

## Final Assessment Report Academic Review

### MA in Classics

#### A. Summary

1. The Department's Self Study was considered and approved by the Academic Review Committee of Senate on February 9, 2012.
2. The Review Committee consisted of two external reviewers: Lea Stirling (University of Manitoba) and Drew Griffith (Queen's University), and an internal reviewer, Corrado Federici (Modern Languages, Literatures and Cultures).
3. The site visit occurred on March 11-13, 2012.
4. The Reviewers' Report was received on April 2, 2012.
5. The Department's response was received on April 23, 2012.
6. The Dean of Humanities' response from Douglas Kneale was received on April 30, 2012.
7. The Dean of Graduate Studies' response from Mike Plyley was received on October 2, 2012.

The academic program offered by the Department which was examined during the review was the MA in Classics.

This review was conducted under the terms and conditions of the IQAP approved by Senate on June 6, 2011.

The reviewers assigned the graduate program: Outcome Category 2, "Good Quality."

## B. Strengths of the Program

The reviewers remarked on the “robust program of course offerings and overseas study opportunities” as indications of the high quality of the program. They noted that it “is one of a handful of programs in Canada with a strong component of material culture, field archaeology, and fieldwork opportunities.” They also said that “It is our sense from talking to colleagues across the country that Brock is becoming known as a good destination for studying Classical material culture and archaeology.”

The reviewers observed that the curriculum is designed to support a “holistic approach to Classics whereby all students are exposed to ancient languages and texts, social history and culture, and material culture” in a program that the Department emphasized was “skills-based.” The reviewers found that these broad goals, as well as each of the six graduate degree level expectations were appropriately defined for the program and effectively assessed.

The reviewers noted that the program was supported by an “energetic and dedicated faculty” with “an exceptional collegiality or even camaraderie of the Department.” They remarked on the physical space which the program now occupies in the International Centre as “the envy of Classics Departments across Canada” and that it provides “an attractive learning environment admirably equipped for outreach, hands-on teaching, specialized research, and interaction among faculty and students.” The Cypriote collection was highlighted as another valuable resource for the Department.

The reviewers stated that the students were “very enthusiastic about the quality of teaching, supervision and mentorship” and that their “camaraderie and engagement with each other and their field” was outstanding. Student participation in “lively programming and events,” both hosted by the university as well as outside of it, was observed as a factor which contributed to the “professionalization of students” in the program. The “intense effort to build funds for travel fellowships for graduate students” was seen as “[e]specially commendable.”

The reviewers judged the program to be of Good Quality (Category 2) and well on its way to national prominence, “If the Department continues - as it shows every sign of doing - on its current upward trajectory.”

### C. Opportunities for Improvement and Enhancement

The reviewers provided 19 discrete recommendations:

1. Ensure that the Departmental Handbook agrees in all points with the calendar.

In its response, the Department stated that “We agree that the Graduate Handbook should be updated to coincide with the (online) publication of the Graduate Calendar.”

The Faculty Dean and Graduate Dean concurred.

ARC considers this recommendation to be accepted and in the process of implementation.

#### Implementation Plan (First Priority)

Responsible for approving:	Department
Responsible for resources:	Department
Responsible for implementation:	Department
Timeline:	Dean of Humanities to report by end of academic year 2012/13

2. Schedule the working-hours of the half-time administrative assistant to coincide with the office-hours of the GPD.

The Department agreed that this was desirable for “maximum efficiency,” but noted that “since the current Graduate Administrative Assistant works part time in another department, and since the Graduate Program Director’s teaching and office hour schedule changes from term to term, it will be difficult to make a scheduling change that works for more than a single term.”

The Faculty Dean agreed that it was a good suggestion, but that the co-ordination of schedules could present obstacles.

ARC considers this recommendation to be one which will be under consideration (in terms of feasibility) on an annual basis.

**Implementation Plan**

Recommendation under annual consideration.

3. Clearly stipulate in their employment contracts that the full-time assistant has seniority and power of command over the half-time assistant.

The Department stated that “we do not believe this to be an implementable action,” but that they would “revisit the chain of command with regard to the Graduate Administrative Assistant.”

The Faculty Dean responded that, “This may not be possible given the unionized environment; administrative assistants regularly report to supervisors, not to others of the same employee group.”

ARC considers this recommendation to be NOT accepted as it would contravene the terms of the Collective Agreement covering administrative assistants.

**Implementation Plan**

Recommendation NOT accepted.

4. The Department should draw up a document clearly delineating the respective responsibilities of the two administrative assistants, and distribute this not only to the two assistants themselves, but also to all faculty and graduate students.

