

Final Assessment Report
Submitted by SUPR-G to SCAPA

Program:	Comparative Literature
Degrees Offered:	MA and PhD in Comparative Literature
Approved Fields:	
Date of Site Visit:	February 5-6, 2013
Evaluation:	<i>Good with report in one year</i>

Summary:

Recommendation:	Responsibility
Advertising campaign for recruitment and direct contact with feeder programs	Graduate Chair
Update program material on MLL website	Graduate Chair
Improve online visibility beyond MLL website	Graduate Chair
Institution of Comparative Literature Research Groups, with grant objectives to support grad students	Graduate Chair
Clarify process for TA assignments, and solicitation of student preferences about same, and publicize to grad students	Graduate Chair
Clarify Collective Agreement status of TA "full course" instruction	Graduate Chair
Require template for coursed syllabii	Graduate Chair
Formalize 2.5 max PhD course load	Graduate Chair, with Program Committee
Clarification and publication of goals, objective and content of PhD Foundations course	Graduate Chair, with Program Committee
At least one section of CL 9503 to be offered in English	Graduate Chair
Introduction of Comp. Lit. Graduate Student Handbook	Graduate Chair
Requirement that applicants identify two potential supervisors and statement of interest, and that potential supervisors indicate willingness to supervise	Graduate Chair
Exploration of possibility of joint PhD degrees	Graduate Chair

The strengths and innovative aspects of the program.

In their report the External Consultants reviewers praise the high quality of the faculty and students in the Comparative Literature Program. They applaud a proposed plan to re-focus the program around three thematic areas of Media, Mobilities and Theories. The Consultants remark on student progress as excellent, and note "good morale and a sense of community". Library resources are also described as excellent, as are program space and computer resources, and the exam structure is noted as generally strong.

Areas for improvement.

The Consultants express a concern about lack of linguistic preparation by Canadian students. They also note scope for improvement in adequacy and sources of student support, particularly for the summer semester and in cases where the program cannot be completed within the allotted funding period. They perceive a need for better, more transparent consultation with students about the allocation of TAs. In regard to curriculum requirements, the Consultants note some inconsistency in the content and goals of a Foundations course. While the Consultants emphasize that the program has “no need to apologize” for the generally recognized Eurocentricism of the curriculum, they also note the importance of avoiding “false expectations” from incoming students.

Opportunities for enhancement.

The Consultants emphatically propose that the program needs to focus on advertising its new profile, targeted recruitment and collaborative, grant-attracting research that will help fund students.

Steps the program can or should take for improvement.

Several steps for improvement were recommended by the Consultants; they are listed below.

- i) No changes in language requirements that would reduce the linguistic entrance requirements for PhD candidates
- ii) Targeted recruitment, including:
 - a) High school recruitment campaign.
 - b) Improved advertisement of the program, particularly to institutions that privilege linguistic competence.
 - c) Improvement of the MLL website.
 - d) Greater Web visibility for the Comp. Lit. program.
 - e) Clearer articulation in promotional materials of the program’s nature and objectives.
- iii) Faculty be encouraged and assisted to seek external funding opportunities that will assist students in financial support and take advantage of the newly developed areas of concentration to develop research clusters and collaborative projects to attract grant success.
- iv) Uncertainty about the funding provisions for international students and confusion about the constraints on such funding should be clarified by discussion between the program, the Faculty of Arts and Humanities and SGPS.
- v) Improved solicitation of student TA preferences, and clear stipulation of procedures for assigning TAs.
- vi) Discussion of the core content of the Foundation course by members of the program and clear articulations of course objectives in syllabi.
- vii) While applauding the new proposed triadic areas of concentration structure, the reviewers recommend greater flexibility than the plan currently envisages, both in course choices within the program and in permission to take courses outside a the department, as well as a possible reduction in course load.
- viii) That the Thesis Project and Professional Writing course be taught in English.
- ix) That the program produces a Student Handbook with clear information about vital aspects of the program
- x) Admission procedure be changed to require a) students to identify two potential supervisors, and to provide a rationale for this choice and b) that selected supervisors sign a form confirming in principle their willingness to take on supervision of the student.

xi) That the program considers the possibility of offering a joint degree in Comparative Literature and a national language, providing this can be done in such a way as to not add excessive time to students' completion time.

Improvements that require support or assistance beyond the program

- i) With SGPS and HR, clarification over the conformity with Collective Agreements in regard to having TAs instruct entire courses.
- ii) With SGPS and Research Services, that faculty be encouraged and assisted to seek external funding opportunities as in iii) above.
- iii) With MLL, that improvements be made in web sites as per ii) c & d above.

Program response

The Graduate Chair, Comparative Literature, provides a comprehensive response to the External Consultant's report. By and large it is in agreement with their recommendations; most of the timelines for implementation of the recommendations proposed above are drawn from the graduate chair's response, in several cases slightly extending the deadlines he proposes. In a few cases where assent was indicated, but no timelines provided, the Internal Reviewer has made his own suggestions. In one or two instances, the chair provided grounds for rejecting the External Consultant's recommendations—for example, in his observation that a proposed high school recruiting campaign would be of most relevance to an undergraduate program, and in such cases the recommendation is not included on the SUPR-G list.

Internal reviewer's note and recommended evaluation

The External Consultants noted that they received conflicting information about the number of applications received over recent years. This point is not addressed in the Program response, and the Internal Reviewer therefore wishes to underline the importance of clarifying this important metric.

Overall this is a positive report on the program, but it does make a considerable number of suggestions for improvement, so the Internal Reviewer suggest an evaluation of "Good Quality with Report", the report to be submitted by May 2014.