

Program Progress Report

Institutional Quality Assurance Program (IQAP) Review

PROGRAM NAME

English and Cultural Studies (UG)

Cultural Studies and Critical Theory (M) and English (M, PhD)

Date of Site Visit: May 13-14, 2021

Progress Report Prepared by: Susie O'Brien

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]

Recommendation: Evaluate the balance between cultural studies and literature offerings
Responsibility for Implementation: Whole department
Anticipated Timeline for Completion: Ongoing
Additional Notes/Commentary: Balance of offerings will continue to shift based on faculty resources
Progress (check one) ☐ Completed ☒ In Progress ☐ Other (please explain)
Department's Comments: - A department retreat in May, 2022, facilitated by Amy Gullage from the MacPherson Institute, initiated conversations about curricular priorities going forward, based on the PLOs we developed in the course of the IQAP process. - Conversations at the retreat confirmed a general rejection of the idea of a dichotomy between cultural studies and literature as inconsistent with the realities of teaching in our department and commitment to focus our undergrad offerings around the values of "innovative community-based, socially engaged and interdisciplinary work" identified as strengths by the reviewers. - Work continues to flag course features based not on English/Cultural Studies distinctions but on components such as experiential education and community engagement. See next Recommendation, below.

Dean's Comments:

A full review was undertaken, involving full departmental consultation and support from MacPherson. Principles were outlined to direct curricular planning going forward.

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

QAC reviewed this report and had no further comments or concerns

Recommendation: Ensure that students understand the relationship between these cultural studies and literature offerings

Responsibility for Implementation: Dept Chair, Undergraduate Chair

Anticipated Timeline for Completion: Ongoing; significant corrective action taken, but communication will be ongoing via undergrad advising.

Additional Notes/Commentary:

Progress (check one)

☐ Completed

☒ In Progress

☐ Other (please explain)

Department's Comments:

- Curricular reform undertaken in 2022 reimagined undergraduate area requirements with a focus on making legible the department's commitment to the overlapping disciplines of English literary and cultural studies.
- Revised undergraduate curriculum, eliminating all area requirements, reflecting both disciplinary shifts away from historical periods and the loss of several key faculty members in pre-20th century areas of study.
- Created a new required course, ENGLISH 2TP3—Literary and Cultural Studies, Theory and Practice, to replace ENGLISH 2RW6—Reading and Writing Criticism. The new course offers a more explicit introduction to the histories of literary and cultural studies as disciplines, their distinctions and continuities

A [letter sent to all undergrad students](#) in summer, 2022, explained the changes to the program and their rationale.

Dean's Comments:

The principles discusses above have guided curricular changes, which were widely supported and unanimously accepted at the Faculty level.

I particularly appreciated that the plans were communicated to students in the program with a clear and compelling rationale.

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

See above

Recommendation: Engage in multi-year planning, with an eye to highlighting student pathways through the program (see next recommendation)

Anticipated Timeline for Completion:

N/A

Additional Notes/Commentary:

Progress (check one)

☐ Completed

☐ In Progress

☐ **Other (please explain)** See below

Department's Comments:

We understand the rationale for this recommendation, which has come up in previous IQAP reviews. Though we have tried to put in place 2-year plans, unanticipated course cancellations (usually due to unexpected leaves or course release) make it impossible to guarantee course offerings over a multi-year period. However, our curricular reform process has resulted in a leaner program so most courses are taught often. The curricular reform itself is a form of multi-year planning towards a self-sustaining program with a small faculty complement.

Dean's Comments:

I support the chair's comments. It's nearly impossible to have a fixed rotation, but the leaner program has made it easier to offer courses on a more regular rotation with an eye to clarity for students navigating course choices.

