



**History**  
**Final Assessment Report &  
Implementation Plan**  
**May 2024**

<b>Faculty / Affiliated University College</b>	Social Science	
<b>Degrees Offered</b>	MA, PhD	
<b>Date of Last Review</b>	2015-2016	
<b>Approved Fields</b>	Public History	
<b>External Reviewers</b>	Dr. Catherine Carstairs, Department of History University of Guelph	Dr. Allison Marsh, Department of History University of South Carolina
<b>Internal Reviewers</b>	Dr. Tom Drysdale, Associate Dean Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry	Nathan Pagliaroli, Ph.D. Candidate, Mathematics
<b>Date of Site Visit</b>	January 15 & 16, 2024	
<b>Date Review Report Received</b>	February 5, 2024	
<b>Date Program/Faculty Response Received</b>	Program – May 15, 2024 Faculty – May 17, 2024	
<b>Evaluation</b>	Good Quality	
<b>Approval Dates</b>	SUPR-G: June 24, 2024 ACA: September 4, 2024 Senate (for information): September 13, 2024	
<b>Year of Next Review</b>	2031-2032	
<b>Progress Report</b>	June 2027	

### **Overview of Western’s Cyclical Review Assessment Reporting Process**

In accordance with Western’s Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP), the Final Assessment Report (FAR) provides a summary of the cyclical review, internal responses, and assessment and evaluation of the Graduate History Program delivered by the Faculty of Social Science.

This FAR considers the following documents:

- the program’s self-study brief;
- the external reviewers’ report;
- the response from the Program; and
- the response from the Dean, Faculty of Social Science.

This FAR identifies the strengths of the program and opportunities for program enhancement and improvement, and details the recommendations of the external reviewers – noting those recommendations to be prioritized for implementation.

The Implementation Plan details the recommendations from the FAR that have been selected for implementation, identifies who is responsible for approving and acting on the recommendations, specifies any action or follow-up that is required, and defines the timeline for completion.

The FAR (including Implementation Plan) is sent for approval through the Senate Subcommittee for Program Review - Graduate (SUPR-G) and ACA, then for information to Senate and to the Ontario Universities’ Council on Quality Assurance. Subsequently, it is publicly accessible on Western’s IQAP website. The FAR is the only document from the graduate cyclical review process that is made public; all other documents are confidential to the Department of History, the School of Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies (SGPS), and SUPR-G.

## **Executive Summary**

History was first taught as a separate discipline at Western in 1895. The first Master's thesis in History was defended in 1903 and the Ph.D. degree introduced in 1964.

The Graduate History Program has deep strengths in the histories of Canada and the United States, and the history of international relations and conflict. The regular MA program has two curriculum options: 1) The project-based option is a 3 term (12 month) program that requires the completion of six one-term courses and a research essay; 2) The thesis option is a 6 term (two year) program that also requires six one-term courses and a thesis based on original scholarship. Total enrolment in the MA in 2021-22 was 41. The PhD program requires completion of four one-term courses, a one-term course in Professional Development, a working knowledge of a second language as tested by a translation exercise, the completion of comprehensive exams in three fields, a dissertation proposal and proposal defense, and the dissertation and its defense. Total enrolment in the PhD in 2021-22 was 33.

The self-study was informed by separate surveys to the MA and PhD programs in May 2023, as well as by data collected as part of changes to the graduate program in 2021.

The external reviewers shared a positive assessment of the graduate History Program. They offer seven recommendations with considerations for further enhancement.

## **Strengths and Innovative Features Identified by the Program**

- The Public History MA field is among the first of its kind in Canada, and has achieved significant recognition both in Canada and internationally.
  - o Since 2008, 93% of graduates have secured employment in the public history field upon graduation.
- Two endowed lecture series widely recognized as being among the most important history lecture series in Canada.
- Strong community partnerships and relationships with a range of institutions including Culture; Heritage; Tourism; Government; Education; and Media; which enable students to access intensive internships with local, provincial, national, international heritage and cultural institutions.
- The program hosts dedicated professional development workshops. PhD students take professional development courses in the winter term of their second year and the Public History Professional Development Series provide networking opportunities.
- Students have opportunities to pursue collaborative graduate programs - Environment and Sustainability, Migration and Ethnic Relations, and Transitional Justice and Post-Conflict Reconstruction.
- Robust mechanism to engage students and elicit their feedback which is used in program planning – for instance, enhanced promotion of wellness, offering

greater variety of courses, providing more training to graduate students in leading tutorials and marking papers.

