



**2011-2012 Cyclical Review of the BA and MA in Religion & Culture
First Implementation Report**

*Submitted by: Dr. Carol B. Duncan, Associate Professor and Chair, Religion and
Culture*

Date: April 29, 2013

Context

The final stage of each cyclical program review is the submission of a Final Assessment Report, authored by the relevant Faculty Dean(s) in consultation with the Associate Vice-President: Teaching & Learning and the Vice-President: Academic & Provost. This report synthesizes all previous cyclical review documents (the self-study, external reviewers' report, unit response), provides the executive response (comments on the program strengths and opportunities for improvement), and includes a schedule for the implementation of approved recommendations.

Laurier's [Institutional Quality Assurance Procedures](#) (IQAP) requires that, in the years following each review, the unit will submit an annual report outlining the progress made on implementing the approved recommendations. This stage of Laurier's IQAP implementation will take effect starting with all programs reviewed in the 2011-2012 cycle, the first annual reports for which will be due by April 30th, 2013. The Quality Assurance Office will notify all units and send them a template with the implementation plan from their Final Assessment Report by February 15th, 2013. The Annual Implementation Report will include the list of all recommendations approved for implementation in the Final Assessment Report and comments from the unit and from the appropriate Dean(s) on the progress made on these recommendations. The report will be submitted to the [Program Review Sub-Committee](#) (PRS), which will review the document and provide feedback to the unit. Completed Annual Implementation Reports will be submitted to the Senate Academic Planning Committee for information.

Note: the Implementation Report template was reviewed by the Program Review Sub-Committee and approved by the Senate Academic Planning Committee.

Instructions

All sections of the following template should be completed in preparing the Annual Implementation Report. If required, a confidential section dealing with personnel issues may be appended. The annual report should be submitted to the Quality Assurance Office by April 30th of each year until the next cyclical review takes place and/or all approved recommendations have been implemented. The annual reports for each program will be posted on the Quality Assurance Office website.

Implementation Plan from 2011-2012 Final Assessment Report

RR = Reviewers' recommendation
Recommendation

DR= Departmental version of Reviewer's

Recommendation	Responsibility	Implementation Date
RR1 - logic of undergraduate programme to be made clearer	Department	Fall 2012
Additional Notes: Department to provide Dean with brief summary of what has been done by Dec 15, 2012		
Progress to Date (check one): <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Completed <input type="checkbox"/> On Schedule <input type="checkbox"/> Behind Schedule <input type="checkbox"/> Revised Implementation Date: <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please explain):		
Program Response on Recommendation: A revised form outlining Religion and Culture BA program requirements which will be used by Undergraduate Officers and other faculty for student academic consultation was completed by September 2012 and is currently in use.		
Arts Decanal Response on Recommendation: The revised form should function well in making the program's structure clearer to students		
PRS Comments: Completed noted. It is not necessary to report on this recommendation further.		

Recommendation	Responsibility	Implementation Date
DR2 (not RR2) - consultation with Seminary and Global Studies	Department	Fall/Winter 2011-12
Progress to Date (check one): <input type="checkbox"/> Completed <input type="checkbox"/> On Schedule <input type="checkbox"/> Behind Schedule <input type="checkbox"/> Revised Implementation Date: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (please explain): Ongoing		
Program Response on Recommendation: Consultation is ongoing.		
Arts Decanal Response on Recommendation: Consultation with both the Chair of Global Studies and the Seminary was started; the departure of the Seminary contact person stalled things for a while, but I'm assured by Dr. Duncan that consultations will continue in the Fall.		
PRS Comments. Progress noted. In next year's report, please provide a brief synopsis of the outcome of these consultations.		

Recommendation	Responsibility	Implementation Date
RR3 (not DR3) - can department continue to emphasize both fieldwork and textual studies in the master's program?	Department	Fall 2012
Additional Notes: Department must resolve the issue raised by the reviewers to the Dean of Art's satisfaction before new tenure-track position (in RR4) is posted; the program coordinator should meet the FGPS dean to discuss the need for curriculum change or the addition of fields. A review of the learning objectives with the assistance of Teaching Support Services is also recommended.		
Progress to Date (check one): <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Completed <input type="checkbox"/> On Schedule <input type="checkbox"/> Behind Schedule <input type="checkbox"/> Revised Implementation Date: <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please explain):		
Program Response on Recommendation: The department has had extensive discussion regarding this issue. In the first instance, the department's perspective is that the distinction between fieldwork and textual studies was not programmatic (i.e. these are not separate streams within the program) but rather a reflection of teaching specializations of faculty who represent both areas, methodologically, in their research, graduate supervisions and course offerings. In the second, as a result, no programmatic changes need to be made. The department remains open to reviewing learning objectives on an ongoing basis with input from others including Teaching Support Services.		
Decanal Response on Recommendation: To some extent, the Reviewers' concerns were based on older descriptive language that has now been clarified. The graduate coordinator and department chair met with the FGPS dean to discuss curriculum issues. The department's response (above) is appropriate.		
PRS Comments: Completion noted. It is not necessary to report on this recommendation further.		

