of the Program at the intersection of ideas and disciplinary traditions.

3. To as great an extent as possible, the Program should ensure that core courses are taught by full-time faculty members. This would include KS100 and KS101 (or one thereof), KS203 and KS400. At the third year, the core courses might be a revamped KS300 or the existing KS303. Barring a KS hire in the immediate future, this would require that the Department of Communications Studies commit to assigning full-time department members to teach the core courses in KS, or that teaching releases from other units be obtained.
4. We recommend that KS300 in its present form be significantly modified, in the light of logistical problems and the fact that the program has only been able to offer the course on a bi-annual basis. We recommend that the department examine other ways of building community involvement into this course, perhaps by making KS300 a projects-based course in which students design their own forms of community involvement and community-based research.
5. We recommend that administrative barriers to teaching in Cultural Studies by members of other departments be reduced as much as possible. In particular, we recommend that the Dean of Arts allow faculty members from other departments to teach KS courses as part of their regular workload through an exchange of stipends from one unit to another. These revenue-neutral exchanges would enable a fulltime member from a program outside of KS to teach in the program, while the instructor's home department would receive the KS stipend as part of its annual course allotment.
6. We recommend that the Cultural Studies program develop one or more courses in two areas currently lacking a strong presence in the Faculty of Arts. One of these is "visual culture", as broadly defined. The other is indigenous art and culture.
7. We believe that a common space for Cultural Studies students would help to build community, and that this is crucial at this time in the program's history, as it acquires stability and looks forward to its growth. More than simply a social space, this might be a venue in which the students display the results of their work and hold events.
8. If financial compensation for the Cultural Studies Program Director is not available, we urge the service contribution of this position to be acknowledged in the fullest way possible. We believe maintenance of this position is necessary to guarantee the autonomy of the Program.
9. We recommend that the Cultural Studies Advisory Committee continue to function and to involve interested faculty from other units. A key function of the Committee should be that of securing the involvement of other faculty in the teaching and other activities of the Program.
10. As the original Memorandum of Understanding between Communications Studies and Cultural Studies expires, and with it the commitment of the Dean to separate consideration of Cultural Studies' financial and personnel needs, we recommend that the Department of Communications Studies make expertise in Cultural Studies part of the description of at least half of their forthcoming requests for new faculty.
11. While this may go beyond the mandate of this review, we believe both the Department of Communications Studies and the Cultural Studies Program would benefit from a reduction in the number of areas of emphasis in Communications Studies, which risks marginalizing Cultural Studies.
12. We recommend that the KS Program highlight its links to many disciplines as a way of highlighting the extent to which a KS degree represents a "customized" interdisciplinary degree within the Faculty of Arts.

13. We recommend that the KS program continue to encourage innovative forms of student work. We do not believe this need in any way compromise the academic rigour of the program.

Unit Response

The Unit Response was authored by the director of the Cultural Studies program and provides responses to each of the recommendations made by the external review committee. The Department thanked the reviewers for their thoughtful and insightful approach to the review and for their recommendations to improve the quality of the program.

The Department responded to each recommendation and identified which ones they agreed to, what steps had already been taken toward their implementation, and what further action would be taken in the future. Recommendations that were already underway (e.g. faculty compliment) were noted, as were those recommendations that are outside of the scope of the Program.

Cultural Studies acknowledges the program evolution and looks forward to further discussion and implementation of the recommendations and they look forward to continuing to assess the successes of their efforts.

B) IDENTIFICATION OF PROGRAM STRENGTHS

The following program strengths are evident from both the self-study and the External Reviewer's Report.

1. The Program's academic goals and learning outcomes align directly with the 2010-2015 Strategic Academic Plan.
2. The Program has implemented a successful fusion with the Department of Communication Studies, and continues the positive development of that connection.
3. The Program's Advisory Committee shows a strong commitment to Cultural Studies as a discipline, and is willing to continue working towards improving its offerings and its relationship with the students who take the program's courses.