The Department replied that “Currently such documents do exist, but we agree that they need to be revisited and revised.” They also suggested that “an additional action” would be to outline the duties and responsibilities of the Graduate Administrative Assistant in the Departmental Handbook.

The Faculty Dean concurred, adding that “an FAQ or a flow chart, showing faculty and students whom to ask for different services, would make the work processes and division of labour clear.”

ARC considers this recommendation to be accepted and in the process of implementation.

**Implementation Plan (First Priority)**

Responsible for approving:	Department
Responsible for resources:	Department
Responsible for implementation:	Department
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5. Allow graduate students, when applying for TAs, genuinely to express their preferences.

The Department confirmed that graduate students “are currently allowed to express their preferences,” but that “we still reserve the right to match students with staffing needs and Teaching Assistant abilities and qualifications” for both “pedagogical and practical reasons.”

The Faculty Dean responded that “graduate students should have the option of expressing their preferences,” but that the “Department must have the option of placing graduate TAs where they are needed, and where the students’ own needs will be best served.”

The Dean of Graduate Studies supported “the position that ALL graduate students are eligible to apply for any and all positions for which they feel that they are qualified.”

ARC considers this recommendation to be consistent with current practices and therefore it has already been implemented.

**Implementation Plan**

Recommendation implemented and no further action required.

6. In lieu of the modern language exam administered by the Department, accept a first-year undergraduate course-credit in either French or German as indicated on a transcript.

The Department stated, “We believe that the ability to read a second (and even a third) language is a necessity for all scholarship, and would encourage the Faculty of Graduate Studies to facilitate the offering of such reading courses in order to better serve the scholarly needs of all graduate students at the university.” It accepted the Reviewers’ recommendation as a “workable second option” as long as the undergraduate course would be equivalent to a full credit, and that a minimum grade be achieved.

The Faculty Dean concurred, saying that “successful completion of a credit course in a second modern language to fulfill the modern language requirement seems sensible.”

The Dean of Graduate Studies supported the recommendation, as it would “seem to benefit the students and at the same time, would decrease faculty workload.”

The Senate Graduate Studies Committee stated, “Although SGSC agrees with the reviewers that this would reduce the number of exams that faculty would need to set and grade, this change will change the spirit and academic vigor of this requirement.”

While acknowledging the concerns of the Senate Graduate Studies Committee, ARC considers this recommendation to be accepted and in the process of implementation.

**Implementation Plan (First Priority)**

Responsible for approving:	Department
Responsible for resources:	Department
Responsible for implementation:	Department
Timeline:	Dean of Humanities to report by end of academic year 2012/13

7. Post several previous years' Greek and Latin exams on the Departmental website; encourage students to test themselves under the conditions prescribed by the Department, and warn them that if they fail a diagnostic test of a similar level of difficulty in September of their first year, they can expect to be told to take a remedial undergraduate language-course concurrently with their MA program.

The Department responded that it “currently do[es] make previous exams available to our students” but that “keeping hard copies on file in the Graduate Administrative office is preferable to making them available on the departmental website.” The Department went on to explain that the Departmental Handbook currently states that the September exams are diagnostic and that opting out of the exams will require that students enroll in undergraduate-level language courses.

The Faculty Dean suggested that the Reviewers' intent “seems to be that incoming students should be made aware well in advance of their arrival at Brock of the level of difficulty of the exams” and that “posting the exams on a website, in addition to making hard copies available in the office, is a good suggestion.”

ARC considers this recommendation to be in alignment with current practices and no further action is required.

#### **Implementation Plan**

Recommendation implemented and no further action required.

8. Include in the Departmental Handbook a “Reading List” of ancient authors from which the material for the sight exams will be drawn. A list of textbooks dealing with material remains would easily provide the equivalent for Exam 3.

The Department responded that they would be “happy to consider providing students with a “list of authors” to read in preparation of the exams and will discuss it in an upcoming departmental meeting and/or graduate program retreat.”

The Faculty Dean concurred.

ARC considers this recommendation as implemented.

**Implementation Plan**

Recommendation implemented and no further action is required.

9. Revisit Departmental Library collection policy to reflect current teaching and research needs.

The Department stated that they agreed with the recommendation, and will discuss it in an upcoming departmental meeting and/or graduate program retreat.

The Faculty Dean suggested that “ongoing development and revision of the department’s library collection policy is indeed necessary.”

ARC considers this recommendation to be accepted and in the process of implementation.