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

See above

Recommendation: Develop suggested pathways to help undergraduate students craft cohesive, connected programs according to their main interests

Responsibility for Implementation: Department Chair and UG Chair
Anticipated Timeline for Completion: 2029
Additional Notes/Commentary:
Progress (check one) ☐ Completed ☒ In Progress ☐ Other (please explain)
Department's Comments: With the new curriculum in place, the Undergrad Curriculum Committee has begun process of identifying themes and pathway that will allow us articulate different routes through the program reflective of students' interests.
Dean's Comments: This work is ongoing. It makes sense that it would follow the first sets of changes already described.
QAC Comments (to be filled in by Quality Assurance Committee): See above
Recommendation: Emphasize key skills and learning outcomes on the department website, and in all material used in communicating with and advising students.
Responsibility for Implementation: Department Chair and UG Chair
Anticipated Timeline for Completion: ongoing
Additional Notes/Commentary:
Progress (check one) ☐ Completed ☒ In Progress ☐ Other (please explain)
Department's Comments: - We have worked with the Recruitment Office to highlight learning outcomes and skills associated with an undergraduate degree in English and Cultural Studies; this is reflected in current recruitment materials. - Website revision to reflect these priorities is in process. - The department welcomes the development of the new skills-based Humanities Minor and will work to identify resonances with specific ECS courses.

Dean's Comments: This is a goal for the entire Faculty, and as Dr. O'Brien explains, we are all moving in this direction and the steps ECS has taken are aligned with Faculty-wide plans. One note – the skills-based credential is a concurrent certificate, not a minor.
QAC Comments (to be filled in by Quality Assurance Committee): See above
Recommendation: Explore the possibility of creating smaller class sizes to improve the undergraduate student experience
Responsibility for Implementation: N/A
Anticipated Timeline for Completion:
Additional Notes/Commentary: - As noted in our response to the reviewers' report, faculty budgetary constraints make reducing class size difficult. - We have continued the practice of allocating tutorials to select upper-year courses in which students encounter difficult subject matter (e.g., ENGLISH 3A03 Critical Race Studies). Several instructors have made use of Active Learning Classrooms to facilitate problem-based and small group learning, with TA support where feasible. - Recognizing that budgetary constraints make it impossible to offer the small class sizes that the teaching of creative writing requires, we have worked with the Associate Dean, UG, to come up with some adaptations, such as the assignment of 2 TAs to a 90-student 3rd-year creative writing class, allowing for lectures to be supplemented by a 1-hour weekly workshop, in which the instructor and 2 TAs each facilitate a group of 30 students.
Progress (check one) ☐ Completed ☒ Other (please explain) See above
Department's Comments:
Dean's Comments: As noted under 'commentary:' The department is not in a position to increase the number of small courses. While we value those experiences, we are unable to increase the percentage that fall in this category given the expense. We are trying to work with the ECS chair to develop some adaptations, as she notes above. So far, it seems to be working fairly well.
QAC Comments (to be filled in by Quality Assurance Committee): See above
Recommendation: Appoint a faculty mentor to work with students towards cohort-based events organized around student interests

Responsibility for Implementation: UG Chair
Anticipated Timeline for Completion: Complete
Additional Notes/Commentary:
Progress (check one) ☒ Completed ☐ Other (please explain)
Department's Comments: • Successive Undergraduate Chairs have taken on this role. • The revived McMaster English and Cultural Studies Undergraduate Society (MECSUS) and development of a creative writing magazine (Spectrum) owe a lot to the efforts of the successive UCCs, Cathy Grisé and Jeffery Donaldson
Dean's Comments: Recommendation has been implemented.
QAC Comments (to be filled in by Quality Assurance Committee): See above

Recommendation: Radically shrink the graduate program(s)
Responsibility for Implementation: N/A
Anticipated Timeline for Completion: N/A
Progress (check one) ☐ Completed ☒ Other (please explain) Please see below
Department's Comments: • The department recognizes the rationale for the recommendation, which is based on limited supervisory resources; however, with strong encouragement from the Associate Dean we have kept graduate program numbers more or less consistent, while keeping scholarship budgets manageable through strong recruitment of CGS-MA holding MA-students. • While keeping student numbers consistent we have made other changes to alleviate (unevenly distributed) pressure on graduate supervisors and to reallocate service roles in support of graduate programs. These include: - o The Graduate Studies Committee, under Melinda Gough's direction, has refined the selection process for PhD applicants to distribute students across different academic areas and ensure that no student is admitted without a provisionally assigned supervisor and committee members.