C) OPPORTUNITIES FOR PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT AND ENHANCEMENT

1. The program's objectives need to be clarified.
2. The program has experienced a declining number of students taking it as a Major.
3. The first-year Cultural Studies course could be more closely aligned with student preferences in subject matter.

D) PRIORITIZATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS APPROVED FOR IMPLEMENTATION

One of the External Reviewers' recommendations (Recommendation #7) entails a space allocation that cannot be addressed outside of the context of wider constraints in the Faculty of Arts and the university as a whole. That recommendation, therefore, is not included in the prioritization list, as it may not be implemented solely in relation to the program under review. This is recognized by the program in its Unit Response.

As well, Recommendation #8 concerns the position of "Director" for Cultural Studies. It is important to recognize that no such position as "Director" is identified in the Collective Agreement, and therefore it cannot be assigned to anyone associated with Cultural Studies. Further, the position of "Coordinator", as identified in the Unit response, may only be applied to free-standing Programs (e.g. Anthropology, Women and Gender Studies). Cultural Studies does not have "autonomy," as implied by the recommendation, but is encompassed by the Department of Communication Studies. Cultural Studies will need to find methods of addressing the External Reviewers' recommendations in the same way that North American Studies does within the Department of Political Science – through the use of existing departmental resources. The Dean suggests that consulting with Dr. Kevin Spooner about his role in North American Studies might prove useful. The current recommendation cannot be implemented as stated, and therefore is not prioritized.

Of the 13 recommendations listed in the reviewer's Report, the following should be prioritized:

Recommendation #1: We recommend that program objectives be made clearer. At the moment, they represent an accumulation of different objectives which, while not incompatible with each other, do not necessarily combine to provide a clear message to potential students. The External Reviewers provide a series of suggestions about how this increased clarity and coherence might be achieved, and while the Unit expresses its willingness to explore those suggestions, it rightly notes that this will require a meeting (or several meetings) of its Advisory Committee. Those discussions will take place starting in the Fall Term of 2017.

Recommendation #2: We recommend that first-year KS courses emphasize innovative, interdisciplinary approaches to culture rather than focusing so strongly on the intellectual traditions of Cultural Studies. First year courses should be designed with the possible recruitment of Honours and minors students in mind, and should emphasize the unique place of the Program at the intersection of ideas and disciplinary traditions. The Unit notes that the issue raised by this recommendation has previously been the topic of discussion by its Advisory Committee, and that it has not yet been resolved. The Advisory Committee will return to this question in the Fall Term of 2017. Although the Dean is not an expert in this area, he would concur with the External Reviewers that a first-year focus on history/theory is perhaps not the best approach to drawing students towards continuing on in Cultural Studies.

Recommendation #3: To as great an extent as possible, the Program should ensure that core courses are taught by full-time faculty members....this would require that the Department of Communication Studies commit to assigning full-time department members to teach the core courses of KS, or that teaching releases from other units be obtained. In its response the Unit rightly notes the resource implications of this recommendation. Although it does not directly demand additional funding be directed towards the Cultural Studies program, the suggestion of ensuring courses are taught by full-time faculty would be difficult to

implement given that other departments and programs are facing their own staffing challenges. It is not likely that a significant shift in this direction will be achievable anytime soon.

Recommendation #4: We recommend that KS300 in its present form be significantly modified, in the light of logistical problems and the fact that the program has only been able to offer the course on a bi-annual basis. We recommend that the department examine other ways of building community involvement into this course, perhaps by making KS300 a projects-based course in which student design their own forms of community involvement and community-based research. The Unit is willing to consider modifying KS300, either through connecting it more directly to Social Innovation or to the Global Studies Experience course. The suggestion provided by the External Reviewers could be implemented in relation to those options. In any case, this should be discussed by the Advisory Committee in order to determine next steps.

