

BA and MA in Religion & Culture 2014 Annual Implementation Report

Submitted by: Carol B. Duncan, Chair
On: May 22, 2014

Implementation Plan from 2011-2012 Final Assessment Report

Recommendation: logic of undergraduate programme to be made clearer	
Responsibility: Department	Implementation Date: Fall 2012
Recommendation completed.	

Recommendation: consultation with Seminary and Global Studies.	
Responsibility: Department	Implementation Date: Fall/Winter 2011-12
2012-2013 Actions:	
<p>Program Response on Recommendation: Consultation is ongoing.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>PRS Comments. Progress noted. In next year's report, please provide a brief synopsis of the outcome of these consultations.</p>	
2013-2014 Progress (check one):	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Completed <input type="checkbox"/> In Progress <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please explain):	
<p>Unit Actions: The Honours BA in Christian Studies and Global Citizenship organized by the Seminary is now launched. Consultations were originally suggested as part of the review process in light of the upcoming launch of the program and possible overlapping concerns with R&C and GS curricula. Conversations were had with the Seminary's Principal and Global Studies Chair. With the launch of the program this item is now completed. As a result of consultation and ongoing conversation with Global Studies, a Global Studies faculty member, Dr. Ali Zaidi, will teach a graduate course, the interdisciplinary seminar RE602, in R&C in the winter 2015 term. The course will focus on Islam, modernity and hermeneutics. While the recommendation for that specific consultation is completed, Religion and Culture will continue to work collegially with the Seminary and consult on an as needed basis. For example, seminary principal Dr. David Pfrimmer, attended the annual Religion and Public Life conference on "Religions, Science and the Secular" (March 21-22, 2014).</p>	
<p>FGPS Decanal Comments: Appropriate collaboration between the graduate programs in the department and the Seminary are noted and appreciated.</p>	
<p>PRS Comments: Completion noted. It is not necessary to report on this recommendation further.</p>	

Recommendation: can department continue to emphasize both fieldwork and textual studies in the master's program?	
Responsibility: Department	Implementation Date: Fall 2012
Recommendation completed.	

Recommendation: advertise for new tenure-track hire.	
Responsibility: Department, after final authorization from Dean	Implementation Date: Fall 2012
Recommendation completed.	

Recommendation: better integration of BA, MA and PhD.	
Responsibility: Department	Implementation Date: Fall/Winter 2011-12
Additional Notes: Department will provide Deans with a report by April 30, 2013.	

2012-2013 Actions:

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 *vis a vis* 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.

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.

2013-2014 Progress (check one):

Completed

In Progress

Other (please explain):

Unit Actions: The integration of the BA, MA and PhD programs is now better facilitated with the hiring in 2013-2014 of two new full-time faculty members in the fields of Aboriginal Religion and Culture (E. Fox Tree) and Christianity in a Global Context (A. Lebner). Both positions are tenure-track and involve teaching in the undergraduate and graduate programs. Dr. Lebner began in January 2014 on a 6-month LTA but will take up her tenure track appointment as of July 1, 2014 while Dr. Fox Tree began his tenure track position as

of July 1, 2013. Annual program features such as the Religion and Public Life conference (with a focus on religions, secularism and science) and monthly colloquia continued in 2013-2014. Both the conference and the colloquia are important meeting points within the program and they help to establish common ground and intellectual community among the department's programs.
FGPS Decanal Comments: New hires should help recruitment into the graduate program.
PRS Comments: Completion noted. It is not necessary to report on this recommendation further.

Recommendation: develop a strategic plan for next 7 years re admin positions.	
Responsibility: Department	Implementation Date: Fall 2012
Recommendation completed.	

Recommendation: collect data from other programmes to determine if "success" measured by majors or enrolments.	
Responsibility: No need to implement (see text) - # of Majors relative to # of faculty is low; total enrolments only mid-range for Faculty	Implementation Date: N/A
Recommendation completed.	

Recommendation: Department needs to increase majors and/or increase enrolments	
Responsibility: Department	Implementation Date: Fall 2012 (so that any changes can be approved by Senate in time for 2013-14)
Recommendation completed.	
Arts Decanal Comments: It's not clear to me that this recommendation has been implemented. The number of Majors, if anything, seems to be declining and this is likely due – as I have indicated to the department in conversation with the Chair - to a structural complexity (re requirements for the Major) that could and should be simplified. The low number of Majors is not justified by departmental enrollments. The Department needs to do more work on this with the goal of simplifying the Major by the end of Fall 2014	
PRS Comments: Please provide an update on this recommendation in next year's report.	

Recommendation: develop ways of preparing fourth year students for grad school.	
Responsibility: Department	Implementation Date: Fall/Winter 2012-13
2012-2013 Actions	
<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>	
<p>2013-2014 Progress (check one):</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Completed</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> In Progress</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other (please explain):</p>	
<p>Unit Actions: The R&C department continues to focus on curricula and pedagogical strategies for preparing 4th year R&C BA students for post-graduate studies and professional work-related endeavours. The capstone course RE407: Research Seminar, a requirement for all Hon. BA students in R&C, was taught this past academic year by department chair, Carol Duncan. The course was fully enrolled with 25 students. High impact practices such as the integration of panels featuring graduates from R&C's BA, MA and PhD programs as well as current students enrolled in the MA and PhD programs were an integral part of the 2013-2014 curriculum. Capstone students also took part in a writing workshop and intensive library-based research seminars. Both of these seminars were aimed at equipping students with skills that would prepare them well to undertake advanced research at the graduate level. These skills in writing, research, cultural awareness and analysis are also transferable to professional work contexts. Some of the fourth year students enrolled in this course applied to and were accepted into the MA program. Notably, the current 2013-2014 cohort of MA students includes recent R&C BA grads. Both of these are evidence of successful mentoring of 4th year students to consider graduate studies and the MA in R&C, specifically.</p>	
<p>FGPS Decanal Comments: Efforts are noted and show evidence of success.</p>	
<p>PRS Comments: Completion noted. It is not necessary to report on this recommendation further.</p>	

Additional Recommendation from the Program Review Sub-Committee: At its November 11th, 2013 meeting, Senate Academic Planning approved the following motion: “that the Senate Academic Planning Committee, on the recommendation of the Program Review Sub-Committee, approve the inclusion of a university-wide recommendation on each Annual Implementation Report that, prior to the next cyclical review, the program develop a means for assessing program learning outcomes.” A full explanation of the rationale behind the motion can be found here:

http://legacy.wlu.ca/documents/56385/PRS_Recommendation_for_Annual_Implementation_Reports_SAPC_Nov_11_2013.pdf

The committee recommends that the Department begin having conversations about program learning outcomes assessment and put together a strategy for collecting and presenting evidence of this assessment in its next cyclical review.

Additional Comments (Unit): The R&C Department has benefitted from the review and implementation report processes.

Additional Comments (PRS): The committee is glad to hear that Religion & Culture has found this process useful and appreciates the Department’s diligence in attending to the implementation of these recommendations. There now remains only one recommendation that requires follow-up in next year’s report.