- o We have eliminated the MA Thesis stream and made other changes to ensure that students have the opportunity to complete substantial research projects without being assigned individual supervisors (see below).
- o Reflecting consensus on the interconnectedness of literature and cultural studies in our department, and following extensive consultation with the Graduate Studies Committee, department faculty as a whole and graduate students, the department merged the two MA programs—English; Cultural Studies and Critical Theory—into a single MA program in English and Cultural Studies with two streams: MRP and coursework (all coursework students complete the public humanities course, ENGLISH 799: Critical and Creative Approaches to Literary Studies: Sharing Knowledges in/with/for Communities over the course of Winter and Spring/Summer terms).
- o This change allowed us to more efficiently allocate faculty service responsibilities by eliminating the (labour intensive, with no teaching release) role of CSCT Director, and assigning responsibility for both streams of the new English and Cultural Studies MA (along with the PhD) to the Graduate Chair.

Other innovations in the graduate program:

- The creation of a public humanities MA course focused on writing in/with/and for communities.
- 2024 PhD name change from English to English and Cultural Studies, consistent with department name and in recognition of the kinds of projects students are completing in the program.
- Implementation of some of the recommendations of the Faculty study on shortening time to completion for PhDs, namely: reducing our PhD requirements by one elective course
- As of 2025-2026, ECS is no longer contributing teaching resources to the CNMCS PhD Pro-Seminar. However, we are piloting closer coordination between our Doctoral Seminar (English 702) and CNMCS's Pro Seminar in 2025-2026, in recognition of common milestones and student interests across the two programs. Ongoing consultations (also recommended in CNMCS's 2025 IQAP review) between ECS and CSMA will be required to determine the extent and nature of ECS's future participation in the CNMCS PhD.
- We are continuing to review our comprehensive exams process with the aim of striking a balance between facilitating students' development of comprehensive knowledge in their research areas; streamlining requirements and ensuring comps provide a good foundation for the dissertation.

Dean's Comments:

The recommendation by the associate dean to maintain graduate numbers was made at least three years ago. If the department wishes to shrink the size of its graduate cohort, they should reach out to the dean's office for a discussion.

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

See above

Recommendation:

Continue to pay an appropriately-skilled person to establish and maintain an engaging social media presence for the department

Responsibility for Implementation: Dean, Dept Chair, ADM
Anticipated Timeline for Completion: Ongoing
Additional Notes/Commentary:
Progress (check one) ☐ Completed ☒ In Progress ☐ Other (please explain)
Department's Comments: - When funding allowed, the department paid a graduate student to serve as an RA in lieu of TA to work with an assigned faculty member on communications. Budgetary constraints do not allow for the continuation of this practice; however, the Dean's office has approved funding for RA web assistants to continue this work in 2025-2026. - The appointment of a faculty member as Publicity Chair as part of the department's recently revised governance structure goes some way to fulfilling this function. - Grad Chair Melinda Gough has undertaken efforts to strengthen faculty profiles in McMaster Experts to make it easier for prospective graduate students to find potential supervisors.
Dean's Comments: The dean's office is willing to support a small contract for this purpose. It was the RA in lieu at 133 hrs and TA rates, which seemed excessive and raised equity issues for me within the program and across the Faculty.
QAC Comments (to be filled in by Quality Assurance Committee): See above
Recommendation: Reduce the secondment of ECS faculty to other units on campus, or institute a system whereby ECS is compensated for lost faculty labour[2] so that it is not being disadvantaged or effectively penalized for its major contributions to interdisciplinary and community-based work
Responsibility for Implementation: Dept Chair, Dean
Anticipated Timeline for Completion: ongoing
Additional Notes/Commentary:
Progress (check one) ☐ Completed ☒ In Progress ☐ Other (please explain)

