

Final Assessment Report

History Integrated Program Review

A. Summary

1. The Department's Self Study was considered and approved by the Academic Review Committee of Senate on January 25, 2013.
2. The Review Committee consisted of two external reviewers: Peter Goddard, Guelph University and Françoise Noel, Nipissing University and an internal reviewer, Jane Helleiner, Department of Sociology.
3. The site visit occurred on February 28 - March 1, 2013.
4. The Reviewers' Report was received on March 22, 2013.
5. The Department's response was received on April 13, 2013.
6. The Dean of Humanities response from Douglas Kneale was received on April 25, 2013.
7. The Dean of Graduate Studies response from Michael Plyley was received on April 21, 2013.
8. The Undergraduate Program Committee response was received on April 19, 2013.
9. The Senate Graduate Studies Committee response was received on April 19, 2013.

The undergraduate and graduate programs offered by the Department of History which were examined as part of the review included:

- MA in History
- MA in History, Co-op
- BA Pass and Honours in History
- BA Honours in History, Co-op
- BA Pass and Honours in History, Combined Major
- BA Pass and Honours in History and Labour Studies
- BA Honours in History/BEd

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

The reviewers assigned the following outcome categories:

- Undergraduate Program - Outcome Category 2, "Good Quality"
- Graduate Program - Outcome Category 2, "Good Quality".

B. Strengths of the Program

Undergraduate Program

The reviewers stated that:

The history program offered at Brock is very good. A strong instruction team and full involvement of its faculty is its major strength. This is an energetic midcareer group. There is a strong culture of collegiality and respect for faculty autonomy but also an openness to teamwork. This is evident in the thoughtful innovations that have been introduced at the first year level with the introduction of a new modular course that involves team teaching and which has been carefully planned to develop student skills incrementally. The investment of resources into the first year serves the broader university community as the students at that level are not limited to history students. The faculty also support other programs such as Labour Studies, MARS, Canadian Studies and Classics. There are good instincts to collaboration.

The faculty in history does service to wider scholarly community by providing leadership to non-History programs (Liberal Arts; Canadian Studies) and University advisory bodies (Aboriginal Council). One member has moved to a senior position with central administration.

The faculty has great pride in its extensive and omnipresent seminar system, which is the signature aspect of the program and considered to be an important distinction when marketing the program. Priority is given to providing small-group instruction at every level. There is one field course which engages the archival and archaeological history of the local area, responding to interest in the War of 1812.

An innovative co-op program has recently been introduced at the undergraduate level. The ability to place students in non-traditional jobs and to teach them the skills required to market their skills is an important strength of the program. With a higher entry level than the regular stream the co-op program helps to attract better students.

Research is a shared value; specialists maintain connections and forge new opportunities beyond the University, e.g. specialist in Iranian History collaborates with UNESCO; Historian of Africa maintains connections with York University research hub. The History Department is home to two Canada Research Chairs engaged in field of digital humanities research and training. Innovative course areas and strong opportunity for significant if specialized program growth exists.

Graduate Program

The reviewers stated that:

The graduate program offers a standard M.A. in History as a one-year program with a Major Research Paper requirement. A thesis stream is available by invitation only. A very innovative co-op stream is also newly available. The thesis and co-op stream extend over

five terms. There are eight thematic areas advertised based on the strengths of the core faculty and within these themes more specific courses are offered depending on the faculty member teaching it. All students must take a historiography and historical methods course.

The faculty is the greatest strength of the graduate program. They are an energetic midcareer group by and large with an excellent research and funding record. There is extensive collaboration with other programs (Humanities Interdisciplinary PhD; MA in Social Justice and Equity Studies; MA in Comparative Literature and Art; newly launched MA in Canadian and American Studies). Research is a shared value; specialists maintain connections and forge new opportunities beyond the University e.g. specialist in Iranian History collaborates with UNESCO; Historian of Africa maintains connections with York University research hub. The presence of the two Canada Research Chairs engaged in the field of digital humanities research and training also enhances the profile of the faculty.

The co-op stream is innovative and, in the current market situation where jobs are difficult to get, is likely to be a real strength. Co-op students acquire employment-related skills and see how capacities learned in an advanced history degree appeal to employers in non-traditional areas. The Co-op stream should help in program recruitment.