Recommendation #5: We recommend that administrative barriers to teaching in Cultural Studies by members of other departments be reduced as much as possible. In particular, we recommend that the Dean of Arts allow faculty members from other departments to teach KS courses as part of their regular workload through an exchange of stipends from one unit to the other. These revenue-neutral exchanges would enable a full-time member from a program outside of KS to teach in the program, while the instructor's home department would receive the KS stipend as part of its course allotment. The Dean does not, in principle, oppose this recommendation, but it should be recognized that an exchange of stipends may not advance its fulfillment. A department may require specific courses to be taught within its own degree pattern, and may not find it easy to replace full-time faculty members with CAS members to cover those classes, whether stipends are provided or not. As the Unit notes in its response, workload negotiations are carried out between the departments/programs and the Dean, so that both parties would need to agree to such transfers. If such an agreement was reached there would be no "administrative barriers" involved, either by the Dean or by Cultural Studies, but the recommendation cannot be implemented unilaterally.

Recommendation #6: We recommend that the Cultural Studies program develop one or more courses in two areas currently lacking a strong presence in the Faculty of Arts. One of these is "visual culture", as broadly defined. The other is indigenous art and culture. The Unit is willing to address the first part of this recommendation by working with Communication Studies offerings, so such an approach should be pursued. The issue of expanding indigenous offerings is a matter that needs to be addressed throughout the Faculty of Arts, and will no doubt be part of its proposed Strategic Plan. The forthcoming appointment of an Indigenous Curriculum Specialist may contribute usefully to this discussion, although at this time new hiring of tenure-track instructors in The Faculty of Arts is not achievable.

Recommendation #9: We recommend that the Cultural Studies Advisory Committee continue to function and to involve interested faculty from other units. A key function of the Committee should be that of securing the involvement of other faculty in the teaching and other activities of the program. The Unit response suggests that this recommendation is "further justification for a Program Coordinator." As noted above, this position cannot be established. The Advisory Committee should be organized by interested members within the Communication Studies Department, as part of those members' service contribution to their Department and to the Faculty of Arts.

Recommendation #10: We recommend that the Department of Communication Studies make expertise in Cultural Studies part of the description of at least half of their forthcoming requests for new faculty. Since this recommendation concerns the structure of a hiring request, but does not insist upon such a hiring, the

Dean feels it falls within the purview of an External Review. It is necessary to note that the Unit response once again invokes the “Coordinator of Cultural Studies,” a position that does not and cannot exist. Determining specializations for potential new hiring of instructors will be a matter for discussion at the Department of Communication Studies’ department-in-council, and should follow its usual procedures.

Recommendation #11: While this may go beyond the mandate of this review, we believe both the Department of Communication Studies and the Cultural Studies Program would benefit from a reduction in the number of areas of emphasis in Communication Studies, which risks marginalizing Cultural Studies. As conjoined academic units it will be necessary for Communication Studies and Cultural Studies to coordinate the structure of their offerings to best serve student program requirements and expectations.

Recommendation #12: We recommend that the KS Program highlight its links to many disciplines as a way of highlighting the extent to which a KS degree represents a “customized” interdisciplinary degree within the Faculty of Arts. The Unit observes that its Advisory Committee is best placed to consider this recommendation while maintaining the core elements of Cultural Studies. The Dean concurs with this approach.

Recommendation #13: We recommend that the KS program continue to encourage innovative forms of student work. We do not believe this need in any way compromise the academic rigour of the program. There is certainly no reason to believe that innovative student work or innovative methods of student evaluation will lead to reduced intellectual rigour. The Dean is confident that instructors in the Cultural Studies Program will employ carefully considered pedagogical and evaluative methods in order to successfully advance student learning.

