



Four Year Report (2023)

PhD in Interdisciplinary Humanities (reviewed 2018-19)

A. Summary of Review

1. This review was conducted under the terms and conditions of the IQAP approved by Senate on May 25, 2016.
2. The academic program offered by the Faculty of Humanities which was examined as part of the review was the PhD in Interdisciplinary Humanities.
3. The Review Committee consisted of two external reviewers: Jeff Brison (Queen’s University) and Michael Gertler (University of Saskatchewan) and an internal reviewer, Lissa Paul (Brock University).
4. The site visit occurred on March 24-26, 2019.
5. The Final Assessment Report was approved by Senate on November 13, 2019.
6. The reviewers assigned the program the following outcome category:

Program(s)	Excellent Quality	Good Quality	Good Quality with Concerns	Non-Viable
PhD in Interdisciplinary Humanities			X*	

*We see much that is excellent in this program, much that is good quality, and nevertheless we have identified some concerns. We struggled to identify the appropriate category in this range of options as we want to make clear that we support both the accomplishments of the program and its potential.

7. The next review of the PhD in Interdisciplinary Humanities program will be in 2026/27.

B: Recommendations

Recommendation #1

Reverse the order of the comprehensive examination and thesis proposal requirements, so that the comprehensives come first.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

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

Implementation Plan (1st Priority)

Responsible for approving:	Department
Responsible for resources:	Department
Responsible for implementation:	Department
Timeline:	Dean of Humanities to report by the end of academic year 2019/20

Actions Taken	Year Action Started	Year Action Completed
Action #1: A HUMA subcommittee revised the program's exam procedures and reversed the order of the exam and thesis proposal. These revisions were approved by the HUMA program committee at its Fall 2019 meeting.	2020	2020

Explanation of Actions Taken, Status and Results:

The comprehensive examinations must now be completed at the end of year two and the thesis proposal now must be submitted by 30 April in year three. Discussions about composition of the comprehensive examinations are ongoing.

Recommendation #2

Expand and promote opportunities for “Regionally-Engaged” and “Research Creation” projects. HUMA should build on an area of existing (but underexploited) strength by encouraging, emphasizing, and promoting “Research Creation” (PhD final projects that include both creative and scholarly components) and other alternative PhD final project forms that require students to engage more broadly with audiences both inside and outside the academy. Related to this, we encourage the program to explore expansion of opportunities for students to pursue regionally-engaged and public-facing humanities practices and degree outcomes in HUMA’s program.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers the recommendation to be accepted for consideration. The Committee expects that the program is best-positioned to examine how HUMA degree outcomes might be changed to encourage public-facing humanities practices and the possibility of alternative PhD final project forms.

Implementation Plan (2nd Priority)

Responsible for approving: Department
 Responsible for resources: Department
 Responsible for implementation: Department
 Timeline: Dean of Humanities to report by the end of academic year 2020/2021

Actions Taken	Year Action Started	Year Action Completed
Action #1 HUMA has expanded its capstone projects to include a research-creation and a suite format. These are described in detail in the October 2020 version of the programme’s handbook.	2020	2021

Explanation of Actions Taken, Status and Results:

As the dates indicate, the expanded options were introduced just as COVID crippled scholarly activity. In the current handbook there are four capstone pathway options available to students: dissertation, suite (collection of essays on a theme), research-creation, and thesis by project. Students have started to access the options. A recent graduate although unable to implement fully a research creation option, has, in her post-doctoral work, been able to develop her scholarly agenda in activating research creation as a viable scholarly option. In the Fall of 2022 she organized a panel held at Hart House, University of Toronto, on research creation. Panelists included people who had recently completed their PhDs and current graduate students. One of our current PhD students (now in year two) is actively engaged in working with us to develop protocols on the option. Her own final work will engage research-creation, as will one of our students now completing her first year.

The students currently working in the program are engaged in projects operating at high levels in both the academy and the community. Among them, we have a student working in digital media on war games/video games, an Indigenous student working on areas related to

decolonization, an actor writing a play as part of his capstone project, a student working on animal rights and a student working on a multi-genre artists' book.

As we move towards implementation, we are also actively working with our colleagues in Studies in Comparative Literature and Arts (SCLA) to foreground research creation as an option in both our programs.

Recommendation #3

Create more flexible student programs of study by increasing the number of non-HUMA elective courses students can take.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers the recommendation to be accepted for consideration. The Committee expects that the program is best-positioned to determine the number of non-HUMA elective courses students will be allowed to take.

