



Philosophy
**Final Assessment Report &
Implementation Plan**

Faculty / Affiliated University College	Brescia University College
Degrees Offered	BA
Modules Reviewed	Major in Philosophy
External Reviewers	Dr. Adam Barkman Philosophy Department Chair and Professor Redeemer University Dr. Todd Dufresne Professor of Philosophy Lakehead University
Internal Reviewers	Dr. Laura Gribble Associate Academic Dean King's University College Claudia Gallant 4th year Political Science Student Huron University College
Date of Site Visit	March 22-23, 2022
Evaluation	Conditionally Approved with Report in 12 months
Approval Dates	SUPR-U: June 29, 2022 ACA: September 7, 2022 Senate (for information only): September 16, 2022
Year of Next Review	Year of next cyclical review: 2029-2030

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 module delivered by the Philosophy Program at Brescia University College.

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 Academic Dean’s Office.

The FAR identifies the strengths of the program, 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 Undergraduate Program Review Committee (SUPR-U) 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 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

Currently offered under the umbrella of the School of Humanities, philosophy courses have traditionally been a significant component of Brescia’s course offerings and programs with philosophy courses being introduced in the 1920s. Brescia’s structure has encouraged interdisciplinary cooperation and course development. Consequently, in addition to offering a Major Module, Philosophy also offers courses that serve other Modules at Brescia. Total student enrollment in philosophy courses in 2021/22 was 106.

To inform the self-study for this cyclical review, students enrolled in philosophy courses were surveyed, with a supplementary survey administered to first-year students to gauge why they were opting to take philosophy courses. In addition, a survey was equally administered among graduates of the philosophy module over the last decade. The Chair of the School of Humanities along with all instructors in philosophy were

consulted as part of the self-study and were assisted by the Advanced Learning and Teaching Centre with curriculum mapping.

The external reviewers offered important considerations for program sustainability and enhancement and conclude their report with four overarching recommendations.

Strengths and Innovative Features Identified by the Program

- Small class sizes that enable more seminar style courses, greater interactivity, and more detailed and tailored feedback to students.
- Philosophy instructors score very highly on course evaluation questions with no median score lower than 6.5 out of 7.
- Special topics independent study option in third year that allows students to design their own project and work one-on-one with a faculty member.
- Development of a Business Ethics course that is a part of several modules, that consistently reaches its cap enrolment.

Concerns and Areas of Improvement Identified by the Program

- Philosophy courses and Major Module face enrolment challenges.
 - o Drawing students to philosophy as a major rather than only as a general interest.
 - o 3000-level courses consistently drawing fewer than 10 students.
- Overall number and diversity of courses offered in philosophy. In particular, in the areas of Ethics and Law.
- Ongoing and further collaboration between the affiliates and Western merits further pursuit.

Review Process

As part of the external review, the review committee, comprising two external reviewers and two internal reviewers (faculty and student), were provided with Volume I and II of the self-study brief in advance of the scheduled review and then met virtually (due to pandemic restrictions) over two days with the:

- Interim Academic Dean, Brescia University College
- Acting Vice-Provost (Academic Programs)
- Vice-Provost (Academic Planning, Policy and Faculty)
- Director of Academic Quality and Enhancement
- President, Brescia University College
- Associate Academic Dean & Director, Advanced Learning and Teaching (ALT)
- Registrar
- Director of Library Services
- Writing Coordinator
- Program Faculty

- Program Students

Following the virtual site visit, the external reviewers submitted a comprehensive report of their findings which was sent to the Program and Academic 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 Brescia Philosophy Program. The FAR is collated and submitted to SUPR-U by the Internal Reviewer with the support of the Office of Academic Quality and Enhancement.

Summative Assessment – External Reviewers’ Report

The external reviewers shared a suite of mixed reflections about the unique features and perceived challenges of Brescia Philosophy. They indicated that while *“we are impressed by what has been achieved in a very small department, [the] advantages of proximity to affiliates and to Western have also hindered the development, maintenance, and integration of a department that functions almost as an afterthought in the context of BUC’s main programming.”* The report’s recommendations consist of considerations to help re-vision the Program.

Strengths of the Program

- Clearly articulated program-level learning outcomes with ascending skill-levels and expectations.
- Extensive commitment to a diversity (of ideas, approaches, faiths, and identities).
- Boutique-sized classes tend to be seminars instead of lectures, which allows students to participate more actively and experience more individualized learning.
 - o This feature constitutes a significant measure of the quality of education students seem to experience at Brescia Philosophy.
- Opportunity to rethink and reposition the Philosophy Program (e.g., expansion in feminist philosophy and applied ethics)

Areas of Concern or Prospective Improvement

- Limited faculty complement and perceived underfunding of the Program
 - o Very difficult for such a small faculty complement to offer the all the “basics” of philosophy programming.
 - o Need for female philosophers in a program dedicated to the education of young women.
- Need for greater consideration of, and planning for, the future of the Philosophy Program.
- Lack of explicit commitment from the Program related to EDI.

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

The following are the recommendations in the order listed by the external reviewers. Recommendations requiring implementation have been marked with an asterisk (*).

