

**Final Assessment Report &  
Implementation Plan  
March 2020**

<b>Faculty / Affiliated University College</b>	Faculty of Arts & Humanities
<b>Degrees Offered</b>	BA
<b>Modules Reviewed</b>	Major in Arts & Humanities
<b>External Consultants</b>	Dr. Peggy McCracken, Professor and Director, Institute for the Humanities, University of Michigan Dr. Paul Keen, Professor and Associate Dean (Student and Postdoctoral Affairs), Department of English Language and Literature, Carleton University
<b>Internal Reviewer</b>	Professor Mary Weil, Faculty Director of the HBA Program, Ivey Business School, Western University
<b>Date of Site Visit</b>	February 6-7, 2020
<b>Evaluation</b>	<b>Good Quality</b>
<b>Approval Dates</b>	SUPR-U: October 14, 2020 SCAPA: October 28, 2020 Senate (FYI only): November 13, 2020
<b>Year of Next Review</b>	Year of next cyclical review – 2027-28

## **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 undergraduate modules delivered by the School for Advanced Studies in the Arts & Humanities (SASAH).

This report considers the following documents: the program's self-study, the external consultants' report and the responses from the Department/School and Faculty. The Final Assessment Report (FAR) identifies the strengths of the program, opportunities for program enhancement and improvement and details and prioritizes the recommendations of the external consultants and prioritizes those recommendations that are selected for implementation.

The Implementation Plan details the recommendations from the Final Assessment Report that are necessary for implementation, identifies who is responsible for approving and acting on the recommendations, outlines any action or follow-up that is required, and provides the timeline for completion.

The Final Assessment Report and Implementation Plan is sent for approval through SUPR-U, SCAPA, Senate and the Ontario Universities' Council on Quality Assurance and is made available on a publicly accessible location on Western's IQAP website. The Final Assessment Report with the Implementation Plan is the only document resulting from the undergraduate cyclical review process that is made public; all other documents are confidential to the Program/School/Faculty and SUPR-U.

### **Executive Summary**

Created in 2013, the School for Advanced Studies in the Arts & Humanities (SASAH) is a modular liberal-arts undergraduate program, housed in the Faculty of Arts & Humanities that focusses on interdisciplinarity. As a direct-entry program, students combine courses from across the Arts & Humanities with a second major or specialization, thus acquiring the breadth and depth essential to pursue graduate studies and/or forge their career path.

The SASAH program was created to foster academic innovation and promotes excellence and creativity as well as community engagement to produce ethical, knowledgeable citizens capable of meeting the challenges of an evolving world and assuming leadership roles. In this academic environment, SASAH students develop an array of soft and hard skills that set them on a path to success as defined by the students themselves.

VISION - As a nationally recognized undergraduate program focused on interdisciplinary education within and beyond the arts and humanities, SASAH inspires and promotes innovation in teaching,

creativity, and community engagement, producing ethical, knowledgeable citizens capable of leadership and of meeting the challenges of the contemporary world.

MISSION - SASAH's issues-based education emphasizes disciplinary legacies and interdisciplinary potentialities within the university, empowering students to transform the world through critical thinking, cultural production, and community engagement, and complementarily advancing the study and relevance of the arts and humanities.

The program values interdisciplinarity, experimentation, dedication, curiosity, relevance, uniqueness, and has a futures orientation.

With a capacity enrolment of 100 students (25 admitted in Year 1), SASAH faculty developed the curriculum and built program capacity to meet and capitalize upon four mandates:

- scholarly and cultural excellence;
- language acquisition;
- local and global experiential learning and community engagement; and
- proficiency in non-digital and digital communication.

It fulfills this mandate through international initiatives, exchanges and internships, experiential learning, curriculum innovation, and research development.

While there is consistency among faculty teaching in the program there is an ongoing circulation of faculty from amongst the Faculty of Arts & Humanities' many departments so that the program continues to evolve with perspective from diverse academics while carefully balancing consistency and innovation. The program has strong support from Western Libraries and continues to develop in-house technological expertise and equipment.

### **Review Process**

SASAH had completed its 7<sup>th</sup> year of operation when this review was carried out.

To complete its self-study, the SASAH faculty and administration met to internally review the program, and as part of their review, gathered survey data from all faculty, current students and alumni. The completed Self-Study (Volume 1) and Faculty CVs (Volume 2) were then provided to the external review committee well in advance of the site visit.

