

FINAL ASSESSMENT REPORT

Institutional Quality Assurance Program (IQAP) Review

BA, MA and PhD programs, Department of History

Date of Review: February 15 and 16, 2022

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 the Department of History. 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 Review

In accordance with the Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP), the Department of History BA, MA and PhD programs submitted a self-study in December 2021 to the Vice-Provost Faculty and Vice-Provost and Dean of Graduate Studies to initiate the cyclical program review of its undergraduate and graduate programs. The approved self-study presented program descriptions, learning outcomes, and analyses of data provided by the Office of Institutional Research and Analysis. Appendices to the self-study contained the CVs for each full-time member in the department.

Two arm's length external reviewers and one internal reviewer were endorsed by the Dean, Faculty of Humanities, and selected by the Vice-Provost Faculty. The review team reviewed the self-study documentation and then conducted a review on February 15-16, 2022. The review included interviews with the Provost and Vice-President (Academic), Vice-Provost Faculty, Vice-Provost and Dean of Graduate Studies, Dean of Faculty of Humanities, Associate Dean, Academic and Associate Dean, Graduate Studies of Faculty of Humanities, Chair of the Department of History, Graduate and Undergraduate Chairs of the Department of History and meetings with groups of current students, full-time faculty and support staff.

The Chair of the Department of History and the Dean of the Faculty of Humanities submitted responses to the Reviewers' Report (May 2022). Specific recommendations were discussed and clarifications and corrections were presented. Follow-up actions and timelines were included.

The following program strengths were identified:

The Department of History boasts excellent programs at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. In our meetings with faculty and our review of the materials provided by the Department, we were very impressed by the faculty's dedication to pedagogy and the quality of the program as well as its commitment to accessibility and its willingness to innovate and collaborate.

- The review committee recognized and praised the Department's commitment to pedagogy, the quality of History undergraduate and graduate programs, their commitment to accessibility and willingness to embrace innovation in a collaborative fashion.
- The review committee noted the 'excellent balance' struck between 'tried and true methods of instruction and assessment' and 'alternative forms' of instruction and assessment.
- Despite budgetary pressures the undergraduate program remains a high quality one. History students at McMaster have the opportunity to explore a wide range of historical themes and issues over the course of their degrees. Individual courses and the progression of courses through the program are well-designed to support the program's learning outcomes, which include fundamental skills such as research, critical thinking and analysis and written and oral communication.
- The review committee has also found the graduate programs to be vibrant; they are producing excellent scholarship (as evidence by the high publication rate of their students) and have favourable time to completion rates compared to similar institutions in Ontario.

The following areas of improvement were suggested:

- More professional development opportunities for both undergraduate and graduate students.
- Better communication between the department and students, including making sure feedback between supervisors and students is communicated in a timely fashion.
- Enhancing the existing suite of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion activities and initiatives in the Department and finding ways to further incorporate student concerns and participation in those issues.
- Further increasing the diversity and breadth of course offerings, particularly in non-Western and Indigenous history and of the pre-modern period.
- Addressing the issue of staff support, which was identified as insufficient for the existing programs and for the enhancements going forward.

More specific areas program enhancement described in the report are directly reflected in the recommendations, discussed below.

Implementation Plan

	Recommendation	Proposed Follow-Up	Responsibility for Leading Follow-Up	Timeline for Addressing Recommendation
	<u>Program:</u>			
1.	The Department of History is encouraged to continue its efforts towards inclusivity and Indigenization in the coming years. In particular, we encourage the department to continue its work through its EDI committee and to look for ways to engage students in these efforts.	<p>The Department’s EDI committee will be expanded to include an undergraduate and a graduate student representative. The EDI committee will have a formal chair (rotated annually) responsible for communication and outreach.</p> <p>Our EDI discussions have always been advertised as welcoming student participation. The committee will, however, make more efforts at outreach to both undergraduate and graduate students.</p>	The Chair of the Department and the Chair of the EDI Committee.	<p>The EDI Committee Chair position will be written into the Department’s governance document.</p> <p>The EDI Chair each year (starting Sept. 2022) will oversee the appointment of undergraduate and graduate representatives each year.</p> <p>The EDI committee will make a point of communicating its initiatives to students through our improved communication strategy (see below).</p>
	<u>Curriculum:</u>			
2.	Consider developing a career for historians series or other initiatives to help undergraduate students see the various ways in which their degree in History can prepare them for future employment.	The Department will task one colleague to serve as is professionalization facilitator. Working with the Undergraduate Chair and the Graduate Chair, the professionalization facilitator will organize some professionalization/career events each year for both	The Chair of the Department.	The Chair will appoint the professionalization facilitator when the other service commitments are assigned in the summer of each year.

