



Department of English & Writing Studies Final Assessment Report

Faculty / Affiliated University College	Arts & Humanities
Degrees Offered	BA
Modules Reviewed	Honors Specialization in English Language and Literature Honors Specialization in Creative Writing and English Language and Literature Specialization in English Language and Literature Major in English Language and Literature
External Consultants	Dr. Robert Aguirre, Senior Associate Dean, College of Liberal Arts & Sciences, Professor of English, Wayne State University Dr. Andrew Taylor, Professor, Department of English, University of Ottawa
Internal Reviewers	Dr. Douglas Jones, Vice Dean, Basic Medical Sciences, Schulich School of Medicine and Dentistry, Western University
Date of Site Visit	February 26, 2018
Evaluation	Good Quality with Report in Three Years
Approval Dates	SUPR-U: May 16, 2018 SCAPA: May 30, 2018 Senate:

Executive Summary

All meetings took place in the Arts & Humanities building which was nearing renovation completion. The formal meetings began with Drs. John Doerksen, Vice Provost (Academic Programs) and Karen Campbell, Vice-Provost (Academic Planning, Policy & Faculty). Dr. Doerksen reviewed the Quality Assurance process and program in Ontario, and focused on the Learning Outcomes of the curriculum. Dr. Doerksen commented that English had gone through a considerable restructuring and refocusing with attention on skill development, and they would be able to use this assessment to determine strategies for moving forward. Recognizing that English was losing enrolment, there was a emphasis on turning this around by collaborating with Classical Studies and Women’s Studies with a major focus on experiential and active education.

Dr. Campbell focused on the faculty component and on the relatively stable constituents in the English Department. In comparison, the Writing Studies contingent has many limited term appointments without PhD’s, which causes some growing pains, but strong commitments to working through any emerging issues related to this. At the same time, there are opportunities for the introduction of writing courses with other areas such as Engineering. She also explained the current issue with funding modules, with some areas having incremental enrolments, so the declining enrolments has resulted with “claw-backs” which have caused a problem. In her view, the corridor funding will mean stability in enrollment numbers, so enriching the environment without an increase in faculty complement should not be a problem. The program will need to establish priorities and use replacements to address any potential gaps, instead of hiring new faculty.

The reviewers met with the Acting Chair, with whom they discussed the impending move into the new building, the opportunities for restructuring in a newly renovated space and the interface between the different types of English and Writing programs. At a subsequent meeting with Dr. Michael Milde, Dean of the Faculty, conversations were focused on the budget implications of the declining enrolment, the opportunities for enhanced interactions, including with Ivey and the combined HBA program, and the implications of moving into a newly renovated building. The use of social media and engagement with the university community were also discussed.

Following a tour of University College the reviewers met with faculty members. The discussions were focused on the faculty and curricular changes, as well as on what was working and what would require significant effort to enhance in the program.

An additional meeting with staff emphasized the potential for outreach, marketing and opportunities for strategically enhancing the catchment of undergraduate students, while utilizing already existing expertise in the Department.

The final meeting of the reviewers was held with undergraduate students. They were very enthusiastic about their interactions with the Department's leadership and faculty members, as well as about the potential for developing a more coherent student body with the redesigned spaces in a newly renovated building. This was considered by the reviewers as a positive enhancement of student engagement in an already good program, and as a potential for improved interactions with other areas such as Film, Women's Studies and Writing.

Significant Strengths of the Program

The reviewers felt that the Department had provided an innovative way of crafting its own learning outcomes which was fostered with "consultation and collegial thinking". However, they also cautioned the necessity of having sufficiently wide outcomes to encompass the variety of fields the graduates could be considering post-graduation. The restructured program was noted to reflect the energy of the faculty and felt by the reviewers to be a good choice in providing greater flexibility for the students and allow for a wider chronological range of offerings, which was seen as appealing to the faculty as well as the students.

The faculty was seen as having an impressive research profile, with grant success and fellowships etc. The writer in residence was seen as innovative and encouraging for young writers. Also the "English 3580 Canadian Literature: Creativity and the Local" course was thought to provide excellent learning for students with local community engagement.