The external review committee, comprised of two external reviewers and one internal reviewer met for onsite two days with the

- Vice Provost (Academic Programs)
- Vice Provost (Academic Planning, Policy & Faculty)
- Dean, Faculty of Arts & Humanities

- Associate Dean (Academic), Faculty of Arts & Humanities
- Director of SASAH
- Former Founding Director of SASAH
- Chair, Department of Modern Languages
- Graduate Chair, Hispanic Studies
- SASAH faculty members
- SASAH undergraduate students
- Western's Associate Chief Librarian and Associate Librarian
- Administrative Staff (2)

Following the onsite review, the external reviewers submitted a comprehensive report of their findings which was sent to the Program Director and the Dean's Office for review and response.

These formative documents, including Volumes I and II of the Self-Study, the External Report, the program response and the Dean's response, have formed the basis of this summative assessment report of SASAH which is forwarded to the Senate Undergraduate Program Review Committee (SUPR-U) by the Internal Reviewer for action and approval.

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

While still new, the SASAH program is seen as a forward-looking, academically sound example of undergraduate study. As it develops, the program is undergoing constant renewal by the Faculty to improve its management and ultimately the learning experience for the students.

The following program strengths were identified in both the self-study and the External Consultants' Report:

- Consistency of Learning Outcomes with Western University's Strategic Plan and course outlines/content
- Commitment of faculty to the program
- Collaborative teaching amongst faculty that provides a model of collaborative inquiry for students
- Excellent examples of faculty submissions of interdisciplinary proposals for courses to be offered in 2<sup>nd</sup> year that have resulted in rich and diverse learning experiences
- Inclusion of non-academic lecturers in 4<sup>th</sup> year programming on relevant topics of importance
- Experiential learning opportunities flexible and responsive to student needs/ambitions
- Number of award-winning students/graduates (*e.g.*, Rhodes Scholar, Gold medalists, Graduate study scholarships)
- Development of Student Council for program

The following are offered as some topics that arose through the review process for further consideration:

- Recruitment of students to ensure an ongoing cohort of 25 students and dealing with attrition of students throughout the four years of the program
- Perceived lack of flexibility in 2<sup>nd</sup> year choices for students
- Balancing need for students to take initiative in their own learning juxtaposed with students' desire for more structure (*e.g.*, some students requiring more guidance in 3<sup>rd</sup> year)
- Students needing clearer direction and expectations for 4<sup>th</sup> year capstone project
- Developing an online portal for students to share their learning from experiential learning and capstone project
- Increased communication
- The reviewers called for investigation into the development of a SASAH master's program as they note, "...an interdisciplinary humanities master's program would be another area for possible growth in the program."

Increased digital literacy presence

### **Summary of the Reviewers' Key Recommendations and Department/Faculty Responses**

#### Recommendations from External Consultants' Report

The following recommendations for program improvement were acknowledged as 'constructive suggestions' and have been reordered from their document in priority order of importance.

1. Consider structural changes to address recruitment and attrition including:
  - 1.1 More frequent information sessions for students, including cohort advising sessions
  - 1.2 A process for allowing students to apply during first year and enter the program during their second year.
  - 1.3 Opening seats in the first-year course to non-SASAH students, who may then wish to continue in the program.
2. Develop clear governance procedures and practices.
  - 2.1 Appointment of an Associate Director for either one or two years, who will then transition into the role of Director for a three-year term.
  - 2.2 Additional support for the Experiential Learning Coordinator to assist with the internships.
3. Define more clearly the importance of the foreign language requirement for the program; consider integrating it into the other requirements or broadening the scope of the requirement to include other kinds of literacies and skills.

4. Consider how to add more structure to the first semester of the 4th-year capstone course while preserving the perspectives of the visiting instructors.

## **Response from the SASAH Program**

### **1. Recruitment and Attrition**

Attrition: “We note that the current 4<sup>th</sup> year has 20 students, and the current 3<sup>rd</sup> year has about the same number, so our upcoming graduation rates may be expected to increase, suggesting some increased retention overall. ...That said, a percentage of students who complete SASAH stay on for a fifth year to complete their other Major or Specialization, affecting the predictability of our graduation rates. We think that program retention will be a significant, ongoing challenge for the foreseeable future, which will require careful management strategies, and we appreciate the Consultants’ concerns and observations.”

Recruitment and Growth: “The suggestions that we develop a more formalized 2<sup>nd</sup> year entry stream and make spaces available to a select number of non-SASAH students in 1<sup>st</sup> year are both astute and potentially doable. Certainly, the program already accepts students into 2<sup>nd</sup> year, so developing a formalized and advertised process for doing so with greater ambition will be a comparatively easy adaptation. Regarding the prospect of making “extra” spaces available in 1<sup>st</sup> year: there are a number of exigencies that need careful consideration, but this suggestion warrants serious attention and consultation.”