The Brock University Archives has good collections of local material which have the potential to draw graduate students interested in the history of Niagara region.

C. Opportunities for Improvement and Enhancement

The reviewers provided nine recommendations for the undergraduate program (U1-9) and three recommendations for the graduate program (G1-3).

UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAM

U1. Conduct a Curriculum Review to clearly identify course portfolio which could be taught by faculty at graduate and undergraduate levels in a two academic year (6 term) rotation.

The Department stated that it:

is happy to conduct a review of our curriculum offerings in the spirit suggested by the Reviewers. Indeed, we already do this on an annual basis as a part of our yearly planning facilitated by the Department’s Curriculum Committee. The Department submits that it may make most sense to determine a course portfolio that could be taught by faculty in a three academic year cycle (rather than in two years), to allow for some leeway to maintain a range of course offerings while at the same time accommodating sabbaticals and regular cycling of faculty into first year.

The Faculty Dean responded that he:

is satisfied that the Department reviews its curriculum on a regular basis through its standing sub-committee devoted to this task. A three-year cycle may provide greater flexibility for the curriculum, given the patterns of faculty on leave or administrative secondment. Regularly cycling full-time faculty into first-year courses is a laudable goal.

UPC noted that:

providing students with some indication of how elective courses are scheduled (i.e., a provisional cycle of these courses over a period of 2-3 Years) would address the desire of students for “greater predictability in course offerings.”

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 to report by end of academic year 2013/14

U2. Consider “banking” courses which cannot be offered in a two year period and deleting those replaced by courses more in keeping with the current interests of faculty.

The Department responded that it:

regularly reviews its course offerings, deleting courses that are no longer taught. We are not certain what the Reviewers mean by “banking” courses, as no such option appears to exist at Brock University. If this option does exist, we are happy to consider it.

The Faculty Dean responded that he:

is confident that the Department will continue to review its curriculum regularly with a view to deleting items no longer needed in the course bank, whether because of changes in faculty research interests or broader program decisions.

ARC considers the recommendation to examine the calendar and remove courses that are not being offered to be accepted. The Committee noted that it is existing practice at Brock to remove courses from the calendar which have not been taught for three years.

Implementation Plan (First Priority)

Responsible for approving:	Department
Responsible for resources:	Department
Responsible for implementation:	Department
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U3. Review remaining course descriptions of specialized topics in order to introduce more thematic language and concomitant flexibility (as has been done in the graduate course calendar).

The Department responded by saying that it:

intends to review our course descriptions of specialized topics in the manner recommended. (Also see U4 below.)

The Faculty Dean responded, “The Dean supports the Department’s intentions here.”

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
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U4. Develop a set of course recommendations for History majors, up to and including “core” courses, and up to and including distribution requirements by thematic, geographical or chronological category, to lend a semblance of “pathways” for majors.

The Department responded that it would be:

happy to look into the possibility of “course recommendations” for History majors. In the past, the Department has specified “bundles” of courses—in North American and in European history for example—but, since we have expanded our offerings geographically to include African, Asian, and Latin American history, and also expanded thematically, we have found this inappropriate. It will not be easy to designate some of our courses as “core” and others not. What we do have are a number of courses that are taught by several faculty members and offered every year. We could have a discussion about this practice, provide a more explicit rationale for it, and see where to go from there. As for creating specified “pathways” for our undergraduate students, one question that emerges is who would do the monitoring? It would be difficult to tell a student who has the requisite number of courses at the appropriate levels that they can’t graduate because their courses weren’t in a prescribed cluster. It may be that “recommended pathways” are better than “required” ones? In any event, the Department will strike an ad hoc committee to explore the possibilities (incorporating #3 above) and to report back to the Department with its findings.

The Faculty Dean responded that he:

looks forward to reviewing the recommendations of the *ad hoc* committee on both the notions of “required” vs. “recommended” pathways, and the viability of defining a “core” curriculum.

ARC considers this recommendation to be under consideration and suggests that it be addressed during the Curriculum review mentioned in U1.

Implementation Plan (Second Priority)

Responsible for approving:	Department
Responsible for resources:	Department
Responsible for implementation:	Department
Timeline:	Dean to report by end of academic year 2014/15

Curriculum

U5. Consider designating a 300-level Methodology class as part of the “core” in order to develop History Major/Minor capacity in disciplinary techniques, as well as greater sense of cohort awareness.