- MA student comments stressed the approachability of the faculty and staff, the strong quality of the courses and the rigor of the classes.

### **Concerns and Areas of Improvement Identified and Discussed by the Program**

- Even though gender balance has been achieved, other forms of faculty diversity require further effort.
- Ongoing need to explore additional funding opportunities for students, including funding a fifth year.
- Enrolment declining for the MA thesis option.
- MA and PhD students indicated a need for more attention to preparing students for their teaching responsibilities by the graduate program.
  - o Students desire more extensive guidance in leading tutorials and in commenting on and marking essays and exams.
- A third of the PhD student respondents thought more had to be done to build a sense of community in the program.

### **Review Process**

As part of the external review, the review committee, comprising two external reviewers, one internal reviewer and a graduate student reviewer, were provided with Volume I and II of the self-study brief in advance of the scheduled review and then met in-person over two days with the:

- Vice-Provost of the School of Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies
- Associate Vice-Provost of the School of Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies
- Vice-Provost, Academic Planning, Policy and Faculty
- Dean of the Faculty of Social Science
- Associate Graduate Dean, Social Science
- Department Chair
- Graduate Chair
- Associate University Librarian
- Department Staff
- Program Faculty Members
- Graduate Students

Following the site visit, the external reviewers submitted a comprehensive report of their findings which was sent to the Program and Dean for review and response. Formative documents, including Volumes I and II of the Self-Study, the External Report, and the Program and Decanal responses form the basis of this Final Assessment Report (FAR) of the Graduate History Program. The FAR is collated and submitted to the SGPS and

to SUPR-G by the Internal Reviewer with the support of the Office of Academic Quality and Enhancement.

### **Summative Assessment – External Reviewers’ Report**

External reviewers shared that *“this is a very good program with well-qualified faculty, a healthy number of graduate students, attentive supervision, and an excellent array of supports and resources for their graduate students, including a wide array of professional development opportunities and seminar series.”*

#### **Strengths of the Program**

- The faculty are very strong in international relations and have global networks for presenting and disseminating their research work.
- Faculty are clearly passionate about their teaching and care deeply about student success.
- Substantial internship opportunities, some of which are funded by the department and others funded by outside organizations.
- Students participate in a wide variety of local, regional, national, and international conferences.
- BIPOC students expressed that faculty and program are supportive and scholarships are available to underrepresented groups.
- The program’s collaboration with King’s, Huron and practicing professionals expand intellectual and practical opportunities for students.
- The public history program at the MA level is particularly innovative. It is one of very few public history programs across the country and the students are involved in in-depth group projects over the course of their degree.
  - o The public history program has strong links with local institutions.

#### **Prospective Improvements for the Program to Consider**

- Revisit and recalibrate evidence of student achievement of program learning outcomes. *(Embedded in Recommendation # 1)*
- Factor in anticipated retirements and consider succession planning – which is necessary for program sustainability. *(Embedded in Recommendation # 2)*
- The concentration of supervision among three faculty members, both currently and historically, is concerning. *(Embedded in Recommendation # 2)*
- Consider ways of sustaining cooperative arrangements with Huron, King’s and practicing professionals which are presently maintained by goodwill and personal relations. *(Embedded in Recommendation # 2)*
- Review the workload expectations of the MA and PhD students and explore options of aiding with program completion within the funding period; as this

contributes to notable levels of stress and anxiety expressed by students.  
(*Embedded in Recommendation # 3*)

- Funding packages could be improved if faculty members had more access to Tri-Council funding, SSHRC and other sources of external funding. (*Embedded in Recommendation # 4*)
- Review the curriculum to ensure that the history of colonization, global racism, gender history and the history of disability are being covered across the program. (*Embedded in Recommendation # 5*)
- Students and faculty are largely unaware of the joint MA/JD option. (*Embedded in Recommendation # 6*)
- Examine prospects for broader faculty involvement and responsibility for the experiential learning projects in the public history program. (*Embedded in Recommendation # 7*)
- Enhance student participation in the workshop and lecture series.