**Implementation Plan (First Priority)**

Responsible for approving:	Department
Responsible for resources:	Department
Responsible for implementation:	Department
Timeline:	Dean of Humanities to report by end of academic year 2012/13

10. Faculty should use one or more sessions of the proseminar course to draw students' attention to the bibliographical material (especially in Epigraphy and Papyrology) now available on the web.

The Department responded that they are currently using “some sessions of CLAS 5P00, our Proseminar, to discuss bibliographical material that is on the internet, although without a specific focus on epigraphy or papyrology.”

The Faculty Dean noted that “The CLAS 5P00 proseminar sessions on specific areas of research introduce students to the tools used by faculty members in their research.”

ARC considers this recommendation to be accepted and in the process of implementation.

**Implementation Plan (First Priority)**

Responsible for approving:	Department
Responsible for resources:	Department
Responsible for implementation:	Department
Timeline:	Dean of Humanities to report by end of academic year 2012/13

11. Regularly offer one MA course that allows/requires students as a major course-component to work with the collection of the Cypriote Museum.

The Department confirmed that “greater use of our Cypriote Museum collection is a priority for the future.” It stated that the Department “do[es] not envision using the collection as a major course-component, due to the fact that no one in the department specializes in Cypriote antiquity” but that “several courses are currently in development that plan to make use of the collection as a more minor course component.”

The Faculty Dean agreed that the “Cypriote Museum is indeed a valuable resource,” and that “[t]he plan for a course in which students will make hands-on use of the collection is an appropriate response to this recommendation.”

The Dean of Graduate Studies proposed that recommendations 9, 10 and 11 could “be rolled together through course work.”

ARC considers this recommendation to be accepted and in the process of implementation.

**Implementation Plan (Second Priority)**

Responsible for approving:	Department
Responsible for resources:	Department
Responsible for implementation:	Department
Timeline:	Dean of Humanities to report by end of academic year 2013/14

12. The Administration should follow through with its promise to replace Barbara Burrell with an expert in the same field, viz. Roman Archaeology.

The Department agreed and stated that they were “pleased to note that the administration has acted promptly and agreed to a replacement position for July 2013.”

The Faculty Dean confirmed that “The Dean has committed to this replacement position, subject to final budgetary approval.”

ARC considers this recommendation to be accepted and in the process of implementation.

**Implementation Plan (Second Priority)**

Responsible for approving:	Department
Responsible for resources:	Department
Responsible for implementation:	Dean, Department
Timeline:	Dean of Humanities to report by end of academic year 2013/14

13. The Administration should keep “on their radar” the possibility of further personnel-change in the Department, and the need to act swiftly and decisively in such an event as they have so admirably done in the case of Prof. Burrell.

The Department stated that they “heartily endorse the recommendation.”

The Faculty Dean stated that “We hope to be able to continue to replace colleagues in a timely way in the future, subject to budgetary approval.”

ARC considers this recommendation to be accepted and in the process of implementation.

**Implementation Plan (First priority)**

Responsible for approving:	Department, Dean
Responsible for resources:	Department, Dean
Responsible for implementation:	Department, Dean
Timeline:	Dean of Humanities to report by end of academic year 2012/13

14. The Administration should dedicate funds to hire (perhaps on a part-time basis) someone to teach courses and supervise theses and MRPs in Latin literature.

The Department stated that it “would be well served to hire another expert in ancient literature,” but argued that this should be a full-time tenure-track position. It explained that “hiring part-time (an ILTA or an LTA, for example) for this position would pose supervisory problems for students, since there is no guarantee that such a person would be around from year to year.”

The Faculty Dean agreed that a part-time instructor would be problematic, “both because of the transience of such appointments and because the seniority provisions of the CUPE 4207 hiring process do not always guarantee that a person hired on such a contract is appropriate for graduate teaching and supervision.” He added that “[e]xpansion of the permanent faculty complement is unlikely in the current financial situation.”

Based on current practices regarding part-time instructors teaching and supervising in graduate programs in the Faculty of Humanities, ARC considers this recommendation to be not accepted.

**Implementation Plan**

Recommendation NOT accepted.

15. Give all students a “tuition holiday” for the summer term of year one.

The Department stated “[w]e think this is a sound recommendation that would be of great financial benefit to our students.”

The Faculty Dean noted that “[t]he implementation of such an initiative lies in the hands of the Faculty of Graduate Studies.”

The Dean of Graduate Studies responded that “FGS would not be in support of this Action.”

The Senate Graduate Studies Committee expressed concern “about the recommendations regarding graduate students’ funding,” stating that “[t]hese recommendations should be considered with caution and in consultation with the Dean of Graduate Studies and the Associate Deans of Graduate Studies as they may conflict with the CUPE collective agreement and may also impact other graduate programs.”

