



History

Final Assessment Report & Implementation Plan March 2020

Faculty / Affiliated University College	Faculty of Social Science
Degrees Offered	BA
Modules Reviewed	Honours Specialization in History, Honours Specialization in American Cultural Studies, Honours Specialization in International Relations, Specialization in History, Major in History, Major in American Studies, Major in Middle East Studies
External Consultants	Dr. Catherine Carstairs, Professor, University of Guelph Dr. Stephen Heathorn, Chair & Professor, McMaster University
Internal Reviewer	Dr. Jan Plug, Acting Associate Dean (Academic), Faculty of Arts and Humanities, Western University
Date of Site Visit	March 3-4, 2020
Evaluation	Good Quality
Approval Dates	SUPR-U: January 20, 2021 SCAPA: February 3, 2021 Senate (for information only): February 12, 2021
Year of Next Review	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 Department of History in the Faculty of Social Science.

This report considers and reports on the following documents: the program’s self-study, the external consultants’ report and the responses from the Department and the Dean of Social Science.

This Final Assessment Report (FAR):

- i) provides an Executive Summary of the Review Process;
- ii) identifies the strengths of the program;
- iii) identifies opportunities for program enhancement and improvement; and,
- iv) prioritizes the recommendations of the external consultants in the Implementation Plan.

The Implementation Plan details the recommendations from the Final Assessment Report that are required 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

Overview

Western's History Department is one of the largest in Canada, offering about 70 diverse courses in any given year that cover Canada, the United States, Europe, Latin America, the Near East and the Far East. Its undergraduate teaching mission purposefully aligns with Western's strategic goals and those of the Faculty of Social Science. The Department recognizes the importance of teaching excellence and cross-disciplinary contributions. The Department's course offerings are known for their clustering of study in culture, society, international relations, war, business, and the environment.

As well as Majors and Minors in History, the Department offers an Honours Specialization in History, an Honours Specialization in American Cultural Studies, and an Honours Specialization in International Relations. The Department also offers or participates in Majors and Minors in American Studies, Middle East Studies, and Jewish Studies, as well as a Minor in Public History. In addition, History faculty members are involved in program modules offered by Medieval Studies and the Centre for Transitional Justice and Post-Conflict Reconstruction.

Experiential learning is an important component of the undergraduate program, either as full courses or assignments in existing courses.

Self-Study Process

The process used in creating the self-study brief was extensive and involved a number of face-to-face faculty retreats and roundtables with students to investigate and question all aspects of undergraduate programming. In addition, members of the History Undergraduate Committee met with individual faculty members, and a survey was sent out to alumni for their responses concerning the efficacy of the program after graduation.

Review Process

During the external review, the review committee (comprised of the two external reviewers and one internal reviewer, the Acting Associate Dean (Academic), Faculty of Arts & Humanities) was provided with Volumes I and II in advance of its visit and then met over two days with:

- John Doerksen, Vice Provost (Academic Programs)
- Karen Campbell, Vice Provost (Academic Planning, Policy and Faculty Relations)
- Joan Finegan, Acting Dean, Faculty of Social Science
- Dan Shrubsole, Associate Dean (Undergraduate Studies), Faculty of Social Science
- Francine McKenzie, Chair, History
- Jonathan Vance, Undergraduate Chair, History
- Faculty, Department of History
- Undergraduate Students, Department of History
- Associate Chief Librarian
- Administrative Staff, Faculty of Social Science

The reviewers also took in a tour of the Faculty and Department, observing the facilities that support teaching, learning, and research.

Following the onsite review, the external reviewers submitted a comprehensive report of their findings, which was sent to the Chair and the Dean for review and response. These formative documents, including Volumes I and II of the Self-Study, the External Report, and the Faculty response, have formed the basis of this summative assessment report of the History undergraduate programs.

Summative Assessment – External Reviewers’ Report

Significant Strengths of the Program

Faculty

- Collegiality within the Department
- Excellent faculty in both teaching and research
- Highly respected by students
- Development of innovative courses that push boundaries of traditional history courses
- Teaching awards for faculty
- Positive response to previous reviews with action taken
- Thoughtfully designed new and improved space for Department that supports faculty growth, student learning and interaction

Courses

- Strong evidence of carefully designed Learning Outcomes and curriculum mapping, specifically focusing on “providing Canada’s best education for tomorrow’s global leaders”
- Creative and diverse assessments across courses, emphasizing creative thinking and writing development; “innovative and demanding”; “hands-on experience developing museum exhibits; they write code to help their research”
- Students graduate with “a subtle understanding of what a primary document can and can’t tell them, and...they comprehend historical disagreements”
- Constant review and renewal of old courses and development of new courses
- Small classes at the 3rd and 4th year levels
- Experiential learning, especially in internships within new Public History module which is known and respected across Canada
- Innovative course titles to attract students to History given that History enrolments are dropping nationally
- Students expressed strong satisfaction with their teaching/learning experience; would recommend Western to a friend.
- Department has revised most courses to one term rather than full year to facilitate student enrolment