### **2. Governance**

#### **2.1 Appointment of Associate Director**

“We agree that this will be an important structural enhancement to the program and acknowledge that its details can be worked out alongside formalizing some program governance matters.”

#### **2.2 Experiential Learning Coordinator**

“This commentary conflates the need for ensuring the stability of the EL Coordinator role with the need for administrative support for Internships in the case of program expansion. We agree that the necessity for stability regarding the EL Coordinator’s role is paramount; in fact, we see the importance of the role expanding administratively, which would then assist with Program expansion overall. Further administrative assistance could be helpful, but solidification and expansion of the existing EL Coordinator role (and reframing it to enlarge on the reach of the position) are more crucial at this time.”

### **3. Foreign Language Requirement**

“We appreciate the attention to this program area and the emphasis on both folding language use into program requirements and considering “alternative forms of skills or literacies (quantitative reasoning, visual literacy, etc.),” which we see as a viable adaptation worth exploring.”

#### 4. Structure of the 4<sup>th</sup> year capstone course and visiting instructors

“We see this as very helpful commentary regarding the Integrated Seminar. Further on in the document, the Consultants’ encouragement that we communicate program and course objectives and goals/methodologies in discussion with students on an ongoing basis is also worthwhile and will be adopted as a program process. While we have numerous mechanisms in place (including one-on-one interviews with 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Year students by the Program Coordinator and the EL Coordinator respectively), we recognize that the leadership role of the Director in doing this work at strategic points throughout the year cannot be minimized. “

#### **Response from the Associate Dean (Academic)**

The decanal response comments specifically on the suggestions raised in the consultants’ report, as well as the issue of communication that seemed to arise throughout the External Consultants’ Report. “While the program is seen as academically strong, the deans’ office is cognizant of the communication issues that arise in an integrated, modular multidisciplinary program in which many faculty from diverse departments are involved, and acknowledges that the program has already taken an active role on this front, not least in the form of recently implemented one-on-one interviews with students, and it will without question continue to monitor and address gaps in communication.”

#### 1. Recruitment and Attrition

“Some viable suggestions are made and need to be weighed against any loss in the cohort experience of SASAH students.”

#### 2. Clear governance procedures

“The recommendation that the program develop clear governance procedures and practices will no doubt need to be taken up with care, since no small part of what assures the uniqueness and success of SASAH is its flexibility, creativity, and adaptability.”

#### 2.1.1 Associate Director Position – confirmed to take effect in 2021

#### 2.1.2 Experiential Learning Coordinator

“The program recently appointed an Experiential Learning Coordinator, whose main task is to help develop and maintain internships and other experiential learning possibilities for students. The coordinator also teaches an online third-year course intended to help prepare students for their fourth-year capstone. The report acknowledges the wisdom of that appointment and recommends additional support for the coordinator. The Director’s response—that “solidification and expansion of the existing Experiential Coordinator’s role (and reframing it to enlarge the reach of the position) are more crucial” than a new appointment at this time—seems to me both accurate and prudent.”

#### 3. Foreign Language Requirement

“The Director has signaled his agreement that further consideration of the language requirement will be beneficial.”

## Other Opportunities for Program Improvement and Enhancement

- Development of an interdisciplinary humanities master’s program

### Implementation Plan

The Implementation Plan provides a summary of the recommendations that require action and/or follow-up. The Department Chair/Director, in consultation with the Dean of the Faculty/Affiliated University College Principal will be responsible for monitoring the Implementation Plan. The details of progress made will be presented in the Deans’ Annual Report and filed in the Office of the Vice-Provost (Academic).

Recommendation	Proposed Action and Follow-up	Responsibility	Timeline
Ensure continuity of leadership	Appoint an Associate Director who will transition into the role of Director.	Dean, Faculty of Arts & Humanities	Fall 2020
Clarify the purpose of the foreign language requirement	Integrate the requirement into other program requirements; consider broadening the scope to include other kinds of literacies and skills.	Director/Associate Director	Spring 2021
Provide a consistent structure for the 4 <sup>th</sup> -year capstone course.	Work with the Centre for Teaching and Learning to develop best practices for this course, for which the instructor and topics vary from year to year	Director/Associate Director, Centre for Teaching and Learning	Summer 2021