



2015-2016 Cyclical Program Review of English & Film Studies

PROGRAMS:

Honours BA English

Honours BA Film Studies

Master of Arts English

Doctor of Philosophy in English and Film Studies

Final Assessment Report

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Academic

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PART ONE: EXECUTIVE RESPONSE

A) EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF REVIEW DOCUMENTS

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

Self-Study

The English & Film Studies self-study involved a review of the undergraduate programs in both English & Film Studies at the Waterloo and Brantford campuses, as well as a review of the Master of Arts in English and the Doctor of Philosophy in English & Film Studies. The self-study pointed out that:

- The undergraduate programs in both English and Film Studies have a long history at both campuses, and the two disciplines have a strong relationship. The MA program has one approved field in Studies in Nation, Gender and Media, and the PhD program has three approved fields of study in Gender and Genre, Nation, Diaspora, Culture, and Textuality, Media, and Print Studies.
- The self-study described the collaborative process by which learning outcomes were designed and the benefits of sharing learning outcomes between English and Film Studies along with the alignment with Laurier's core principles, degree level expectations, and Academic Plan. Curriculum is organized around historical periods, national literatures, genres, themes and theoretical issues and the courses in the program have recently been reviewed, extraneous ones deleted, and overlapping ones streamlined to align with the new learning outcomes. Admission requirements are consistent with Laurier averages and there are alternative requirements articulated in the self-study document. The English program also offers a B.A. + M.A. joint entry pathway.
- Graduate student coursework exceeds the Quality Council requirement that two-thirds of required coursework consist of graduate level coursework. Both the Brantford and Waterloo units provide extensive service teaching, especially in their introductory courses.
- The program delivery utilizes high impact practices such as online chatrooms, practical skill development, Community Service Learning, Active Learning Classrooms, and Residence Learning Communities. The program also offers the Walls to Bridges program to offer educational opportunities to prison inmates as well as Laurier's Common Reading Program and the Free Film Series. The self-study also highlights Brantford's Professional Writing Minor and the digital humanities efforts undertaken by the program.
- In the section on Assessment Methodologies, the self-study was able to clearly articulate how students' knowledge and skills are developed in each year of the programs, as well as identify the ways in which program learning outcomes are assessed.
- The self-study describes the adequacy of administrative staff and notes a heavy reliance on Contract Academic Staff, but praises their quality and continuity. The self-study also notes that additional high quality classroom spaces would be beneficial, particularly Active Learning Classrooms. Offices at

Brantford may benefit from being clustered together, but the number of cross-appointments makes this difficult.

- The self-study notes that faculty research output is impressive and that there is a considerable amount of university service by its members. Faculty promote students' career successes and are working to more clearly market the job skills inherent in their degrees. Even as enrollment in the discipline is down both at Waterloo and nationally, it has been steadily growing in Brantford. Employment rates for graduates as well as employment quality within their areas of interest is impressive and alumni report being highly satisfied with their education.
- In its conclusion, the self-study reiterates the Department's commitment to continue to innovate its curriculum so that it is relevant and appealing to students, as well as notes an interest in broadening its service to the university through the delivery of additional writing courses. Several areas of possible curricular growth are identified, but the self-study notes that this growth and innovation is linked to faculty resources. The Department identifies the challenges that it faces in the coming years, as well as iterates many opportunities that it foresees for its role within the university going forward.

External Reviewers' Report

Executive Summary

The Reviewers found in the *Self-Study Report* and in their visits to the Waterloo and Brantford Campuses well designed and effectively run programs in English and Film at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. Departmental objectives are in keeping with the University's Mission and Academic Plan. Faculty at both Waterloo and Brantford have made a sustained effort to develop curricular changes together. The results are an impressive collaboration that ensures curricular consistency but also flexibility in recognizing that courses need to be tailored to the student body of each campus. In addition to traditional objectives in the areas of English and Film, objectives have been identified in the areas of Academic Writing, Film Production, Professional Writing, Digital Media and Journalism, and Gaming.

Despite considerable competition from other institutions both the Waterloo and Brantford programs have done well in attracting top students, although adequate graduate student funding is and will continue to be a major issue in recruitment.

The structure and administration of the programs has provided strong curricula at both sites at the graduate and undergraduate levels. An innovative practicum program has played an important and distinguishing role at the MA level. Reviewers were concerned with an administrative structure that puts an enormous weight on those in advising roles. The loss of a .75 staff member in the Department has clearly had an impact on its functioning, with many administrative duties being taken on by Department members. One casualty of administrative overload has been the Department's social media presence, which no longer reflects its quality or nature.