Implementation Plan (2nd Priority)

Responsible for approving:	Department
Responsible for resources:	Department
Responsible for implementation:	Department
Timeline:	Dean of Humanities to report by the end of academic year 2020/2021

Actions Taken	Year Action Started	Year Action Completed
Action #1 Consider the recommendation.	2020	2020

Explanation of Actions Taken, Status and Results:

Given that university rules now require a minimum number of students in every course, instructors have been struggling to make sure that registration is high enough to ensure that their courses run. That's why there is now an obvious tension between sustaining the viability of our own elective courses and encouraging students to enroll in other academic units. As the rules about minimum enrollment per course apply across the university, the Faculty of Graduate Studies (FGS) is involved in addressing the issues too. One option is that graduate programs work together to make sure that their electives are made visible to students across disciplines who might be interested. Ideally, by advertising to a pool of potential student larger than the ones specifically enrolled in our program, cross-disciplinary opportunities will be more broadly available in two directions: HUMA students enrolling in elective courses in other programs and non-HUMA students enrolling in our elective courses. One faculty member has suggested that we "formalize and standardize a call for course proposals . . . so that faculty beyond HUMA's PC . . . realize that there is room for them in HUMA." We will put this on the GPC agenda.

To answer more explicitly the recommendation to increase the number of non-HUMA electives available to students: as per the FGS rules, all students have the option to take courses

outside the program in which they are registered. We also continue to encourage students, in consultation with their supervisors, to consider courses that will support their doctoral research.

Recommendation #4

Review, refine and codify the relationship between the supervisory committee and the Program Committee.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

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

Implementation Plan (1st Priority)

Responsible for approving:	Department
Responsible for resources:	Department
Responsible for implementation:	Department
Timeline:	Dean of Humanities to report by the end of academic year 2019/20

Actions Taken	Year Action Started	Year Action Completed
<p>Action #1: In its revisions to program procedures undertaken to meet recommendation 1, the program committee ensured that the relationship between the supervisory committee and the program committee was clearly articulated.</p>	2020	2020

Explanation of Actions Taken, Status and Results:

Here is the current process as defined in the calendar. It was revised to address interactions between the Program Committee and the Supervisory Committee.

In cases where the Supervisory Committee approves a proposal but the GPD has concerns about the quality of the proposal, the GPD will discuss those concerns with the student supervisor. If disagreement persists or if the GPD is concerned that there is no plan in place to address the shortcomings of the proposal, the GPD will consult with the Program Committee and assess whether to approve the proposal or not. The Program Committee may opt to

- Approve the proposal as submitted
- Approve the proposal as submitted and offer recommendations on how to address the concerns and successfully complete the project
- Request revisions prior to approval
- Not approve the proposal

The Program Committee will notify the student and the supervisory committee of its decision in writing. The letter will delineate the reasons for the decision, provide suggestions for revisions if appropriate, and will set a reasonable deadline for the proposal’s resubmission for approval if appropriate. The revised proposal will be submitted to the Supervisory Committee and GPD who

shall assess the proposal anew and in light of the requests for revisions. The process of approval/non-approval is the same as for the first submission of the thesis proposal.

Recommendation #5

HUMA’s Program Committee should work with adjacent/cognate units towards the development of an Interdisciplinary MA in the Humanities.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers the recommendation to be accepted for consideration.

Implementation Plan (2nd Priority)

Responsible for approving:	Department
Responsible for resources:	Department
Responsible for implementation:	Department
Timeline:	Dean of Humanities to report by the end of academic year 2020/21

Actions Taken	Year Action Started	Year Action Completed
Action #1: a subcommittee was struck to assess the possibility of creating a HUMA MA.	2020	2022

Explanation of Actions Taken, Status and Results:

Since the Fall of 2022, Lissa Paul (as current GPD) has been working with Catherine Parayre, GPD of Studies in Comparative Literatures and Arts (SCLA) to formalize the alignment of SCLA’s MA program with HUMA’s PhD program. SCLA’s committee has voted unanimously in favour of such a formalization, and we will set a vote early in 2023, after we’ve confirmed that we’ve met any issues raised by the Faculty of Graduate Studies. In the interim, we have also been working with the Recruitment Office to indicate that we are developing options for students wanting to move from an MA program in SCLA to a PhD program in HUMA. We are also expanding our connections with other academic units in the university especially, Dramatic Arts, Digital Humanities and History.

Recommendation #6

The Program Committee should revisit and re-conceptualize the general field exam component of comprehensive exam.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

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

Implementation Plan (1st Priority)

Responsible for approving:	Department
Responsible for resources:	Department
Responsible for implementation:	Department
Timeline:	Dean of Humanities to report by the end of academic year 2019/20

Actions Taken	Year Action Started	Year Action Completed
Action #1 See Recommendation 1.	2020	2020

Explanation of Actions Taken, Status and Results:

As consensus on a standardized body of common knowledge becomes increasingly difficult to achieve—especially in an interdisciplinary program—we are actively engaged in rethinking options for ensuring that students acquire the depth and breadth of knowledge which used to be defined by comprehensive examinations. To address the issue—at least in the interim--individualized reading lists as well as standardized lists were revised, and they are subject to ongoing revision.