In its response, the Department stated that it:

will consider designating a 300-level methodology class, or possibly designate two or three courses that will have a very enhanced focus on historical methodologies. Our initial thought is that it (or they) might be most effective as a course (or courses) designed for History majors.

The Faculty Dean responded that he:

supports the possibility of new courses (or the revision of existing ones) focusing on historical methodologies. While these would undoubtedly be beneficial for majors, the Department might consider whether also offering them for students taking a History minor would be an additional recruitment draw.

ARC considers this recommendation to be under consideration and suggests that it be addressed during the Curriculum review mentioned in U1.

Implementation Plan (Second Priority)

Responsible for approving:	Department
Responsible for resources:	Department
Responsible for implementation:	Department
Timeline:	Dean to report by end of academic year 2014/15

U6. Use results of curriculum review to ascertain areas of new faculty investment (based on faculty replacement for administrative appointment and possible retirement replacements up to 2016).

The Department agreed that:

it makes good sense to use the results of our curriculum review to ascertain areas of new faculty investment. While we welcome additional faculty investment—especially to support our Graduate Program which could expand were it better funded—looking ahead to the next two years our highest priority is to maintain the number of positions that we have.

On the retirement of Professor [name withheld] in 2014, the Department will no longer have a historian who specializes in modern British history. That position is essential in any Canadian History Department. After completing our curriculum review, we will be in a better position to ascertain which area of expertise within modern British History makes most sense for us. It may be that we need to hire a candidate with an emphasis on imperialism/colonialism so that we can use this salary line, not only to maintain British History, but also to provide more depth to our expanding Graduate Program.

Given the very strong report that these Reviewers have given us, it is critically important that—at the very least—the funding to Brock's History Department be maintained at its current levels.

The Faculty Dean stated that he:

hopes to be able to continue to replace colleagues in a timely way in the future, subject to budgetary approval. The Department's assessment of its own needs will be an important part of decisions about investment in new faculty. ...

...The Dean has discussed enrolment patterns with all units in Humanities and their implication for future resources. The Dean notes that the Majors headcount in HIST has dropped from 563 in 2008-09 to 479 in 2012-13. Early enrolment indicators in the HIST co-op program, however, are encouraging, rising from 17 in the first year of the program (2011-12) to 30 in 2012-13. Then again, the number of OUAC 101 applications to HIST direct from high school for Fall 2013 is disappointing, having dropped from 341 in January 2012 to 299 in January 2013—a 12.3% decline, with the most significant drop being in the number of first-choice program applications, from 70 to 49 applicants for this coming Fall. Whatever external or internal factors may be responsible for these declines, the Dean believes that the Department has to monitor enrolment patterns and do everything it can to recruit and retain students in a sustainable way, especially if it wishes to make an argument for additional appointments and other resources.

ARC considers this recommendation to ascertain areas of new faculty investment 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 to report by end of academic year 2014/15

U7. Provide opportunity for upper level History undergraduates to develop an understanding of how their skills and capacities may be deployed in the world after graduation e.g. the Department could facilitate discussions by recent graduates now working in interesting fields. Such initiatives are particularly important in light of perceived decline in opportunity in teaching profession, traditional mainstay of Humanities education at Brock.

The Department welcomed this recommendation and noted:

In fact, on 8 March (a week after the Reviewers' visit) all of our upper-level History majors were invited to a "Career Planning Session" that featured four graduates from our Program who now work in a variety of fields. We intend to offer something similar again next year, facilitated through our Student Recruitment and Communications Committee.

The Faculty Dean responded that he:

agrees with the Reviewer's recommendation and supports the Department's efforts in this area. Indeed, the Associate Dean (Undergraduate Student Affairs and Curriculum) attended the March 8 Career Planning Session and noted its success, including the positive feedback from the students present. If possible, this should become an annual event with even higher student attendance. Similar efforts, but geared toward a targeted high school audience, might aid in recruitment efforts.

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 to report by end of academic year 2013/14

U8. Organize a “Graduate Program information event” for senior undergraduates, to be held in September of each year, in order to better inform graduating students about opportunities for graduate study as well as processes, deadlines and best practices for scholarship applications.

