Program:	Library and Information Science	
Degrees Offered:	MLIS, PhD	
Approved Fields:		
External Consultants:	Fiona Black, Associate Vice-President Academic, Dalhousie University	Lynne Bowker, Vice-Dean, Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies, University of Ottawa
Internal Reviewers:	Pauline Barmby, Associate Dean Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies Faculty of Science, Western	
Date of Site Visit:	2016/11/29-30	
Evaluation:	*Good Quality*	
Approved by:	*SUPR-G on February 27, 2017* *SCAPA on March 8, 2017*	

Executive Summary

The Library and Information Science programs at Western are well-established and among the oldest such programs in Canada. The Masters and PhD programs are quite different: the former is a professional program with external accreditation, while the latter is a research-based program. MLIS enrolments have fluctuated in the past few years but are typically over 200 (FT and PT combined); PhD enrolments have been in the 30-40 student range. Possible changes in MLIS accreditation are under broader discussion across many universities. Western's MLIS will be undergoing accreditation in 2018.

Program structure was seen as generally appropriate by the reviewers. Some changes are being made as part of the review process, in order to facilitate timely completion in the PhD. The reviewers were supportive of the course and program structure changes made to address this issue, and encouraged monitoring of the results. Completion times are not generally a problem for MLIS, but the flexibility of the program (full-time/part-time, any-term start, co-op option) requires excellent communication and advising so students are aware of options and constraints. This is particularly important for part-time students who are less a part of a "cohort" than full-time students.

The reviewers recognized the research and teaching strengths and engagement of both faculty and students in the LIS programs. The LIS faculty and students are important contributors to the interdisciplinary atmosphere of the Faculty of Information and Media Studies. The learning outcomes of both programs are clear and appropriate for the professional preparation of graduates. The field of library and information science is undergoing rapid changes, and the reviewers suggested that there is scope to place more emphasis on technology- and data-related aspects. Having students and faculty familiarize themselves with the range of careers available to LIS professionals was encouraged; formal contacts with alumni would be helpful in this regard.

Significant Strengths of Program:
- Well-articulated and measurable learning outcomes, mapped to degree-level expectations and range of course offerings
- Research-active, collaborative, engaged faculty with diverse areas of expertise, supportive of student success

- Excellent network/community of part-time and cross- appointed and emeritus professors who contribute to the program
- Students are well-qualified and engaged; MLIS students appreciate program flexibility & co-op
- Changes to PhD structure expected to improve timely completion rates
- Breadth requirement in MLIS ensures well-rounded professionals able to operate competently in a very broad-ranging discipline
- Recent (2017) relocation to new building expected to facilitate interactions and collaborations
- Rich intellectual experience for students (workshops, lecture series); quantity and range of student publications

Suggestions for improvement & enhancement:
- Expand scholarship and teaching to include data management, data visualization, and big data
- Explore opportunities for collaboration on data journalism
- Consider additional research-oriented courses for PhD students holding only a professional MLIS
- Additional tracking and advising of part-time MLIS students might help ensure timely completion
- Communicate to MLIS students that range and number of available electives may differ depending on starting term
- Ensure that students are made aware of the changing employment landscape in the broad field of LIS, beyond traditional librarian/faculty positions
- Consider a capstone exercise for MLIS, to facilitate program-level evaluation
- Assess how student advising & supports are provided within FIMS
- Develop & maintain formal alumni relations
- Align with Western Indigenous Strategic Plan
- Consider MLIS capstone before next American Library Association (ALA) accreditation

Recommendations required for Program sustainability:	Responsibility	Resources	Timeline
Clearly delineate faculty roles, especially program coordinators & program committee chairs	Dean, Associate Dean Graduate	Admin & faculty workload	immediate
Proceed with & monitor changes to PhD courses	AD Grad, program coordinator, faculty	Admin & faculty workload	1-2 years
Proceed with & monitor changes to PhD exams & thesis proposal	AD Grad, program coordinator	Admin workload	3-4 years
Monitor FT/PT instructor ratio	AD Grad, program coordinator	Admin workload	ongoing
Plan for faculty renewal, especially in info-science areas	Dean	budgetary	ongoing
Prepare PhD students for non-faculty positions	AD Grad, faculty, SGPS	Faculty & admin workload	ongoing
Facilitate more formal alumni engagement	Dean, faculty	Admin workload	Immediate (already underway)