**Summary of the Reviewers’ Recommendations and Program/Faculty Responses**

The following are the reviewers’ recommendations in the order listed by the external reviewers.

Reviewers’ Recommendation	Program/Faculty Response
<p><b>Recommendation 1:</b> Re-examine the learning outcomes to ensure that they are achievable in the funding period, most particularly the demand that the cognate paper be similar to a peer-reviewed article and that the dissertation be similar to a scholarly monograph. The department also needs to be more deliberative in how the learning outcomes will be achieved by students.</p>	<p><b>Program:</b> The language in the Department’s Graduate Program Handbook has now been revised to make clear that MA cognate essays and theses and doctoral dissertations are meant to provide a foundation for a publication, not to be immediately publishable.</p> <p>The department believes that its courses do achieve these Learning Outcomes; they are the heart of all academic endeavors. The Department Chair will continue to prioritize these outcomes in selecting graduate courses and in asking members of the faculty to develop new courses. For example, in 2024-25 the Department will for the first time offer a graduate course on Indigenous history, taught by a new History faculty member who is an expert in the field. Efforts to achieve these Learning Outcomes are ongoing.</p> <p><b>Faculty:</b> The Dean’s Office supports the response of the program to date and appreciate the plan for ongoing deliberation on how learning outcomes are achieved among History faculty, graduate students, and staff.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 2:</b> Conduct an impact study and devise a succession plan to ensure the long-term success of the graduate program in the face of pending retirements or unexpected illness. Consider how losing key individuals will directly affect course offerings (geographically, temporally, and thematically) and supervision of graduate students. Consider how losing multiple faculty will shape the future of the program. This impact study should also include the effects of losing faculty at King’s and Huron who supervise significant numbers of graduate students.</p>	<p><b>Program:</b> This is an extremely serious issue, but it is not a problem that the department can solve, or at least not on its own. The greying of the faculty has not been accompanied by many new appointments. There are no retirements of PhD supervisors currently announced. Most importantly, the department cannot know when faculty will retire. If a PhD supervisor retires, all efforts will be made to find the most suitable replacement possible at that time. The department has no jurisdiction concerning faculty at affiliate colleges.</p> <p><b>Faculty:</b> The program is correct in noting that some aspects of this recommendation are not entirely under its control. The Dean’s Office is committed to supporting this program, given multiple demands on the Faculty’s budget at present and in the near future.</p>

<p><b>Recommendation 3:</b> Reduce the number of required courses for the PhD program and the MA thesis option and consider reducing the number of required courses for the MA cognate option.</p>	<p><b>Program:</b> Both the Graduate Committee and the department faculty have discussed this recommendation. There was little support for the recommendation that the number of courses required for the MA thesis and cognate essay be reduced. The program believes that MA students benefit from the rigorous study of current historical scholarship on the range of subjects examined in our courses; and, the number of courses required is not atypical when compared with other Ontario universities, and considering that the MA thesis is funded for two years. Opinions were divided with respect to the recommendation that the number of courses required of doctoral students be reduced.</p> <p><b>Faculty:</b> The Dean’s Office notes History faculty members’ mixed viewpoints regarding this suggestion and support their plans for ongoing discussion regarding whether reducing the number of courses is consistent with the vision for the program.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 4:</b> Faculty members should be applying for Tri-Council funding to provide more funding for their PhD students.</p>	<p><b>Program:</b> The program agrees with this recommendation. The Associate Dean (Research) gave an invited presentation on the support his office provides for funding applications at the April 2024 Department meeting.</p> <p><b>Faculty:</b> Dean’s Office strongly agrees with this suggestion and have asked History program leadership to consider ways to motivate program faculty to seek Tri-council funding at increased rates, relative to the past.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 5:</b> Review all current syllabi and field reading lists noting the diverse perspectives in topics and authors, as a benchmark exercise. Revisit this in three years and at the next formal review to see if there is a trend towards more inclusivity.</p>	<p><b>Program:</b> The program disagrees with this recommendation and does intend to continue department discussions aimed at encouraging the inclusion of diverse perspectives in the syllabi. Preference is for a more collaborative process that respects faculty expertise, rather than a top-down check-box process.</p> <p><b>Faculty:</b> The program has argued that this recommendation need not be implemented as the current syllabi emphasize diverse perspectives. Program leaders note various initiatives already in place to maintain student exposure to diverse vantage points.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 6:</b> Either eliminate the JD/MA program or promote it. Advertise Western’s three collaborative graduate programs more effectively.</p>	<p><b>Program:</b> The Department has voted to eliminate the JD/MA program; and will promote the three collaborative graduate programs more effectively.</p> <p><b>Faculty:</b> The department has decided to proceed with eliminating the JD/MA program and has articulated plans for enhancing the visibility of its three collaborative programs as well.</p>