The Department agreed with this recommendation and further stated:

The Graduate Committee and Teaching Committee will co-ordinate to bring it about. An event in early fall would allow the Department to acknowledge our best undergraduate students while informing them of the exciting opportunities in the Graduate Program.

The Faculty Dean responded:

The Department has held such an event in previous years to inform undergraduate students about opportunities and processes, and should revive the practice. The Faculty of Humanities holds an event for third-year students from across the Faculty every Spring, so a Fall term event aimed specifically at History students would be a good follow-up.

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

Implementation Plan (First Priority)

Responsible for approving:	Department
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U9. Consider whether or not student representation at department meetings would help the Department to be more in touch with student perspectives. Consider creation of a Faculty Advisor role to liaise with student representatives and student associations.

The Department welcomed both parts of the recommendation, and stated:

It seems the second ought to come before the first. To this end, we will consider adding a “Faculty Advisory Committee” to our departmental committee structure. A committee of that description could liaise with the student body and move forward with already-developing plans to facilitate student interest in creating a Brock History Association.

The Faculty Dean responded:

The Dean supports the Department’s efforts and recommends that the proposed Faculty Advisory Committee include the newly founded Humanities Student Association in its communications and student outreach efforts as appropriate.

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
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GRADUATE PROGRAM

G1. Continue to refine articulation of research areas.

The Department responded that “The Program’s offerings are based on a thematic approach that will continue to grow as we further articulate our research areas.”

The Faculty Dean stated, “This is a good suggestion, which the Department is in the process of following.”

The Dean of Graduate Studies stated:

The FGS supports the Program's view of using a thematic approach as this works best for the Department; however, the FGS will ask the Department to clearly define the thematic approach being used in any given year, and work with them to make sure that this is clearly presented on the Program website in time for students interested in the Graduate Program to see what is being offered. In fact, it may well be possible for the Program to outline a multi-year description of the themes.

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

Implementation Plan (First Priority)	
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G2. Devise ways to better involve Canada Research Chairs in graduate program.

The Department responded:

Though the Graduate Program would welcome more involvement of the two Canada Research Chairs in digital humanities, one is moving into an administrative position, further reducing the limited time devoted to teaching in the Department.

The Faculty Dean stated:

More involvement of the Canada Research Chairs in the MA program would be ideal. But, as noted in the Departmental response, their other responsibilities could hinder this. Both CRCs are involved in the PhD program in Interdisciplinary Humanities, and their courses there have been cross-listed with History.

The Dean of Graduate Studies stated:

The FGS strongly endorses this recommendation - the CRC involved in administration is only a 50% appointment, so there is still an opportunity for the Program to utilize him in the Program. The second CRC remains as a full-time CRC and so there should be no impediment to the Program developing his involvement to enhance the Graduate Program. FGS is willing to work with the Program on this recommendation.

ARC considers this recommendation to be worthy of consideration and recognizes that implementation will depend upon the availability of CRC's.

Implementation Plan (First Priority)	
Responsible for approving:	Department
Responsible for resources:	Department
Responsible for implementation:	Department
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G3. If necessary, introduce a maximum number of new supervisions per year for each faculty member.

The Department responded:

Equitable distribution of graduate supervision is a high priority for the Department and the Graduate Committee; no faculty member shall be asked to supervise more than two students in any given academic year.

The Faculty Dean stated:

The Department should strive for equitable distribution of supervisions, although it is recognized that student demand and other factors sometimes disturb the balance.

The Dean of Graduate Studies stated:

The FGS would suggest that the Program analyze its past, and current, supervisory capacity, and compare this to other Graduate Programs in History, to ascertain the supervisory capacity of the Core and Participating Members of the Program. In this way, the Program will be able to do some long term planning, taking into account impending sabbaticals, UG teaching needs, and openings for new graduate students.

ARC considers this recommendation to be consistent with existing practice. No further action is required.

Implementation Plan
No further action required.

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 U1, U2, U3, U7, U8, U9, G1, G2.

Second Priority:

Recommendations U4, U5, U6.

No further action required:

Recommendation G3.

E. Recommendations that Will Not be Implemented

None.