

Program Progress Report

Institutional Quality Assurance Program (IQAP) Review

BA, MA and PhD programs, Department of History

Date of Site Visit: February 15-16, 2022

Progress Report Prepared by: Dr. Megan Armstrong, Chair, Dept of History

Please outline below how recommendations from the initial program review have been addressed.

[Please fill in one table for each recommendation from the original Final Assessment Report]

<p>Recommendation:</p> <p><i>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.</i></p>
<p>Responsibility for Implementation: The Chair of the Department and the Chair of the EDI Committee.</p>
<p>Anticipated Timeline for Completion: Underway and ongoing</p>
<p>Additional Notes/Commentary:</p>
<p>Progress (check one)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Completed</p> <p>X In Progress</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other (please explain)</p>
<p>Department's Comments:</p> <p>Our first departmental initiative following the completion of the IQAP was to formalize our EDI committee and identify specific objectives. That is now completed. The EDI was expanded to three faculty members with one constituted as chair, and developed by-laws which were voted on by the department. Through discussion with the department more generally, the committee identified a specific objective for the year 2023/24 aimed at decolonizing Faculty syllabi. This labour-intensive initiative was devised in four stages: focus groups, development of an analytical rubric, review of submitted syllabi, and follow up interviews. Two of the four phases are complete. Stages three and four will take place this year (2024/2025). The purpose of this initiative is to make our curriculum more inclusive and representative of historical societies of the past, and more inclusive in terms of representing histories that are relevant to our diverse student body. I should mention that the department collectively has devoted a great deal of time over the last several years to thinking about courses that would have broad appeal, and so this initiative is building upon that. We do also have another initiative that will take place on January 16, 2025: a two-hour library workshop on EDI resources. Our plan is to have a new initiative each year going forward. The committee is already deliberating on possible projects for 2025/2026.</p>

<p>Dean's Comments:</p> <p>As the chair explains, the department has taken this recommendation seriously. They have taken steps to consider both what they teach and how they teach it, with an eye to equity, diversity and inclusion, and I expect this work will continue.</p> <p>I don't believe the chair references engaging students in this work, as spelled out in the recommendation. I encourage my colleagues to think about how to involve students in this work going forward.</p>
<p>QAC Comments (to be filled in by Quality Assurance Committee):</p> <p>QAC reviewed this report and had no further comments or concerns</p>

<p>Recommendation</p> <p><i>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.</i></p>
<p>Responsibility for Implementation: The Chair of the Department.</p>
<p>Anticipated Timeline for Completion: 1 year and ongoing</p>
<p>Additional Notes/Commentary:</p>
<p>Progress (check one)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Completed</p> <p>X In Progress</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other (please explain)</p>
<p>Department's Comments:</p> <p>The decision of the department was to appoint a professionalization facilitator to work with the grad and undergrad chairs each year to arrange professionalization events that would benefit all of our students. We introduced this position in September 2022, and it continued through 2023/2024. During these two years, the facilitator worked with the two chairs and Andrew Folino, the Department Manager, to plan several events including a meet and greet with alumni about careers (undergraduate and graduate), and special sessions on historical methodology, resume-building, and archives among other topics. We found many of these events were not well attended, perhaps in part because they were extra to the regular workload of students and in addition to other departmental events, in particular our regular lecture series, and events organized by the undergraduate and</p>

graduate societies. With an eye to being more mindful of student time and making our program more relevant to the job marketplace in and outside of academia, we have introduced two new initiatives and are planning a third one. The first is a new required graduate professionalization course for MA students. This will take place in the Winter term each year. It is required, and it involves weekly professionalization topics and leads into a final student-run conference at the end of the term. Graduate students will also be expected to attend a certain number of departmental lectures as part of this curriculum and an end of year student-organized conference.

The end of year student conference will involve undergraduates as well as undergraduates both in the planning of the event and as participants. Fourth year seminars will have the opportunity to present on their research, in formal papers and group presentations. It is at this event, for example, that the fourth year Heritage Placement students will present their community-based research projects to community partners, faculty and other students. Students will plan every facet of the event with the support of faculty advisors. A prominent keynote speaker will be invited each year, giving students an important opportunity to engage with, and receive critical feedback from, an expert. We have already selected a keynote speaker for the conference in 2025.