Recommendation	Responsibility	Implementation Date
RR4 - advertise for new tenure-track hire	Department, after final authorization from Dean	Fall 2012
Additional Notes: See RR3 above		
Progress to Date (check one): <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Completed <input type="checkbox"/> On Schedule <input type="checkbox"/> Behind Schedule <input type="checkbox"/> Revised Implementation Date: <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please explain):		
Program Response on Recommendation: Two tenure track positions in Aboriginal Religion and Culture and Christianity in a Global Context were approved by the VP: Academic.		

Recommendations for candidates at the Assistant Professor level have been made by the R&C DAPC.
Decanal Response on Recommendation: Hires have been made.
PRS Comments: Completion noted. It is not necessary to report on this recommendation further.

Recommendation	Responsibility	Implementation Date
RR5 - better integration of BA, MA and PhD	Department	Fall/Winter 2011-12
Additional Notes: Department will provide Deans with a report by April 30, 2013.		
Progress to Date (check one):		
<input type="checkbox"/> Completed <input type="checkbox"/> On Schedule <input type="checkbox"/> Behind Schedule <input type="checkbox"/> Revised Implementation Date: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (please explain): Ongoing		
<p>Program Response on Recommendation: This integration is ongoing and reflected in the department's approach to areas such as the student organized annual interdisciplinary arts conference, the annual department-led Religion and Public Life conferences, the numerous community events co-ordinated by the Community Events Committee in consultation with the chair and other faculty members as well as well as mentoring and advising sessions held for students at BA and MA levels of the program about further study. Discussion among faculty regarding this recommendation noted that "better integration" seemed to point towards an overt North American religious diversity orientation of the doctoral program. While this focus is characteristic of the joint doctoral program and while it is also represented at the MA and BA levels <i>vis a vis</i> faculty research interests, course work and other program features, the reproduction of the joint doctoral program focus in a similar manner was not deemed to be in the department's best interest. Now that the two new tenure track appointments in Christianity in a Global Context and Aboriginal Religion & Culture have been recommended, this discussion will be revisited, at the annual faculty retreat at the end of the summer term in late Aug/early Sept prior to the start of classes.</p>		
Decanal Response on Recommendation: The department's response here is entirely appropriate, especially given the two new hires.		
PRS Comments: We note the department's ongoing efforts to implement this recommendation and look forward to future updates.		

Recommendation	Responsibility	Implementation Date
DR6 - develop a strategic plan for next 7 years re admin positions	Department	Fall 2012
Additional Notes: Plan to be discussed with Dean no later than Dec 15, 2012.		
Progress to Date (check one):		

- Completed
- On Schedule
- Behind Schedule
- Revised Implementation Date:
- Other (please explain):

Program Response on Recommendation: The department has already responded in large part to this request noting that the chairship of the department has been organized for the next decade. C. Duncan, who has served as chair from 2005-2006; 2007-2009; 2009-Dec 2010; 2012-current, will chair through to June 30, 2014 effectively finishing two full three year terms plus an additional six months. M. Desjardins is slated to take up the role of chair for one year, 2014-2015, followed by M. Sharify-Funk for a three year term, 2015-2018, and J. Neelis for a three year term 2018-2021. C. Ross will serve as Undergraduate Officer in 2013-2014. Other faculty will be appointed in subsequent years including a consideration of newly hired tenure-track faculty. The Graduate Officer role is typically held for three successive years. Currently, Dr. Jason Neelis is Graduate Officer and Joint PhD Program Director. The Graduate Officer/Joint PhD Director role for 2013-2014 will be covered by Dr. Janet McLellan while Dr. Jason Neelis, currently in the 2nd year of his term as Graduate Officer, is on sabbatical. The department will revisit assignment of the role in subsequent years beyond 2014-2015 in light of interest already expressed by current full-time faculty as well. It was also noted that the new incoming full-time tenure track appointments beginning July 1, 2013 should also be a part of the discussion for subsequent years re: undergraduate and graduate program and departmental leadership.