The curriculum is well developed with abundant evidence of the use of High Impact Practices at all degree levels and considerable innovation and creativity. However, the large number of new courses proposed in recent years can no longer be taught due to severe personnel cutbacks. Reconsideration of these courses should also take into

consideration outstanding proposals for Writing and Film Production curricula. MA and PhD programs could be streamlined. The current Research Methods course is quite dated and needs to be changed to reflect even more skills' development.

Assessment methodologies are completely reasonable, are in keeping with accepted practices and clearly produce well-educated and successful students.

Resource shortfalls represent the Department's foremost challenge. The credibility of the undergraduate and graduate programs at the Waterloo campus are jeopardized by not replacing the Department's two recently retired Early Modernist scholars. The Department has also been dramatically affected by the recent and dramatic contraction of administrative staff from 1.75 to one position and the consequent downloading of administrative work onto a shrinking faculty complement. Its ability to maintain its program has been seriously impacted by the reduction of CAS from a high of 22 positions to the current four. CAS and graduate office space is extremely limited. At Brantford, the heavy administrative load placed on Department members has made the program overly dependent upon CAS. Support staff in Brantford is well below what is required to maintain the program. The Brantford campus offers limited and scattered office space and, most notably, no library. Students literally have no place to go.

On the basis of all conventional quality indicators, the reviewers found faculty and students of a high quality in all programs on both campuses.

With the exception of the Early Modern area, graduate supervision was found to be excellent. Given its limited funding, the Graduate Program does a good job of recruiting students. More transparency was needed in the distribution of TAs.

The reviewers applauded the Department's new initiatives in quality enhancement including: plans for a University-wide hub for writing education; Digital Humanities and Youth Studies; increased internship opportunities; film production; Youth and Child Studies; Game Development and Design.

Reviewers found room for improvement in the coordination of Program substitutions between the two campuses.

List of Recommendations

1. Make ENG190 a required course that could potentially serve other Departments and faculties effectively, given the universal need for strong writers in virtually all professions.
2. Increase the levels of graduate funding to compete with other programs and to make those offers in a timely manner
3. Require graduate students to apply for SSHRC and SGS yearly as part of their program and to create a workshop process for doing so.
4. Accept undergraduate-level language courses totalling 1.0 credits for completion of the PhD Language Requirement.
5. Request writing samples for graduate applications so as to have a better sense of the quality of the students being admitted.

6. Give the Undergraduate Adviser a second course release (from Dean's Office).
7. Provide access for relevant faculty to COGNOS.
8. Create an online presence for English and Film Studies and improve website.
9. Advertise the MA Practicum widely and stress its uniqueness.
10. Reassess the recent plethora of new courses to the curriculum in light of decreased numbers of tenure stream and Contract Academic Staff.
11. Provide stipends and other resources necessary to expand writing and initiate film production initiatives.
12. Rethink MA and PhD streams to better articulate what differentiates WLU (e.g. MA practicum), PhD with Film Studies focus.
13. Revise the Research Methods course further to introduce SSHRC/OGS workshop, add other professionalization seminars with a focus on alt-academic careers.
14. Hire an Early Modernist within the next 24 months, preferably a Digital Shakespearean (as recommended by the Department).
15. Provide adequate funding to fill the gap in Early Modern Literature during the search for the tenure stream hire. Interim solutions include: hiring Contract Academic Staff to teach at the undergraduate level; or creating linkages with Stratford to create a course that involves extensive interaction with the theatre; or by creating a Shakespeare and Film course.
16. Design and initiate linkages between Communications and English and consider how the English program Writing Minor might operate as a required course within multiple faculties.
17. Enhance space provisions for CSA and graduate students. Additional space should be dedicated for offices and meeting rooms. These new spaces could be augmented by using the unoccupied offices of those on sabbatical and to repurpose offices of retiring faculty as they become available.
18. Find space for and construct a dedicated film seminar screening room.
19. Convert the LTA at Brantford in British Literature post 1660 and American literature before the 20th century to a permanent tenure-track position.
20. Create appropriate study spaces and a physical library on the Brantford campus.
21. Facilitate the release of funding in a timely manner to graduate students
22. Make the method of assigning TAships more transparent to students.
23. Create greater teaching expertise for PhD students through a mentoring process.
24. Provide resources for the support of new initiatives in writing and communication, Youth and Child Studies, and Game Design and Development at the Brantford campus.