Department's Comments: As the university is moving to enhance interdisciplinary offerings and to enhance EDI and other initiatives in which ECS faculty have interest and expertise, moving to completely "withdraw [ECS faculty] from any extradepartmental Commitments" is neither practical nor desirable. However, the department appreciates the Dean's recent termination of the secondment of two faculty members to Arts & Science, so that their teaching is now concentrated in ECS alone. Decisions about these secondments will continue to be made on a case-by-case basis in consultation with interested faculty members.
Dean's Comments: I appreciate the department's willingness to consider collaboration with other units.
QAC Comments (to be filled in by Quality Assurance Committee): See above
Recommendation: Organize a departmental retreat, with a professional facilitator, to explore ways of improving the department's cohesion and morale as well as the unity of the undergraduate curriculum; these discussions must also address issues of equity and diversity
Responsibility for Implementation: Dept Chair
Anticipated Timeline for Completion: Complete
Additional Notes/Commentary:
Progress (check one) ☒ Completed ☐ In Progress ☐ Other (please explain)
Department's Comments: - a workshop in January, 2022 with equity educator Rania El Mugammar, attended by approximately 2/3 of the department, initiated work to address these issues. - beginning in 2022, the department has adopted a practice of initiating discussions with incoming grad students as part of orientation about inclusive and anti-oppressive practices geared towards interdisciplinary seminars. - The results of these discussions, updated annually, are shared with faculty members who are encouraged to implement, adapt and modify them for use in their classes
Dean's Comments: Sounds positive.
QAC Comments (to be filled in by Quality Assurance Committee): See above

Recommendation: The University should understand that ECS requires additional line appointments in order to participate more meaningfully in community engagement and experientially based learning.
Responsibility for Implementation: Dean, Provost, President
Anticipated Timeline for Completion: 2027
Additional Notes/Commentary:
Progress (check one) ☐ Completed ☒ In Progress ☐ Other (please explain)
Department's Comments: While additional hires are welcome and needed, the department was delighted to have been granted a Tier II CRC in Canadian Literature and Culture to replace retiring faculty members Daniel Coleman and Lorraine York. There is the potential with this hire to enhance department strengths in these areas (the draft ad includes "critical community engagement" as one of the priority modes of research methodology)
Dean's Comments: The tier 2 CRC (one of only 3 CRCs in the Faculty) is a great opportunity.
QAC Comments (to be filled in by Quality Assurance Committee): See above
Recommendation: Broaden the notion of what "counts" in the point system for teaching reduction, and award additional course releases (i.e., beyond the maximum 3 credits) for those faculty who are shouldering particularly heavy workloads. BIPOC faculty, for example, often devote considerable time to mentoring and to building community relationships, and this additional work inevitably affects the amount of time they have available for research.
Responsibility for Implementation: Dean, Dept Chair
Anticipated Timeline for Completion: N/A
Additional Notes/Commentary:
Progress (check one) ☐ Completed ☐ In Progress ☒ Other (please explain) Please see below

Department's Comments: • The department administers the points system but doesn't determine how points are allocated. • Revision of the department's by-laws and committee structures in 2023 aim to improve transparency and go some way towards recognizing and remediating uneven service workloads in the department.
Dean's Comments: Most members of ECS already have enough points for the teaching release associated with the points system, and we are not able to offer more release than 3 units, given financial constraints.
QAC Comments (to be filled in by Quality Assurance Committee): See above
Recommendation: Change the budget model so that the department is not disadvantaged financially by recruiting international students.
Responsibility for Implementation: Province
Anticipated Timeline for Completion: N/A
Additional Notes/Commentary:
Progress (check one) ☐ Completed ☐ In Progress ☐ Other (please explain) Please see above
Department's Comments:
Dean's Comments: I don't believe the current situation is likely to change.
QAC Comments (to be filled in by Quality Assurance Committee): See above