ARC considers this recommendation to be not accepted as it would contravene current University policies.

**Implementation Plan**

Recommendation NOT accepted.

16. Give the GPD discretion to subtract some of the bursary-money from students who win external awards (e.g. from SSHRC or OGS) to redistribute among their less fortunate peers so that, while the *average* student funding in any given year remains unchanged, the *minimum* funding will rise, in some years by a wide margin.

The Department had “concerns about the ethical and even legal ramifications of this recommendation.” It objected to the use of the phrase “less fortunate,” stating that external awards are decided on the basis of merit, not fortune. The Department noted that “by taking funding away from our most qualified students we would risk losing our best candidates to other universities.”

The Faculty Dean stated that students were “entitled to all of the money they earn” through awards, and that “[f]unding packages are instrumental in attracting the best graduate students” who might go elsewhere if they learn that Brock will “in effect, penalize them for their success.”

The Dean of Graduate Studies stated that “this is contrary to policy, and is not supported by the Faculty of Graduate Studies.”

ARC considers this recommendation to be not accepted as it would contravene Senate policy with regard to graduate student support.

**Implementation Plan**

Recommendation NOT accepted.

17. Ensure that Classics MA students pursuing the MRP pattern know that they are eligible to compete in the DGS summer fellowship competition in their *first* year of study.

The Department stated that they agreed with the recommendation, and were “exploring the possibility of making the development of a grant application, including a research statement, one of our fall term Proseminar assignments.”

The Faculty Dean supported the “idea of using the proseminar to teach students how to write grant applications.” He suggested “[i]ncreasing awareness among the graduate students of the opportunities available to them” by other means, including adding information to the programme handbook, taking advantage of opportunities offered by the Humanities Research Institute (HRI), and attending workshops hosted by the HRI.

The Dean of Graduate Studies stated that the “FGS will make doubly sure that these students know that they are eligible.”

ARC considers this recommendation to be accepted and in the process of implementation.

**Implementation Plan (First Priority)**

Responsible for approving:	Department
Responsible for resources:	Department
Responsible for implementation:	Department
Timeline:	Dean of Humanities to report by end of academic year 2012/13

18. The Graduate Faculty at Brock should hire a bus, like those that currently take university sports-teams to extramural competitions, to depart (say) every Saturday at 10:00 a.m. from the front of Schmon Tower, which would deliver interested students to the front door of Mills library at McMaster, with a regularly scheduled return trip at (say) 4:00 p.m. the same afternoon.

The Department stated that the idea had “some merit, although we believe it would have to be a Faculty of Graduate Studies or even a University-wide initiative in order to get enough students to make such trips worthwhile.”

The Faculty Dean concurred with the Department.

The Dean of Graduate Studies responded that the recommendation “is not feasible, and makes little sense.”

ARC considers this recommendation to be not accepted.

**Implementation Plan**

Recommendation NOT accepted.

19. Every summer Brock’s Classics Department should offer one second-year Greek course to prepare incoming students to pass the “diagnostic” Greek language exam. Realizing that such a course would seldom, if ever, achieve an enrolment that would make it financially viable, we further recommend that such a course be offered by distance education, and be open to all interested Canadian university students.

The Department responded that such an undertaking would require surmounting the daunting “pedagogical issues and problems surrounding the teaching of language as a distance education course.” Nevertheless, it stated that it would consider the possibility of an elearning course, or a spring/summer course offered on a rotating basis with other universities in Ontario, or even Canada.

The Faculty Dean stated that it would be “unlikely that a regular summer offering of a low enrolment undergraduate course such as Intermediate Greek would be viable” but that a “consortium of universities in Southern Ontario offering such a course on a rotating basis has possibilities.”

The Dean of Graduate Studies stated that the recommendation was “a reasonable idea - one that would meet student needs, and might supply some revenue to the Department. It is suggested that financial feasibility should be explored to see the viability of moving forward with this action.”

ARC considers that this recommendation continues to be under consideration in terms of feasibility.

#### **Implementation Plan**

Recommendation under consideration.

## **D. Recommendations to be Implemented**

The IQAP requires that ARC “set out and prioritize the recommendations that are selected for implementation.” Using the specific ARC proposals enunciated above, the following priorities are proposed:

First Priority:

Recommendations 1,4,6,9,10,13,17

Second Priority

Recommendations 11,12

Under Consideration

Recommendations 2, 19

Already Implemented

Recommendations 5,7,8

## **E. Recommendations that Will Not be Implemented**

Recommendations 3,14,15,16,18