25. Formulate an agreement regarding Program substitutions between the Waterloo and Brantford campuses.
26. Share information about graduate students' areas of expertise with the Brantford faculty and CAS.
27. Post RA-ships in a central area so that graduate students can apply for them, making the selection process more transparent.
28. Establish a shuttle bus service between the two campuses.

Unit Response

The Unit Response was drafted by both the Chair of the English Department at the Waterloo campus and the Coordinator of the English Program at the Brantford campus, in consultation with the relevant committees and councils at both campuses. Representatives at both campuses responded to any recommendations that affected them both.

Generally speaking, the response to the reviewers' recommendations was agreeable, and for each recommendation, the appropriate respondents indicated whether or not they agreed with and accepted the recommendation (e.g. Recommendation #7, #9, #13, #22), or accepted it with provisions (e.g. Recommendations #1, #4, #10). There was one clarification (Recommendation #5) but no recommendations that English & Film Studies did not support. The Chair and Coordinator also indicated where the implementation of reviewers' recommendations, while sound in principle, was not within their control (e.g. Recommendation #2, #6, #11, #17, #18). At the time of writing, implementation of several recommendations (e.g. Recommendations #9, #16) was already underway. A thorough rationale was provided for any of the recommendations accepted with modifications or stipulations.

The authors of the Final Assessment Report appreciate the thoughtfulness and thoroughness of the Unit Response, as well as the acknowledgment that not all of the reviewers' recommendations that had resource implications may be achievable in the short term.

B) IDENTIFICATION OF PROGRAM STRENGTHS

The following departmental strengths for the English and Film Studies Department in the Faculty of Arts are evident from both the Self-Study Report and the External Reviewers' Report.

1. The Department's offerings provide the skills in writing, close reading, and textual analysis necessary in a Humanities program while at the same time fulfilling the university's mandate to explore diversity, global citizenship, and social justice. High Impact Practices are acknowledged and achieved.
2. The Department has adopted new initiatives to attract students (English 190, the articulation agreement with the Vancouver Film School, the practicum element in the M.A.)

3. The Department has achieved a strong level of student satisfaction (both undergraduate and graduate), and has a very good record placing undergraduate students who go on to the M.A. in their first choice of graduate programs. Students are also success in winning financial support.
4. The relationship between faculty at the Waterloo and Brantford campuses is collegial and consultative, as evidenced by the creation of a new inter-faculty minor in youth literatures in 2014-16, differentiated interdisciplinary minors in professional writing at the two campuses, and a well-developed and well-functioning Multi-Campus English Program Coordinating Committee.
5. The English program in the Faculty of Liberal Arts has been very proactive in forging collaborative relationships with other programs on the Brantford Campus, leading to rich curricular English offerings for students in a variety of Brantford programs.

C) OPPORTUNITIES FOR PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT AND ENHANCEMENT

The following departmental challenges for the English and Film Studies Department in the Faculty of Arts are evident from both the Self-Study Report and the External Reviewers' Report.

1. At the graduate level students with less strong records may be being admitted at the M.A. level in order to sustain enrollment. There is no clear evidence of this, but the FGPS dean notes that application numbers are weak so that accepted students may not be of the quality the faculty would like to admit. More work on the program website might help increase these numbers by highlighting the unique qualities of the master's program.
2. The Research Methods course needs to be updated.
3. At the administrative level linkages between the Waterloo and Brantford campuses could be more systematized. In particular the sharing of information regarding the expertise and availability of graduate students could be improved.
4. The Department's/Program's online presence and website on both campuses needs to be improved.

D) PRIORITIZATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS APPROVED FOR IMPLEMENTATION

A number of the External Reviewers' recommendations (Recommendations #2, #6, #11, #14, #15, #17, #18, #19, #20, and #28) entail resource allocations that cannot be addressed outside of the wider context of the budgetary and space constraints in the Faculty of Arts, Faculty of Liberal Arts, and in the university as a whole. They are therefore not included in the prioritization list, since they may not be implemented outside of the budget process.

In regard to Recommendation #1, "Make ENG190 a required course that could potentially serve other Departments and Faculties effectively," it is worth noting that this topic has been extensively discussed at DAC meetings subsequent to the departmental response, and that a strategy for making the course more widely

available has been voted on and accepted. The Dean of Liberal Arts agrees with the ENFLA response that the recommendation does not apply to FLA because the Brantford Campus is served by BF299.