		undergrads and graduate students.		The professionalization facilitator will work with the Grad Chair and Undergrad Chair each year to arrange events.
3.	Consider enhancing the cohort experience for students throughout the program.	The Undergraduate Committee will consider improvements to the curriculum to improve cohort experience.	The Undergraduate Chair.	Consultations undertaken over the course of 2022-2023, with any changes to be proposed in the fall of 2023.
4.	Ensure that students are aware of the opportunity to pursue the 4th-year thesis option and of the requirements for doing so.	The Undergraduate Chair and Administrative staff will highlight these opportunities during the balloting process for seminars each year. Requirements will be more clearly explained on the balloting forms.	The Undergraduate Chair and Administrative Assistant.	Will be done annually, starting in Winter term 2023.
	<u>At the MA and PhD levels:</u>			
5.	Reinforce expectations among Faculty regarding turn-around times for feedback on student work to ensure a more consistent supervisory experience.	The Graduate Chair will remind colleagues of the need to provide timely supervisory feedback according to the School of Graduate Studies guidelines. Grad students will be told what those guidelines are in the grad orientation session every September. The Grad Chair will encourage grad students through the Graduate Committee representative to indicate if there is a persistent problem with faculty feedback not meeting the SGS guidelines.	The Graduate Chair.	Immediately and ongoing.

6.	Introduce more professional development opportunities in the program, for example, a pass/fail professional development course or a future career series focusing on both academic careers and alternative career paths.	The professionalization facilitator (noted above) will work with the Grad Chair on future career talks and initiatives. This will be complemented by the faculty-wide graduate professionalization series recently proposed by the Associate Dean, Research and Graduate Studies.	The Chair of the Department and Graduate Chair.	See #2 above.
7.	At the PhD level, consider ways to further support students in transitioning to the job market.	The professionalization facilitator along with the Graduate Chair and Graduate Committee will explore the best way to provide such supports.	Grad Chair and Professionalization Facilitator.	Consultations undertaken over the course of 2022-2023, with proposals to be implemented in the fall of 2023.
8.	Consider ways to support PhD students who wish to embark on archival research in year two. One possible avenue might consist of reserving TAs in online courses for PhD students who need to undertake research travel.	The Chair already has done this in the past. Course offerings vary from year to year and no guarantees can be made, but we propose where possible archival research considerations will factor into TA allocations.	The Chair of the Department.	Immediately and ongoing.
9.	Improve communication with graduate students. Possible options include a digital message board or a biweekly newsletter.	A revised digital communications strategy for our students has already been proposed. A curated message board for our students (a collaboration of the UG and Grad Chairs, the admin staff, and student representatives) will be developed.	The Chair of the Department.	This is dependent on when our admin staff get full access to our website and training on how to manage it. This should happen in 2022, and so the plan is to launch the new messaging board in the fall of 2022.

	<u>Teaching and Assessment:</u>			
10.	At the undergraduate level, continue to support and encourage faculty to explore new pedagogical approaches and innovative types of assessments where appropriate.	This suggestion is built into our new Department Strategic Plan (see # 14 below). Ongoing experimentation will depend to a degree on the new guidelines that the Faculty of Humanities is working on regarding its digital teaching strategy and updated methods of assessment.	The Chair of the Department and Undergraduate Chair	The Undergraduate Committee has already undertaken a discussion and provided suggestions to the department. New course proposals and innovations ongoing.
11.	Review existing TA training and consider ways to introduce discipline-specific training at the departmental level, particularly training that addresses grading History essays.	The Chair of the Department and the Grad Chair will review existing training practices and after consultation with other departments, revise the existing training regime.	The Chair of the Department and Graduate Chair.	Review and consultation over the summer and fall of 2022. Preliminary changes to be implemented in fall of 2022. Further improvements for 2023.
12.	At the graduate level, consider increasing the length of the MRP at the MA level to align with other comparable programs (40-50 pages is standard).	The Graduate Committee will review and decide what revisions the requirements of the MA MRP require.	The Graduate Chair.	Study and consultation over the course of 2022-2023. Implementation of changes in fall of 2023.
	<u>Resources to meet Program requirements:</u>			
13.	In order to ensure the department's ability to meet its undergraduate and graduate learning outcomes and to maintain the quality of its academic programs and student experience, it is essential to provide additional administrative support. If the appointment of an	Administrative staffing is not directly within the Department's control. However, working with the Dean's Office, steps have already been undertaken to alleviate some of the burdens that fall on the office staff. A pilot project that centralizes reimbursements in the	The Faculty of Humanities Finance Director and the Chair of the Department.	Process underway. Full review and implementation of staffing changes should be complete by fall of 2022. Thereafter staffing will be monitored by the Chair and any further