SIGNATURES

Richard Nemesvari

June 29, 2017



Kathryn Carter

July 4, 2017



Paul Jessop

September 29, 2017



PART TWO: IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Recommendation to be Implemented	Responsibility for Implementation	Anticipated Completion Date	Additional Notes
<p>Recommendation #1: We recommend that program objectives be made clearer. At the moment, they represent an accumulation of different objectives which, while not incompatible with each other, do not necessarily combine to provide a clear message to potential students.</p>	<p>Program Advisory Committee</p>	<p>September 2018</p>	
<p>Recommendation #2: We recommend that first-year KS courses emphasize innovative, interdisciplinary approaches to culture rather than focusing so strongly on the intellectual traditions of Cultural Studies. First year courses should be designed with the possible recruitment of Honours and minors students in mind, and should emphasize the unique place of the Program at the intersection of ideas and disciplinary traditions.</p>	<p>Program Advisory Committee</p>	<p>September 2018</p>	
<p>Recommendation #3: To as great an extent as possible, the Program should ensure that core courses are taught by full-time faculty members....this would require that the Department of Communication Studies commit to assigning full-time department members to teach the core courses of KS, or that teaching releases from other units be obtained.</p>	<p>Department of Communication Studies</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Although the recommendation is valid, it has resource implications that cannot be unilaterally addressed. The issue raised will need to be discussed on a continuing basis.</p>
<p>Recommendation #4: We recommend that KS300 in its present form be significantly modified, in the light of</p>	<p>Program Advisory Committee</p>	<p>January 2018</p>	

<p>logistical problems and the fact that the program has only been able to offer the course on a bi-annual basis. We recommend that the department examine other ways of building community involvement into this course, perhaps by making KS300 a projects-based course in which student design their own forms of community involvement and community-based research.</p>			
<p>Recommendation #5: We recommend that administrative barriers to teaching in Cultural Studies by members of other departments be reduced as much as possible. In particular, we recommend that the Dean of Arts allow faculty members from other departments to teach KS courses as part of their regular workload through an exchange of stipends from one unit to the other. These revenue-neutral exchanges would enable a full-time member from a program outside of KS to teach in the program, while the instructor’s home department would receive the KS stipend as part of its course allotment.</p>	<p>Program Advisory Committee Dean of Arts Related Departments/Programs</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>The type of exchanges described in the recommendation are a useful way to support Cultural Studies, but they would need to be negotiated on a continuing basis, and would depend on related department/program needs.</p>
<p>Recommendation #6: We recommend that the Cultural Studies program develop one or more courses in two areas currently lacking a strong presence in the Faculty of Arts. One of these is “visual culture”, as broadly defined. The other is indigenous art and culture.</p>	<p>Program Advisory Committee Department of Communication Studies Dean of Arts Indigenous Curriculum Specialist (once appointed)</p>	<p>September 2018 (for the first part of the recommendation)</p>	<p>The recommendation to develop a course in “visual culture” may be achievable within existing resources. The recommendation concerning indigenous art and culture will depend on wider Faculty of Arts initiatives.</p>
<p>Recommendation #9: We recommend that the Cultural Studies Advisory Committee continue to function and to involve interested faculty from other units. A key</p>	<p>Program Advisory Committee</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	

function of the Committee should be that of securing the involvement of other faculty in the teaching and other activities of the program.			
Recommendation #10: We recommend that the Department of Communication Studies make expertise in Cultural Studies part of the description of at least half of their forthcoming requests for new faculty.	Department of Communication Studies	Ongoing	As noted in the Dean's response, this recommendation will depend on usual departmental procedures.
Recommendation #11: While this may go beyond the mandate of this review, we believe both the Department of Communication Studies and the Cultural Studies Program would benefit from a reduction in the number of areas of emphasis in Communication Studies, which risks marginalizing Cultural Studies.	Department of Communication Studies	September 2018	This recommendation is dependent on usual departmental procedures.
Recommendation #12: We recommend that the KS Program highlight its links to many disciplines as a way of highlighting the extent to which a KS degree represents a "customized" interdisciplinary degree within the Faculty of Arts.	Program Advisory Committee	Ongoing	
Recommendation #13: We recommend that the KS program continue to encourage innovative forms of student work. We do not believe this need in any way compromise the academic rigour of the program.	Program Advisory Committee	Ongoing	