Recommendation #2, “Increase the levels of graduate funding to compete with other programs and to make those offers in a timely manner.” In planning enrolments for the current academic year, the graduate coordinator noted that funding for master’s and doctoral students was either competitive or exceeded that of the competition. As for timely admissions, FGPS staffing was reduced by budget cuts such that we are down to one admissions and records officer. That person handles each offer in order of its submission typically makes the targeted 3-day turnaround. Indeed a look at the records confirms that all offers in the last round of admission were made in 2 days, and most in 1.

In regard to Recommendation #3, “Require graduate students to apply for SSHRC and SGS yearly as part of their program.” FGPS requires that all doctoral students apply for major external awards in order to receive the Minimum Guarantee of funding. Master’s students are not required to do this. Scholarship workshops are offered every year by FGPS.

In regard to Recommendation #5, “Request writing samples for graduate applications so as to have a better sense of the quality of students being admitted,” the departmental response notes that this is already done, and FGPS confirms this

Of the twenty-eight recommendations listed in the Reviewers’ Report, the following should be prioritized by the Department of English and Film Studies in the Faculty of Arts.

Recommendations #8 and 9: “Create an online presence for English and Film Studies and improve website”; “Advertise the MA Practicum widely and stress its uniqueness.” These two recommendations are connected in their suggestion to raise the Department’s profile, and are important to recruitment efforts. Although the Department rightly notes that during the university-wide website redesign moving ahead individually was difficult, that process is now drawing to a close, and so department website improvement should be undertaken as soon as possible. The same is true for the English program at the Brantford Campus.

Recommendations #10, #12, and #13: “Reassess the recent plethora of new courses to the curriculum in light of decreased numbers of tenure stream and CAS”; “Rethink MA and PhD streams to better articulate what differentiates WLU”; “Revise the Research Methods course further to introduce SSHRC/OGS workshop, add other professionalization seminars with a focus on alt-academic careers.” These three recommendations involve curricular change. The Department rightly notes that it is already undertaking many of these suggestions, and the reconsideration of offerings, both overall and within individual courses, should continue. The EN FLA Program Coordinator rightly notes that the differing sizes of the two programs should be taken into account in these discussions of course creation and deletion to ensure that the needs of students on both campuses are met (regarding #10).

Recommendation #16: “Design and initiate linkages between Communications and English.” The Department notes that it has already begun discussions along these lines. Given existing budgetary constraints it is important that possibilities for shared resources be explored and implemented.

Recommendation #21: “Facilitate the release of funding in a timely manner to graduate students.” It is the university’s practice (not FGPS) not to release funding until the tuition account is settled and then not until the

last drop-and-add date. The FGPS dean agrees that this practice is not in the best interest of graduate students, and talks are underway to bring practices in line with those of other universities.

Recommendation #26: “Share information about graduate students’ areas of expertise with the Brantford faculty and CAS.” The FGPS dean encourages both campuses to be involved in the graduate programs, including in advising and committee membership.

SIGNATURES

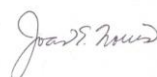
Richard Nemesvari



Heidi Northwood



Joan Norris



Kathryn Carter



Deborah MacLatchy



PART TWO: IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Recommendation to be Implemented	Responsibility for Implementation	Anticipated Completion Date	Additional Notes
<p>Recommendation #8: Create an online presence for English and Film Studies and improve website.</p> <p>Recommendation #9: Advertise the MA Practicum widely and stress its uniqueness.</p>	Department Chair and appropriate Department Faculty; Department Administrative Assistant	April 31, 2017	Elements of these two recommendations can be implemented in stages.
<p>Recommendation #10: Reassess the recent plethora of new courses to the curriculum in light of decreased numbers of tenure stream and Contract Academic Staff.</p> <p>Recommendation #12: Rethink MA and PhD streams to better articulate what differentiates WLU (e.g. MA practicum), PhD with Film Studies focus.</p> <p>Recommendation #13: Revise the Research Methods course further to introduce SSHRC/OGS workshop, add other professionalization seminars with a focus on alt-academic careers.</p>	Department Chair and appropriate Department Faculty	January 31, 2017	The Department should continue its progress in relation to these recommendations.
Recommendation #16: Design and initiate linkages between Communications and English and consider how the English program Writing Minor might operate as a required course within multiple faculties.	Department Chair	April 31, 2017	Consultation with the Chair of Communication Studies, and between the relevant faculty in both departments, will be necessary.