<p><b>Recommendation 7:</b> Find ways of involving more faculty in their impressive public history program to ensure its stability and prevent burnout among faculty.</p>	<p><b>Program:</b> The History Department Chair and Graduate Chair met with the leaders of the Public History field to discuss how more members of the History Department, and faculty from other Western departments, might teach Public History courses. This possibility will be pursued in the coming year.</p> <p><b>Faculty:</b> The program is engaging in ongoing discussion with its faculty members concerning ways to support the public history field.</p>
---	--

### Implementation Plan

The Implementation Plan provides a summary of the recommendations that require action and/or follow-up. In each case, the Graduate Program Chair, in consultation with the SGPS and the Dean of the Faculty is responsible for enacting and monitoring the actions noted in Implementation Plan.

Recommendation	Proposed Action and Follow-up	Responsibility	Timeline
<p><b>Recommendation #1:</b> Be more deliberative in how the learning outcomes will be achieved by students.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to prioritize outcomes in selecting graduate and in the development of new courses.</li> <li>Consider undertaking a dedicated curriculum mapping exercise that would aid in better articulating how outcomes align with courses and milestones and where any gaps or redundancies may exist.</li> </ul>	Graduate Chair	Ongoing
<p><b>Recommendation #2:</b> Conduct an impact study and devise a succession plan to ensure the long-term success of the graduate program in the face of pending retirements.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discuss faculty renewal needs and options with the Dean’s Office.</li> <li>Develop a succession plan for the next two Graduate Chairs.</li> <li>Assist with any challenges involving the need to replace supervisors, should circumstances require it.</li> </ul>	Department Chair  Associate Dean (Graduate) and Graduate Chair	By Dec 2024

<p><b>Recommendation #3:</b> Reduce the number of required courses for the PhD program and the MA thesis option and consider reducing the number of required courses for the MA cognate option.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Dedicate discussion at the fall Department meetings, and at a possible fall retreat, to the appropriate number and ideal types of graduate courses for PhD students.</li> </ul>	<p>Graduate Chair</p>	<p>By Dec 2025</p>
<p><b>Recommendation #4:</b> Faculty members should be applying for Tri-Council funding to provide more funding for their PhD students.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Work with the Office of the Associate Dean Research in support of funding applications.</li> </ul>	<p>Department Chair</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
<p><b>Recommendation #5:</b> Review all current syllabi and field reading lists noting the diverse perspectives in topics and authors. Revisit this in three years and at the next formal review to see if there is a trend towards more inclusivity.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Continue department discussions aimed at encouraging the inclusion of diverse perspectives in the syllabi. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Evaluate outcomes of these discussions in three years (in the standard progress report).</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>Graduate Chair</p>	<p>By June 2027</p>
<p><b>Recommendation #6:</b> Either eliminate the JD/MA program or promote it. Advertise Western’s three collaborative graduate programs more effectively.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Prepare a submission for the closure of the JD/MA program.</li> <li>● Promote the three collaborative graduate programs at the: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ orientation for new graduate students</li> <li>○ summer meetings with in-coming students</li> <li>○ any other information session</li> <li>○ and among faculty members</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>Graduate Chair</p>	<p>By Dec 2024</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 7:</b> Find ways of involving more faculty in their impressive public history program to ensure its stability and prevent burnout among faculty.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Liaise with faculty members in the History Department to determine interest and availability to teach Public History courses.</li> <li>● Consider possible changes to the 2025-26 timetable to incorporate additional faculty into the teaching of a required Public History course.</li> </ul>	<p>Graduate Chair</p>	<p>By Dec 2024</p>