Another strength was the newly renovated building both in terms of the facilities, but also for the potential for enhancing the cohort concept within the student body. This will require thought to make use of both the space and ways of using it for innovative activities for students outside the classroom.

Suggestions for Improvement & Enhancement

There was a recognition of the need for better integration of the Writing program within the English Department and closer affinity of all the faculty rather than writing being perceived as a threat. Another concern was the revisions to the 3rd and 4th year courses hadn't yet made it to 1st and 2nd year courses and perhaps incorporating group presentations and oral communication earlier would benefit the students

Although it didn't make it to the recommendations was the relatively low number of academic advisors available for students. This was also to focus on the aspects of advice of potential career choices as they would likely be more aware than the faculty of what is "beyond the university walls".

Overall the reviewers were quite positive on the Department and recent changes. They had 10 specific recommendations.

1. Extend the revision of the curriculum to the 2000- and 1000-level courses, especially to attract more students into the program. Courses should be designed and taught with an eye to the recruitment of students.
2. Integrate the Writing program, Film Studies, and Women's Studies more fully into the program. To succeed, we feel that integration, rather than separation, is the best way forward. This must take place at all levels: collegiality; voting rights on committees; curriculum. Students are clamouring for more opportunities to reach beyond one discipline, and English, as capacious as it must feel it already is, can lead the way in opening wide the doors of collaboration. This should not be done in a merely symbolic way, but thoroughly, intentionally, and conscientiously.

3. Hire full-time faculty into the Writing program, decreasing the reliance on faculty with poor job security and stature in the university/Faculty.
4. Incorporate some training in oral delivery prior to the 4000-level.
5. Establish a marketing and communication strategy and a committee for social media, web presence, outreach, and community formation, including professors and students.
6. Make the website more accessible to smartphones.
7. Have syllabi posted as early as possible.
8. Expand professional advising.
9. Strengthen the racial and gender diversity in the course offerings by weaving these discourses more thoroughly throughout courses on periods, genres, authors, etc.
10. Promote experiential learning across a broader range of courses.

Departmental/Decanal responses to the recommendations.

1. The Department has agreed to test some adjustments to the 1st year course, but suggest that 2nd year courses are not amenable to such adjustments.
2. Although there have been some adjustments, the departmental response was to await the arrival of a new chair to proceed with this recommendation. The Dean also points out that Women's Studies is a different department so "incorporation" is not part of the mandate although enhanced interdisciplinarity within the Department and cooperation between departments could be pursued.
3. The department recognized that hiring is beyond the ability of the program itself.
4. The department will ask the undergraduate committee to look for opportunities to incorporate more oral presentations.
5. The department suggested a committee composed of the Coordinator, Vice Chair, Chair, and Undergraduate Chair to be responsible for developing the strategy with the Coordinator being responsible for developing the platform. The Dean agreed that delegating this work to individuals who have these items as part of their portfolio would be achievable. The distinction between this collective and a "committee" isn't clear. In addition, the Dean suggested that assistance from the Faculty's Communications Officer, Jo Jennings could be a resource for this group (committee).
6. The department agrees this to be an ongoing issue, which they will be working on. No specific plans were given.
7. The department commented that they will work to get information out earlier.
8. The department recognized that this was a Faculty issue which they commented that they would explore ways of being more proactive with students in need of career counselling.
9. The department stated that rotation of courses in the 3rd year was assisting with enhancing diversity and that increasing course offerings will be useful for enhancement.
10. The department will encourage additional faculty to incorporate experiential learning in additional courses.

Of the 10 recommendations, only 3 are necessary to halt the slide in enrolments and provide sustainability of the program.

Recommendations Required for Program Sustainability

Recommendation	Responsibility
Explore opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration with the Writing Program and Film Studies.	Dean and Department
Establish a marketing and communication strategy for social media, web presence, outreach, and community formation, including professors and students	Department/Faculty
Strengthen the racial and gender diversity in the course offerings by weaving these discourses more thoroughly throughout courses on periods, genres, authors, etc.	Department