Here is the current calendar description on the design of the comprehensive examination lists:
 . . . students and their supervisors will create and submit to the GPD reading lists of 35 texts for each written exam. For the specific exam, the student, in consultation with his or her supervisory committee, will devise a reading list that covers the broad field related to his or her research. While some of these texts might duplicate those that are on the thesis bibliography, this exam is to cover a wider area than the narrow thesis topic. The program’s four standard reading lists in place for the general exams will serve as a starting point for the general exam reading list, with at least 14 texts chosen from each of the standard lists for the student’s two chosen fields, with the option of substituting five alternative texts.

Recommendation #7

We encourage the Program Committee to continue to recruit new faculty participation in teaching core courses, welcoming HUMA students into their existing courses, serving on supervisory committees (as supervisors, co-supervisors or members), and taking part in program leadership. As part of visualizing and actualizing an open and flexible definition of “interdisciplinary humanities,” the Program Committee should be constantly seeking opportunities to tap the research and teaching potential of scholars in the Faculty of Humanities, and from relevant fields in the Social Sciences, Education, and the Marilyn I. Walker School of Fine and Performing Arts.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

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

Implementation Plan (1st Priority)

Responsible for approving:	Department
Responsible for resources:	Department
Responsible for implementation:	Department
Timeline:	Dean of Humanities to report by the end of academic year 2019/20

Actions Taken	Year Action Started	Year Action Completed
Action #1: Recruit a wider range of faculty to teach in the program.	2020	Ongoing

Explanation of Actions Taken, Status and Results:

Since the 2019 review, there has been increased attention to diversifying the faculty. We have active participation from faculty members in Dramatic Arts, Digital Humanities, Education, English, History, Modern Languages, Philosophy, Political Science and Sociology.

Recommendation #8

Supporting innovative interdisciplinary programs calls for innovations in administration. Despite resource constraints, there are many things that the Faculty of Humanities and other senior administrative units could do to promote the success of (this and other) interdisciplinary graduate programs.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers the recommendation to be not actionable as stated. However, the Committee recognizes the role of administrative offices in the promotion of programs and encourages the program to consult with them as appropriate.

Implementation Plan

Recommendation not accepted.

Explanation of Actions Taken, Status and Results:

As the ARC response notes, the tentativeness of the recommendation reads as a kind of veiled allusion to something not clearly stated. Perhaps the best way to address the issue is to say that at this juncture we do have strong working relationships with the Dean and Associate Dean in Humanities and with the Faculty of Graduate Studies. Given the impact—especially the financial impact-- of COVID-related restrictions on all of us, we all recognize the need to be mutually supportive.

C. Unit Summative Analysis and Evaluation**1. To what extent has the Program achieved the improvements suggested by the reviewers?**

The recommendations related to revising the comps/proposal order have been implemented as have the recommendations related to the relationships between the supervisory and program committees and broadening of interdisciplinary approaches and faculty. Both—according to long-serving faculty members—have helped.

We're working (recommendation 5) on aligning the SCLA MA with our PhD and appreciate that in so doing we are creating an internal path for students to our program. Work on revisiting comps and the development of a research creation option remain ongoing. Two second-year students and one first-year student organized a very successful roundtable discussion on research creation in the Fall of 2022. They have more focused discussions planned for the Winter of 2023. HUMA and SCLA were also awarded a small grant from the Dean's Discretionary Fund to assemble background information on how research creation is handled in other institutions.

2. What overall impact has it had on the Program?

Long-serving faculty members have also noted that changing the order of the capstone / proposal has had a positive impact as have the recommendations to expand the options to include research-creation, suite and project options.

3. Is the Program adopting a process of continuous quality improvement for its programs?

Yes, though as that process had been ongoing, and continues to be ongoing, it is not clear if the formal review offered insights that weren't already in play.

4. How well do the programs now align with Brock University strategic priorities?

Very well, especially in the context of research capacity in the development of research-creation options, and support for social and cultural vitality and the value of interdisciplinary approaches. Among our current students there is someone working on Indigenous issues, others on animal rights. Both would fit with Brock's strategic mandate to "foster a culture of inclusivity, accessibility, reconciliation and decolonization" as well as a commitment to "enhance the life and vitality of our local region and beyond."

5. How does this review and its results position the program as it moves into the next review cycle?

We are evolving, especially in:

1. Developing research creation, suite (collection of essays on a common theme) and thesis by project options
2. Expanding the interdisciplinary options and faculty members
3. Rethinking comprehensive exams
4. Aligning SCLA MA with HUMA PhD

D. ARC Final Summary

In final summary of the 2018-2019 cyclical academic review of the program offered by the Faculty of Humanities, ARC has determined the following:

1. That the Reviewers' Recommendations have been addressed satisfactorily.
2. That the Program has established a direction for next steps as it prepares for the next review cycle.
3. That the Program has achieved a broad-based, reflective and forward-looking self-assessment.