The third initiative in process is a History Lab. This is intended to be a place where students can engage in research production under the direction of faculty using new technologies (ie. AI) and new modes of research dissemination (ie podcasts, video games, graphic novels). We have already identified space within our department for it, and have applied as part of a broader University initiative for a grant of \$20,000 seed funds to go towards technology. This grant is pending. Under the leadership of the acting chair of the Wilson Institute, Jessica Van Horssen, we are applying for CFI-JELF funds as well. Our plan is to build towards an application for a larger SSHRC-funded grant (2025-2026).

Dean's Comments:

This work seems to be moving forward.

QAC Comments (to be filled in by Quality Assurance Committee):

See above

Recommendation:

3. Consider enhancing the cohort experience for students throughout the program.

Responsibility for Implementation:

The Undergraduate Chair

Anticipated Timeline for Completion: 1 year for first phase (new course), and ongoing

Additional Notes/Commentary:

Progress (check one)

☐ Completed

X In Progress and ongoing

☐ Other (please explain)

Department's Comments:

We are very aware that the cohort experience plays an important role in fostering the learning experience of graduate as well as undergraduate students. We are also painfully aware of the continuing impact of the pandemic upon our community. With an eye to improving the cohort experience at the graduate level, we have introduced a new required course on professionalization that begins Winter 2024. In addition to the skills it will teach, the course will ensure that MA students are in at least one class altogether both Fall and Winter terms, something that our present graduate students say that they wished they had had. As part of their formation in this course, graduate students will also be expected to attend at least two lectures in our lecture series. MA students used to attend these regularly before the pandemic but attendance dropped off after that. This series is a valued space for student/faculty interaction and sociability as well as intellectual formation.

We have also been working closely with the graduate and undergraduate history societies to help sponsor events that they have developed, including movie nights, lectures and other events. We consider the building of a cohort experience at all levels critical to the success of students in the program and beyond, and for that reason it will remain an ongoing concern of ours.

Dean's Comments:

The idea of a second course for the entire graduate cohort is a good one. It may end up being replaced by a course for all Humanities grad students, which is currently under discussion in the Faculty -- but that too could help support community building. I encourage the chair to continue seeking ways to build community among undergraduate majors.

QAC Comments (to be filled in by Quality Assurance Committee):

See above

Recommendation:

4. Ensure that students are aware of the opportunity to pursue the 4th-year thesis option and of the requirements for doing so.

Responsibility for Implementation: The Undergraduate Chair and the Administrative Assistant
Anticipated Timeline for Completion: Winter 2023
Additional Notes/Commentary:
Progress (check one) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Completed <input type="checkbox"/> In Progress <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please explain)
Department's Comments: We have taken steps to make sure that the availability of the thesis option is much more visible in the student calendar and on our website.
Dean's Comments: Sounds fine. I would also ask department colleagues to raise the idea with students who seem capable of writing an excellent thesis. Sometimes students need encouragement from a professor they trust.
QAC Comments (to be filled in by Quality Assurance Committee): See above

Recommendation: <i>5.Reinforce expectations among Faculty regarding turn-around times for feedback on student work to ensure a more consistent supervisory experience.</i>
Responsibility for Implementation: The Graduate Chair
Anticipated Timeline for Completion: Ongoing
Additional Notes/Commentary:
Progress (check one) <input type="checkbox"/> Completed <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> In Progress and Ongoing <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please explain)
Department's Comments:

The Graduate Chair has brought this issue to the department for discussion, and it is clear that expectations differ among faculty as to what is considered a reasonable response time for feedback. The graduate chair has consistently reminded colleagues at our departmental meetings of the importance of timely feedback, and graduate students have been encouraged to contact the graduate chair when they are concerned. We are behind on our objective to develop common guidelines, but it is still our intention to develop these, and hopefully have them in place by September 2025.

Dean's Comments:

The School of Graduate Studies is developing guidelines and training modules for supervisors under the acronym GEMS. This may supercede the dept's efforts – best not to duplicate efforts.

