

**UNIVERSITY
of GUELPH**

COLLEGE OF ARTS

Department of History

March 9, 2016

Dear Members of Senate Quality Assurance Committee.

The Tri-University Graduate Program in History, University of Guelph, University of Waterloo and Wilfrid Laurier University was reviewed in January 2014. The report from the external consultants, Dr. Doris Bergen and Dr. Jim Miller concluded that the Tri-University program benefits from “committed and enthusiastic graduate instructors and able and energetic students.” We were pleased by the conclusion that the program offers “very good quality” and the organization is “on the whole sound.” We also appreciate the consultants’ assessment that the program “operates in accordance with practices used at other good institutions” and provides “education and training of high quality to its students.” The Tri-U Program Director and the three program Coordinators and three Department Chairs have discussed each of the external consultants’ suggestions in detail and developed an implementation plan at Tri-U Executive meeting in autumn 2014 and 2015. The implementation process is on going.

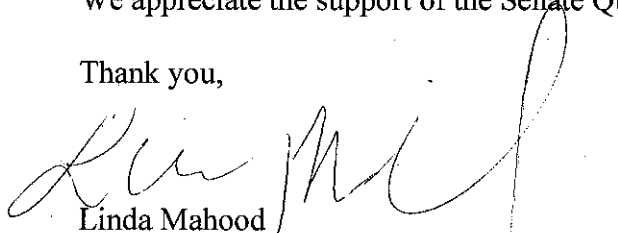
The consultants made a number of recommendations regarding the more uniform delivery of the program across the three campuses, the need to clarify expectations, improve communication, and streamline MA and PhD course delivery. To that end, the Tri-University executive, in consultation with members of the Tri-U Graduate Student Association (TUGSA), initiated a major revision of the MA and PhD handbooks. The revised handbooks were approved by all three the history departments and posted on the Tri-University website in summer 2014. Following the consultants’ recommendation that there be a greater emphasis on training PhD students both for academic and “vocational” positions in the private sector, government, and non-government organizations, the Professional Development Seminar now includes speakers from the College of Management and Economics and Tri-University faculty with experience as consults in industry and leadership. We hope to continue and expand this practice.

The Tri-U has devoted significant attention to the consultants’ recommendation that we review the cost to students of inter-campus transportation. In Fall 2015 we began a student survey of intercampus travel experiences. The burden of intercampus transportation falls most heavily on Guelph students. The consultants suggested increasing the travel grants currently awarded to students for intercampus travel. To that end, we increased the allocation of funding at all three institutions from \$80.00 to \$100.00 per term to cover travel and mileage costs. We are aware that this is inadequate. We wish we could do more. We continue to encourage ride-shares and carpooling.

The consultants expressed concern that some doctoral students might be isolated in their field courses, and recommend accordingly that they be allowed to attend MA seminars in relevant subjects in partial fulfillment of their minor field requirements. We agree that MA and PhD students benefit from interacting with each other in seminars. In consultation with Tri-University faculty we see that we have diverging points of view on this issue. Individual faculty work load and professional autonomy allow for internal flexibility, which enables the faculty teaching PhD field seminars to run them as they chose. We recognize that PhD and MA students have separate needs. The wide range of MA-only seminars and PhD-only field courses, made possible by the combined resources of the three departments, distinguishes it from most other programs in the country. That said, the Program does permit PhD students to sit in on MA seminars and some students and faculty may take advantage of this informal option. This approach is characteristic of the Program's flexibility, which the consultants noted as one of the strengths and an attribute appreciated by our students. We consider face-to-face seminars and meetings preferable to Skype and other technologies.

We appreciate the candid and thoughtful review provided by the external consultants and look forward to moving ahead with further changes to the Tri-University Graduate Program, especially in the area of streamlining communication and course delivery across the campuses. We appreciate the support of the Senate Quality Assurance Committee.

Thank you,



Linda Mahood
Professor of History
Director Tri-University Graduate Program