	<p>additional staff member is not possible, other measures to consider include: hiring a graduate student on an annual basis to provide support for social media and event organization; moving the administration of the Global Peace and Justice Program out of History; and/or ensuring that the Wilson Institute for Canadian Studies does not rely on the History Department for administrative support.</p>	<p>Dean’s Office is underway. The impending retirement (June 2022) of the current Administrative Co-ordinator of the Department will trigger a review of staffing requirements and an adjustment of the terms and responsibilities of the staff.</p>		<p>adjustments proposed on an ongoing basis.</p>
<p>14.</p>	<p>Given the BA, MA, and PhD program learning outcomes and anticipated upcoming faculty retirements, the Department will need to begin planning for future hires. A reduction in History student numbers has allowed the Department to continue to offer a high quality program despite a reduction in faculty complement. That said, the termination of the Wilson postdoctoral fellows and loss of teaching this entailed as well as the significant number of faculty who have been seconded or have positions that come with teaching reductions means that the Department is operating with little excess capacity. The</p>	<p>As a result of our IQAP self study and associated feedback, we began the process of drafting a new Department Strategic Plan prior to the IQAP review team’s visit. The plan was drafted and discussed by both the Executive Committee and the wider department. In addition to suggestions for improving our undergraduate enrollments moving forward, including introducing new certificates directed not solely at History Majors, the plan provides a rationale for suggested hires for the next five years. These hires are effectively to replace retiring faculty, but also move us towards broadening our curricula coverage, addressing EDI</p>	<p>The Chair of the Department and the Dean of Humanities.</p>	<p>The plan was approved by the Department in May of 2022 and will be the blueprint (with changes possible if needed) for the next five years.</p>

	<p>modest rebound in History student numbers noted in the self-study (and apparent in other Ontario History departments) coupled with anticipated retirements in the coming years suggest that the Department will not be able to continue to offer its high quality programs without faculty renewal. We would urge the Department to begin planning now.</p>	<p>priorities, and supporting the two research units associated with the Department (the Wilson Institute and the Centre for Human Rights and Restorative Justice). The plan is premised on the assumption that our undergraduate enrollments remain steady and our faculty complement will not further shrink. Hires are, of course, the prerogative of the Dean of the Faculty so the plan provides rationales for the nature of the replacements we'd like to make.</p>		
	<p><u>Physical resources:</u></p>			
<p>15.</p>	<p>Given that the move to the new space in the Wilson Institute has reduced interactions between MA and PhD students as well as physically separated graduate students from the rest of the department, consider ways to increase interactions and informal mentoring between PhD and MA students and better integrate both into the life of the department.</p>	<p>The Wilson Institute space will be re-organized so that all the PhDs and MAs will share the same study space (requiring the purchase of more open carrels that the PhD use) and the former MA room will be turned into a lounge/meeting space for discussion. This will allow the PhDs to be more integrated and build community.</p> <p>We also plan to revive the brown-bag lunch series of talks (grad students and faculty sharing their current research in an informal setting) in the new lounge space.</p>	<p>The Chair of the Department.</p>	<p>New carrels have been ordered (with monies provided by the Dean and from the Department's donations fund). The reorganization of the space should be complete by the end of the summer of 2022 in advance of the arrival of the new MA class in September 2022.</p> <p>Brown bag talks to resume in fall 2022.</p>