QAC Comments (to be filled in by Quality Assurance Committee):

See above

Recommendation:

6. Introduce more professional development opportunities in the program, for example, a pass/fail professional development course or a future career series focussing on both academic careers and alternative career paths.

Responsibility for Implementation: Grad Chair and Professionalization Facilitator

Anticipated Timeline for Completion: Winter 2025

Additional Notes/Commentary:

Progress (check one)

☒ Completed

☐ In Progress

☐ Other (please explain)

Department's Comments:

Please see the response to Recommendation #2 above. We have introduced a professionalization MA course in our curriculum, and the first one is scheduled for Winter 2025.

Dean's Comments:

See my comments for #7.

QAC Comments (to be filled in by Quality Assurance Committee):

See above

Recommendation

7. At the PhD level, consider ways to further support students in transitioning to the job market.

Responsibility for Implementation: Grad Chair and Professionalization Facilitator

Anticipated Timeline for Completion: immediate and ongoing

Additional Notes/Commentary:

Progress (check one)

☐ Completed

X In Progress

☐ Other (please explain)

Department's Comments:

In 2023/24 we planned several professionalization sessions for graduate students. We also had PhD as well as MA students play a central role in organizing these events including selecting themes, planning and communication/marketing. The graduate society in particular has been extremely active in this regard. In addition, PhD students can apply to teach undergraduate seminar courses (on a competitive basis). Finally, part of their professionalization in the program is to give a talk on their dissertation in the Faculty or at a conference. We provide financial support to attend conferences outside of the university as well because we do believe this kind of academic engagement contributes both to their professionalization (public speaking, networking, research) as well as provides invaluable feedback and scholarly connections relevant to their dissertation.

Dean's Comments:

Numbers 2, 6, and 7 are all related, having to do with our graduate program and the improvement of the student experience and preparation for careers. In addition to what Dr. Armstrong notes, the Faculty of Humanities has been undertaking a more extensive project to 'reimagine the Humanities PhD,' and I hope the dept will use the recent working group report to stimulate further work in this area, especially with respect to preparation for **non**-academic careers.

QAC Comments (to be filled in by Quality Assurance Committee):

See above

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.

Responsibility for Implementation: Chair

Anticipated Timeline for Completion: immediate and ongoing

Additional Notes/Commentary:

Progress (check one)

☒ Completed

☐ In Progress

☐ Other (please explain)

Department's Comments:

Regarding TAs in online courses, the Chair already has done this in the past when possible. 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. Just as importantly, we have been streamlining our PhD program over the last several years to ensure that students are ready to hit the ground running in terms of their research by the end of their first year in the PhD program. This has meant shortening the timeline of comprehensive exams so that these take place at the end of the Winter term, and the student spends the remaining months preparing a detailed proposal for a dissertation project that is presented at their supervisory meeting in the Fall of their second year (September/October). The concomitant effect of these programmatic changes and the possibility of online teaching is that they have more flexibility in terms of when and where they pursue archival research.

Dean's Comments:

No comments.

QAC Comments (to be filled in by Quality Assurance Committee):

See above

<p>Recommendation: <i>9. Improve communication with graduate students. Possible options include a digital message board or a biweekly newsletter</i></p>
<p>Responsibility for Implementation: Chair</p>
<p>Anticipated Timeline for Completion: immediate and ongoing</p>
<p>Additional Notes/Commentary:</p>
<p>Progress (check one) <input type="checkbox"/> Completed X In Progress <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please explain)</p>
<p>Department's Comments: Until recently we haven't been able to control our website, which has meant that the announcement board has often been quite out of date. But our Department Manager, Andrew Folino, has developed a monthly newsletter for the graduate students that announces events, administrative deadlines and other information we think will be useful and of interest to them. Our Department Manager has also created an online calendar of events which will make it much easier for students and faculty alike to plan for departmental events. Finally, thanks to the Wilson Institute, we also presently have a graduate student who is sending out announcements on social media of Institute and departmental events.</p>
<p>Dean's Comments: Sounds good!</p>
<p>QAC Comments (to be filled in by Quality Assurance Committee): See above</p>