Student Support

- Impressively large number of financial supports and awards for students
- Active and faculty-supported undergraduate society
- Successful undergraduate academic journal
- Excellent faculty and staff support students in all areas, including advising, meeting, setting up special events, accessibility and mental health
- Excellent library facilities and support
- Employment opportunities are rich and varied for graduates

Opportunities for Growth

Faculty

- Large faculty complement but lack of diversity – more than half focus on the US and Canada with no dedicated expertise in South or Central America, Africa, or South and Southeast Asia; and only two scholars whose training covers time periods before 1800 – such that lack of departmental expertise is a significant obstacle.
- Lack of scholar(s) in Indigenous methodologies, but note made of cross-listing of courses in Indigenous Studies and Women’s Studies; however, current program structure currently inhibits student registration
- Lack of faculty in Jewish Studies
- Currently no probationary faculty; requires leadership to look to the future of Department
- Concern raised by students that History faculty (at Western and elsewhere) give lower grades than in other disciplines, which disadvantages the best students and may impede student recruitment

Courses

- Learning Outcomes are detailed for each course, but specializations and modules would be improved with programmatic outcomes
- Breadth requirements for students seem unwieldy and are not required in Learning Outcomes
- Course structure has little flexibility

Summary Statement

In summary, the external reviewers commended the Department of History on its faculty complement, referring to them as devoted pedagogues, outstanding scholars, and as impressively collegial Department members who hold an impressive array of teaching awards and are highly respected by their students. Faculty members were complimented on their program streams and the course curricula, with the note that the Public History program is renowned across the country. Through this review, it was readily apparent that the Department is dedicated to student learning and success. Recommendations for enhancing the Department’s programs offerings are described below.

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

The Reviewers’ recommendations were divided into two categories, one dealing with program administration and the other related to faculty.

REVIEWERS’ RECOMMENDATION	PROGRAM & DECANAL RESPONSES
<p>The Department should:</p>	
<p><u>Program Administration</u> Review and develop more flexible program requirements to ensure timely completion for students.</p>	<p>The Undergraduate Committee is currently in deliberations about revising the requirements of History modules and examining what a revised program might look like. The Dean has confidence that the Department is working on this at this point.</p>
<p>Work with the Political Science Department to review courses at the 3000 and 4000 levels to ensure that students in International Relations are able to enroll in the required courses.</p>	<p>This is a highly popular program with students. Priority enrolment already gives them some advantage but reserving the specific number of required spots might help.</p>
<p>Ensure that Learning Outcomes are clearly articulated for all modules at each level to ensure that goals are met.</p>	<p>The re-visioning of learning outcomes goes hand-in-hand with our annual review process and as we review the History degree, expectations will be updated and implemented.</p>
<p>Review grading practices to ensure that students are not being discouraged from majoring in history.</p>	<p>Faculty are in discussion about grading and attending to this issue while being conscious of grade inflation.</p>
<p><u>Faculty Resources</u> Re-examine current faculty complement and anticipated retirements. The Department should, in future, hire faculty to broaden expertise across the department, specifically pre-1800.</p>	<p>The Department agrees that there is an issue with the ‘greying out’ of the department and looks forward to hiring of a new assistant professor in 2021. Hiring will be “by theme (<i>e.g.</i>, gender) and methodology (<i>e.g.</i>, transnational, global) rather than the long-standing practice of categorizing expertise by nation and period.” The Dean is cognizant of this issue and notes that a new hire is in process.</p>
<p>Ensure that the Director of Public History has a permanent position in the History Department.</p>	<p>Currently under discussion</p>
<p>Consider deleting Jewish Studies and Middle East Studies until there are faculty resources to support the programs.</p>	<p>The brief notes that History can continue to participate in Jewish Studies but the Department’s ability to offer courses in the area will be limited. The issue is not addressed in the responses.</p>

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
Review program requirements with an eye to flexibility and ensuring that students can complete requirements in a timely fashion	Program review, whether through regular meetings and consultation or a (series of) department retreat(s).	Chair/Undergraduate Chair in consultation with Department.	The review could be complete by the end of the summer of 2021, with potential changes to go through the approval process in 2021-22.
Clearly articulate learning outcomes for modules.	Part of the program review (above).	Chair/Undergraduate Chair, in consultation with Department.	As above—part of the program review process.
Ensure that students in International Relations have adequate access the upper-level courses they require.	Meetings with Chair/Undergraduate Chair of Political Science.	Chair/Undergraduate Chair.	Immediate and ongoing.
Because Jewish Studies is a collaborative program whose home is not in the Dept. of History, this report will recommend that the Department continue to monitor its participation in Jewish Studies.	Part of program review (above).	Chair/Undergraduate Chair in consultation with Department.	As above—part of the program review process.
Consider discontinuing the Major in Middle East Studies.	Part of program review (above).	Chair/Undergraduate Chair in consultation with Department.	As above—part of the program review process.
Review grading practices to ensure that History students aren’t disadvantaged, especially when applying to professional and other programs.	Regular review of grading practices.	Undergraduate Chair and Committee on Undergraduate Studies.	Ongoing