

FINAL ASSESSMENT REPORT

Institutional Quality Assurance Program (IQAP) Review

Anthropology

Date of Review: March 23 and 24, 2017

*In accordance with the University Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP), this final assessment report provides a synthesis of the external evaluation and the internal response and assessments of the undergraduate and graduate programs delivered by **Department of Anthropology**. This report identifies the significant strengths of the program, together with opportunities for program improvement and enhancement, and it sets out and prioritizes the recommendations that have been selected for implementation.*

The report includes an Implementation Plan that identifies who will be responsible for approving the recommendations set out in the Final Assessment Report; who will be responsible for providing any resources entailed by those recommendations; any changes in organization, policy or governance that will be necessary to meet the recommendations and who will be responsible for acting on those recommendations; and timelines for acting on and monitoring the implementation of those recommendations.

Executive Summary of the Cyclical Program Review of the Undergraduate and Graduate Anthropology Programs

In accordance with the Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP), the Department of Anthropology submitted a self-study to the School of Graduate Studies in January 2017. The self-study presented the program descriptions and learning outcomes, an analytical assessment of these two programs, and program data including the data collected from a student survey along with the standard data package prepared by the Office of Institutional Research and Analysis. Appended were the CVs for each full-time faculty member in the Department.

One external reviewer from Ontario, one external reviewer from Alberta and one internal reviewer were endorsed by the Dean, Faculty of Social Sciences and selected by the Associate Vice-President and Dean of Graduate Studies. The review team reviewed the self-study documentation and then conducted a site visit to McMaster University on March 23 and 24, 2017. The visit included interviews with the Provost and Vice-President (Academic); Associate Vice-President, Faculty, Associate Vice-President and Dean of Graduate Studies, Dean and Associate Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences, Chair of the department and meetings with groups of current undergraduate students, full-time faculty and support staff.

- **Strengths**

In their report (April 2017), the Review Team highlighted the following strengths of the program:

- The strengths of the Department are made evident in the report. First, the Department works at a very high rate of research productivity, as evidenced by its research output, including talks and publications. The Department also enjoys a very high success rate in CFI and Tri-Council funding.
- The Department enjoys a high success in graduate student funding, largely by Canada’s Tri-Council, but also international funding sources, including the highly prestigious Wenner-Gren and Fulbright grants.
- Although the Department consists of three subfields (archaeology, cultural anthropology, biological anthropology) that both intellectually and methodologically can hold different points of orientation, the Department enjoys a high level of collegial interconnectedness and coherence that is not self-evident in a Anthropology department of such diversity and size.

- **Areas for Enhancement or Improvement**

The Review Team noted the following areas for improvement in the program:

- The report has identified four major areas for improvement: 1) the health field, 2) course offerings on the undergraduate level, 3) course offerings on the graduate level, and 4) the relationship between the Department and the Indigenous Studies Program.
- The Department agrees with report’s recommendation for the hiring of three positions (cultural anthropology, health, and Indigenous Studies), but realizes that – most likely – these resources will not be immediately diverted from the faculty to the department level. Given this scenario, it has agreed in Department meetings and in its Strategic Research Plan to advocate first and foremost for a Cultural Anthropology position. It also would like to maintain some autonomy in relation to the way in which positions will be defined, and would like to follow – as closely as possible – the trajectory as outlined in its Strategic Plan.

Summary of the Reviewers’ Recommendations with the Department’s and Dean’s Responses

Recommendation	Proposed Follow-Up	Responsibility for Leading Follow-Up	Timeline for Addressing Recommendation
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<p>At a number of places, the report states that the department needs to determine “whether to build or eliminate the health field in both the undergraduate and graduate programs.”</p>	<p>The department’s executive committee and the department as a whole will meet to follow-up on the recommendation to build or eliminate the health field in the graduate program. As stated above, there is currently no health field in the undergraduate program.</p>	<p>The Department Chair, in conjunction with the department’s executive committee, graduate committee, and faculty members will carry the responsibility for leading the follow-up.</p>	<p>Unfortunately, in the 2017/18 academic year five faculty members will be on administrative or research leave: 3 on a six-month-leave, and 2 on a 12-month leave. Given that –as the report correctly states – decisions related to the health field are potentially contentious, the Department as a whole will start to follow up on this issues in the 2018/19 academic year. This may seem late, but since the outcome of this process will affect the entire department for years to come, it seems wise to wait until then.</p>
<p>The report advises the department to revise undergraduate course listings, especially in terms of the number of courses being offered.</p>	<p>The department will follow up on this suggestion to tighten its undergraduate program in regard to its course offerings.</p>	<p>The Undergraduate Chair, in consultation with the undergraduate committee and faculty members will lead this process.</p>	<p>This process will be initiated in the 2017/18 academic year. Given various administrative timelines, it can be completed in 2018/19.</p>
<p>The report advises the department to examine its course offerings on the graduate level, specifically with a view to the internal competition that seems to exist between the three subfields mentioned in the report: cultural anthropology, archaeology, biological anthropology.</p>	<p>The department will follow up on this suggestion. However, it is important to note that the current chair and graduate chair began this process in 2016-17 by raising pertinent issues with faculty members. The department will continue to streamline graduate courses and work on creating more</p>	<p>The Graduate Chair, in consultation with the graduate committee and faculty members will lead this process.</p>	<p>This process will be initiated in the 2017/18 academic year. Given various administrative timelines, it can be completed in 2018/19.</p>

	courses that cross-cut subfields.		
The Department takes the report's recommendation to build a "fruitful relationship" with the Indigenous Studies Program seriously.	In consultation with ISP and the FSS Dean, the Department would like to think about possibilities to initiate and sustain such a "fruitful relationship." It is pleased to recognize that the report states that "Dr. Martin-Hill's position [...] provides a wonderful bridging opportunity," and would like to reiterate its willingness to work with ISP and the Dean on this issue.	The Department Chair will carry the responsibility on following up on this suggestion.	This process can be initiated in the 2017/18 academic year.