Dean's Response, Faculty of Humanities

Let me begin my response by thanking Dr. Sofie Lachappelle (Wilfrid Laurier); Dr. Rebecca Manley (Queen's University); and our own Dr. Mark Johnstone, Dept of Philosophy, for their thoughtful and comprehensive review of History's undergraduate and graduate programs. The department also took the process very seriously, produced an excellent self-study, and has already begun moving on some of the suggested recommendations. For this work, I want to thank Dr. Stephen Heathorn, the rest of his departmental colleagues, and the department's two staff members, Ms. Debbie Lobban and Ms. Aurelia Gatto. I would also like to echo the sentiments of the reviewers with respect to the quality of my colleagues' research and teaching – and their willingness to try new things. This department was the first on campus to welcome the potential benefits of a fully online undergraduate degree, and in recent years has taken several steps to increase elective enrollments in History among non-program students and to make the program more accessible to majors. Trends in enrollments, as noted also by the external reviewers, have reflected the experiences of history departments across North America. Happily, we are currently seeing the stabilization of undergraduate enrollments here at McMaster.

Most of the recommendations cited by both the reviewers and the department do not request direct support from the dean's office, so I will respond below only where I think central supports can be helpful.

1. EDI: The department has been quite active over the past couple years in this realm. Trying to engage students more in these activities is a good suggestion. The Faculty will be launching its own Humanities Advisory Committee on Equity (ACE) this summer (2022), which should help the department learn from others and stay connected to cross-campus initiatives.
2. Careers support: This issue comes up regularly in Humanities IQAP reviews. In response, the Faculty has invested considerably in the last two years in our Humanities career services, and we should be leveraging that support for our undergraduates, in particular. In addition to two full-time staff people in our Humanities Student Experience office, we also now have an alumni engagement officer, who can support career-focused events for upper-yr students and recent alumni.

Career advice for graduate students remains a sticking point, and the Associate Dean, Graduate Studies will once again try to build support for Faculty-wide programming among the graduate chairs in 2022-23. I have concerns about already-stretched departments each trying to reinvent the wheel, when it comes to support for those completing MAs or PhDs in Humanities and looking to transition to (non-academic) careers. I would rather see a central program for all Humanities graduate students and recent alumni, but there needs to be buy-in from the programs.

3. Graduate programming and culture:

- a) I support the department's desire to improve the layout of the spaces in LRW Hall, and I have committed some funds to pay for the furniture needed.
- b) With respect to the supervisory relationship and responsibilities to review chapters within a reasonable timeframe, I would recommend that the graduate chair consider asking colleagues to use the SGS-developed supervisory relationship guide as a basis for discussion between students and their supervisors at the annual meeting. The form asks students and their supervisors to commit to certain behaviors to avoid problems such as the ones mentioned in the reviewers' report.
https://gs.mcmaster.ca/app/uploads/2020/02/supervisory_relationshipjuly_222016.pdf.
- c) The idea of archival travel during the second year is an interesting one. The financial question remains. Scholarship funds are portable, but it is not clear at present if students will be able to hold TAs, while living out of province, even if the course is fully online. The union agreed to this option temporarily during the pandemic, but it remains a topic for negotiation going forward. I also wonder about the eligibility terms for travel support. Would something like language training be eligible? I look forward to hearing further discussion of this idea.

4. Administrative staffing: the Faculty's DFA has begun to implement some changes in the Faculty's administrative structure. Given the needs identified by the chair, History was selected for a pilot program in which some of the transactional work generated in the department is being handled centrally in the dean's office. The initial experience of the pilot has been positive, and more centralization of tasks may be explored. The Faculty is also undergoing searches for several staff roles, including History's department manager. Filling this position and rethinking others should help address the department's needs.

5. Faculty complement: the department has recently been the beneficiary of a spousal appointment in Canadian history following two retirements. President Farrar's endowment of the Wilson Chair in Canadian History also ensures there will be another new appointment in Canadian history at some point in the future. At the moment the Faculty is only making a small number of TT appointments per year, but my goal is renewal to the greatest extent possible. I look forward to seeing the department's planning document.

Quality Assurance Committee Recommendation

McMaster's Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) reviewed the above documentation at the November, 2022 meeting and the Committee recommends that the History BA, MA and PhD programs 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 eight years after the start of the last review.