Reviewers’ Recommendations	Program / Faculty Response
<p>1. Acknowledge that the vision, mission, and values of Brescia, start with Philosophy.</p>	<p>Program: While there is agreement with the importance of Philosophy in the founding of universities and the development of university education, the Program is not clear on what the suggested implementation of this recommendation would entail.</p> <p>Faculty: The recommendation seems to be outside the scope of the review.</p>
<p>2. Reinvest in Philosophy via multiple hires or new cross appointments with competency in feminist philosophy, gender studies, and/or applied philosophy.</p> <p>Possible formats for consideration include four half-time cross appointments or one full-time faculty member and two cross appointments to bring in diverse perspectives and to make the program complement large enough to share ideas, have meetings and advance the discipline.</p>	<p>Program: The Program supports increasing the number of tenured and tenure-track faculty members. The possibility of faculty hires in Philosophy will be included in the regular fall discussion and consultation between the Academic Dean and School Chairs concerning faculty complement and priority areas of hiring.</p> <p>Faculty: Increasing the number of faculty hires in a discipline is always a potential improvement for any program. Extra hires, particularly in the form of “cross-appointment” noted by the reviewers would be beneficial and will be considered in the next round of hiring discussions between Chairs and the Academic Dean (Provost). Any potential hiring can be advertised with requirements for an applied/feminist philosophy focus or specialization by candidates.</p>

<p>3. Integrate Philosophy into the Brescia curriculum. *</p> <p>Consider having cross appointments across four different disciplines within Brescia; requiring a half course in applied ethics and Society; rebranding the Philosophy Department/Program as part of a merger with others in Political Thought or Gender Studies.</p>	<p>Program: Combining programs or courses via a series of cross-appointments may work counter to the modular approach taken at Western University for the structure of an undergraduate degree. Regarding the possibility of a required course in ethics, it should be noted that the first-year course IDS 1200AB – Brescia Bold does include a week on ethics and ethical frameworks, and two additional weeks on social justice and the Ursuline approach to education. All first-year students do have exposure to ethics and social justice as part of this required course.</p> <p>The reviewers may have misunderstood the organizational structure at Brescia, suggesting that the Department of Philosophy and other small departments be combined into one department or division. Given that there is a Major in Philosophy, there is a Philosophy Program, but not a Philosophy Department. The reviewers suggested the possibility of combining small departments into a Humanities Division. Currently, Brescia has a School of Humanities that includes English, French History, Philosophy, Political Science and Religious Studies.</p> <p>Following the spirit of the recommendation, ways to integrate Philosophy will be included as an item for discussion at a fall meeting of the School of Humanities.</p> <p>Faculty: Cross-appointments are an interesting idea. This could be a promising way to enhance Philosophy and integrate the discipline into the curriculum. However, it may prove difficult to find persons who actually have the required specializations, such as “a feminist philosopher with a research interest in food security”.</p> <p>The proposed requirement for students to “take one half course in Applied Ethics and Society in first or second year” is actually covered by the current “Brescia Bold” interdisciplinary course required of all first-year students at Brescia.</p> <p>Merging or rebranding Philosophy would not necessarily work given the current discipline structure used at Brescia and at Western. Some of the requirements of this recommendation already exist, also, in that Brescia has a School of Humanities, which currently includes Philosophy.</p>
<p>4. Model the vision, mission and values of Canada’s only Women’s University by recruiting women philosophers. Even if from non-traditional streams such as Gender Studies, Interdisciplinary Studies, Social and Political Thought, Theory and Criticism, Cultural Studies, History of Consciousness.</p>	<p>Program: As Canada’s women’s university, Brescia is committed to gender equity and support a diverse professoriate.</p> <p>Faculty: The recommendation is a good idea in principle, but perhaps untenable in reality. Hiring a female philosopher would be good for Philosophy at Brescia, but in any job hire situation the best, most qualified person for the job is the one hired. If two candidates are equal (in ability, experience, etc.), then a search committee may use criteria such as gender or ethnicity as a “tie breaker”; one cannot arbitrarily appoint on basis of a preferred characteristic.</p>

Implementation Plan

The Implementation Plan provides a summary of the recommendations that require action and/or follow-up. The Program Chair, in consultation with the Dean of the Faculty/Affiliated University College will be responsible for monitoring the Implementation Plan.

The number of recommendations prioritized for implementation has been reduced as some are outside the scope of the IQAP review process (#1 and #2), and some are already being actioned, in principle, as described in the program and faculty responses above (#4). As a result, the aforementioned recommendations will not appear in the implementation table.

Recommendation	Proposed Action and Follow-up	Responsibility	Timeline
<p>Recommendation #3 Integrate Philosophy into the Brescia curriculum via expansion of offerings and expertise.</p>	<p>Determine feasible mechanisms to expand Philosophy offerings and integrate into existing curricula. Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Possible cross-appointments with existing Brescia programs (e.g., a feminist philosopher with a research interest in food security and/or food ethics could be appointed across Food and Nutrition and Philosophy, or a cross-appointment with Management/Business Ethics from a feminist perspective). - Further program specialization in the areas of applied/feminist philosophy. - Re-engaging in cross institutional partnerships. <p>Develop a feasible plan and timeline for the necessary changes to the Philosophy Program.</p>	<p>Chair of the School of Humanities Associate Academic Dean Academic Dean</p>	<p>By September 2023</p>