Faculty Response:

The reviewers' overall assessment is that the Department of Anthropology offers excellent education to its undergraduate and graduate students. The department has implemented a number of important innovations in recent years and the undergraduate program in particular offers a more integrated curriculum across the sub-disciplines than do most anthropology programs in Canada. The reviewers, as directed, also identify a number of areas where the program and department could make changes to improve the programs. None of the recommendations, to the Dean's knowledge, required changes in organization, policy or governance to implement. Some require resources. Most require deliberation among departmental members and between the department and the Faculty to assess the best way to respond to the recommendations in the context of current resources and desired directions for the undergraduate and graduate programs. The Dean's response below focuses on the key recommendations offered by the reviewers, focusing first on those recommendations that raises issues of resources.

Human Resources

The reviewers make recommendations in three areas that pertain to faculty resources and one that pertains to staff resources.

Faculty

- That, should the department want to retain the health field, the Faculty consider funding a hire to contribute to it
- That the department re-think its relationship to the Indigenous Studies Program (ISP), and Dawn Martin-Hill's commitments in particular.
- That the department retain the hiring of a socio-cultural faculty member as a priority.

The Dean recognized that recent retirements and departures have weakened the health field within the department and that the department has identified the hiring a socio-cultural anthropologist as a need and priority. The ability to address these needs depends on resources available to the Faculty, and Anthropology's needs relative to other departments, schools and programs within the Faculty. It may also be possible to help address both of these priorities with a single hire of a socio-cultural anthropologies working in the area of health. While the Dean recognized these needs, the uncertainty created by the new provincial funding model for universities, and its impact on McMaster and the Faculty of Social Sciences in particular, precluded him from making any commitments regarding faculty hires.

The issue of Anthropology's relationship to the ISP, and opportunities for anthropology students to pursue interests in Indigenous history, culture and knowledge systems, extend beyond Dawn Martin-Hill's appointment. The ISP is keen to work with other programs to increase the numbers of students studying Indigenous history, culture and knowledge systems at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. This presents many opportunities to expand the options for anthropology students to pursue Indigenous-related interests. In addition, the ISP and School of Social Work are jointly developing a new graduate course on Indigenous knowledge systems open to all graduate students within the Faculty of Social Sciences. It is being offered on Dean's permission in 2017-18, and will be offered into the future if there is sufficient interest. So opportunities are expanding, and the Faculty welcomes Anthropology's participation in discussion regarding how best to expand such opportunities further at the undergraduate and graduate levels.

Staff

- Make the Archaeology Instructional Assistant a 12-month contract rather than a 10- month contract

The 10-month contract reflects the structure and timing of course offerings within the program. A shift to a 12-month contract would only make sense under a revised curriculum, with commensurate resources to fund the additional two months over the summer.

Physical Resources

The report observes that overall the current teaching labs are serving the program well, but makes a set of recommendations to restructure, reorganize and/or develop further aspects of these labs.

- Of particular importance is the Human Skeletal Biology and Bioarchaeology lab, which is a bottleneck in the undergraduate program. The Faculty will work with the department this coming year to assess what physical or scheduling changes can be made to address these concerns.
- The reviewers recommend enhanced space for the biological anthropology lab and identifies needs associated with ANTH 2D03 and ANTH 3R03. In the review of space requirements within the Faculty this past year, these needs were not identified as a priority by the department, but as part of the Faculty's continuing review of space allocation, this coming year the Dean will work with the department to consider these recommendations.
- The Dean shared the reviewer's assessment that the Sustainably Archaeology Lab provides an underdeveloped opportunity for training undergraduate and graduate students, and will work with the department, and the Lab Director, Aubrey Cannon in particular, to explore ways to facilitate its use in student training.

Financial Resources

- The report recommends that the university "enhance and/or regularize" the financial support of graduate student fieldwork. The Faculty is prepared to work with the department and the School of Graduate Studies to assess options that can address the financial needs of graduate students conducting fieldwork.

Educational Programs

The report recommends a number of actions to enhance the undergraduate and graduate programs and which that have no direct resource implications. The Faculty will work the department and its respective undergraduate and graduate committees to support changes as appropriate. Here the Dean offered comment on two issues identified by the reviewers.

- Student Advising. The report indicates that inconsistency in academic advising occurs between the department, the Faculty advising and the website. We will work with the department before the start of the Fall term to improve coordination between the department and the Faculty advisors; website issues will be addressed as part of the Faculty refresh of its website. In the longer term, the Faculty will be using strategic funding from the Provost to create an on-line academic "journey planner" that should help students understand program options and requirements.
- Teaching Opportunities for Graduate Students. Anthropology, like all departments, is allocated PhD teaching Fellow positions to enable graduate students to gain teaching experience. Further, the allocation of TA resources to the department has increased slightly in recent years. Resources to support teaching opportunities therefore are likely not the problem; it may be a matter of course designs and how TA funding is

used within the programs.

Quality Assurance Committee Recommendation

McMaster's Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) reviewed the above documentation and the committee recommends that the program should follow the regular course of action with an 18-month progress report and a subsequent full external cyclical review to be conducted no later than 8 years after the start of the last review. The committee will request an update on the strategic plan concerning the Health Studies field to be included the progress report.