Decanal Response on Recommendation: The department's plan for the division of administrative responsibilities over the next decade or so is well thought out and appropriate.

PRS Comments: We agree with the decanal response. It is not necessary to report on this recommendation further.

Recommendation	Responsibility	Implementation Date
RR7 - collect data from other programmes to determine if "success" measured by majors or enrolments	No need to implement (see text) - # of Majors relative to # of faculty is low; total enrolments only mid-range for Faculty	
Progress to Date (check one): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Completed <input type="checkbox"/> On Schedule <input type="checkbox"/> Behind Schedule <input type="checkbox"/> Revised Implementation Date: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (please explain): 		
Program Response on Recommendation: There was no need to implement this recommendation as noted above; however, noteworthy is the fact that the department's collective effectiveness re: research was compared to other units within Laurier and other Canadian universities, favourably, through an independent study conducted through the		

auspices of VP of Research Office.
Decanal Response on Recommendation: As mentioned, no need to implement.
PRS Comments: We agree with the decanal response. It is not necessary to report on this recommendation further.

Recommendation	Responsibility	Implementation Date
Dean of Art's Recommendation (given discussion of RR7 above) - Department needs to increase majors and/or increase enrolments	Department	Fall 2012 (so that any changes can be approved by Senate in time for 2013-14)
Additional Notes: Department to provide Dean of Arts with brief summary of what steps they will be taking by Dec 15, 2012.		
Progress to Date (check one): <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Completed <input type="checkbox"/> On Schedule <input type="checkbox"/> Behind Schedule <input type="checkbox"/> Revised Implementation Date: <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please explain):		
Program Response on Recommendation: This discussion is ongoing within the department. While the department will continue liaison activities with prospective incoming first year students through Laurier Day and other university-wide activities such as participation in the annual University Fair, there are a number of other potential initiatives that have been identified. These include the following: (a) establish a residential learning community; (b) expanding and revamping first and second year curriculum; (c) focused highschool liaison; (d) develop an Online Option on a topic such as Religious Diversity which would have broad appeal and applicability; (e) consider developing core Religion and Culture courses for Online learning; (f) enhance the online profile of the department. R&C is aware of movements within the Faculty of Art to update the webpage of Arts and the dept would very much like to pursue updates within this overall change.		
Decanal Response on Recommendation: All the initiatives mentioned here are appropriate initiatives to pursue in trying to raise undergraduate enrollments and/or to increase majors. The online option might well appeal to people who are in, or intend to be in, positions whose occupants might benefit from a nuanced understanding of cultural diversity. The department's willingness to maintain and expand its online offering is to be commended.		
PRS Comments: Completion noted. It is not necessary to report on this recommendation further.		

Recommendation	Responsibility	Implementation Date
DR8 (not RR8) - develop ways of preparing fourth year students for grad school	Department	Fall/Winter 2012-13
Additional Notes: Not a high priority (see text) but department is right to consider a range of options beyond the "thesis like" requirement mentioned in RR8.		
<p>Progress to Date (check one):</p> <p> <input type="checkbox"/> Completed <input type="checkbox"/> On Schedule <input type="checkbox"/> Behind Schedule <input type="checkbox"/> Revised Implementation Date: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (please explain): Ongoing </p>		
<p>Program Response on Recommendation: This is already an ongoing focus for fourth year seminar courses in Religion and Culture. Faculty who teach these courses are well aware that preparation for further study both in content as well as academic skills such as research, writing and analysis is key. A capstone fourth year course in Religion and Culture which must be completed by all R&C honours majors is now in place. Dr. Meena Sharify-Funk is the originator of this course in its design and implementation. Annually, a panel of BA graduates from the program is organized. These graduates, some of whom, but not all, are graduate students share their experiences of life beyond the BA. For Religion and Culture, this type of emphasis on post-graduate opportunities, some of which may include graduate education, works well for students. The department is also considering ideas such as having a research specialization Option for students with a higher GPA. This research specialization Option could possibly require students to take both RE307 and RE308 as well as two fourth year seminars.</p>		
<p>Decanal Response on Recommendation: The steps taken so far (especially the capstone course) are appropriate, and the other options that the department will be considering might also be extremely useful in preparing students for graduate school. The FGPS dean would like to encourage the department to mentor their outstanding undergraduates for admission into their own master's program.</p>		
<p>PRS Comments: Ongoing progress noted.</p>		