



Final Assessment Report

Academic Review

History

The Final Assessment was approved by Senate at the May 13, 2016 meeting. The following is the review:

A. Summary

- i. The Self Study was presented to the PPC on November 22, 2013.
- ii. The Review Committee consisted of two external reviewers: Dr. Janice Liedl, Laurentian University and Dr. Jane Errington, Queen's University and two internal reviewers, Dr. Peter Nosko and Dr. John Allison.
- iii. The site visit occurred on February 27 and 28, 2014.
- iv. The Reviewers' Report was received on March 26, 2014.
- v. The Department's response was provided on April 11, 2014.
- vi. The Faculty Dean's response was received on October 20, 2014.

The academic programs offered by the Department which were examined as part of the review included:

BA Honours Specialization
BA Concurrent Education with an Honours Specialization
BA Specialization
BA Major
BA Minor
MA

This review was conducted under the terms and conditions of the IQAP approved by Senate on May 17, 2013.

B. Strengths

The Review Committee noted the following: *"The Department of History is one of the leading departments at Nipissing University. The quality of the education it affords its students (both undergraduate and graduate) and the very high quality of the faculty with respect to their own scholarship and their commitment to students and their programs are impressive. This is a department that needs to be supported in all aspects of its endeavours to ensure that its high performance continues even as declining enrolments in Education as well as institution-wide pose serious challenges."*

C. Opportunities for Improvement and Enhancement

The Review Team offered the following specific recommendations:

1. The department must retain the fundamental seminar format of all first and fourth year courses. And if additional resources are available, this should be extended to a growing proportion of second and third year courses.

In its response, the Department “*is fully committed to seminar-based learning. It is the primary element through which we achieve our program goals and provide training at “the highest disciplinary standards” that “epitomizes Nipissing University’s mission objectives”. Furthermore, it is a “universally celebrated” aspect of our program and well suited to fulfill the university’s mandate to support first generation and Aboriginal learners.*”

The Faculty Dean – no specific response provided

PPC response is as follows: **Given the current budgetary situation of the University, and notwithstanding the usefulness of the seminar concept, PPC cannot endorse the expansion of this concept at this time.**

2. We encourage the department to continue to review its course offerings on a regular basis, to respond to student needs, but without compromising the essential pedagogy (seminar and small class formats) that has been the basis of their success to date. This could include the introduction of a methods course or more focused methodology elements in current courses.

The Department “*will reevaluate the place of our methods course, History and Historians, in our undergraduate program. The reviewers describe our graduate program as “robustly successful”. Our steady enrollment is in no small measure a result of the recruiting work done by [name deleted] and [name deleted]. While our methods course has been more successful this year due to consistent faculty involvement, in light of the student surveys we will reevaluate its structure.*”

The Faculty Dean – no specific response provided

PPC response is as follows: **PPC recommends that the Department review its course offerings, and in particular consider the introduction of a methods course.**

3. We encourage the department to continue to maintain and strengthen relationships with other programs and centres within the university, and the community at large. This would include supporting joint and multi-disciplinary programs; strengthening ties with the Office of Aboriginal Initiatives and the North Bay Indian Friendship Centre; further developing community service learning components into courses,

The Department responded that “*during the 2014-2015 academic year, the History Department will offer courses to support business, Physical Education, geography and nursing students, including a lecture-capture option in Imperial Russian History. We will continue to develop these aspects of our program in the short and mid-term.*”

The Faculty Dean– no specific response provided

PPC response is as follows: **PPC agrees that the Department should continue to maintain and strengthen relationships within the University and within the community.**

4. The current first year “Canadian” history course (HIST1405), Power and Resistance in Canada’s Past”, should be formally recognized as a transition to university course.

The Department “*will strike a committee this spring to reevaluate this course. Its present form – transition-to-university structure for students and groundbreaking partnerships with elders – receives strong endorsement in our review. We will maintain these characteristics, while considering how we will increase the attractiveness of the course for students who arrive at Nipissing University with misconceptions about Canadian History.*”

The Faculty Dean – no specific response provided

PPC response is as follows: **PPC recommends that the Department review HIST1405 with the view of having it recognized as a “transition to university” course.**

5. The two seminar leaders [name deleted] and [name deleted] should be made permanent members of the department. They contribute far more than their ten month contracts would indicate and they are essential to the continuing strength of the first year program and the furthering the department’s commitment to one student at a time.

The Department advised that “*the student-centred nature of our program and our ability to extend this into second and third years, as our students and reviewers request, depends on job security for our colleagues [name deleted] and [name deleted]. The reviewers acknowledge this in their report and make this their first recommendation to the university. We urge the administration to make the security of these positions a matter of priority. In the process, they will support an exemplary aspect of our program and, no less importantly, the essential work our colleagues do to support this university inside and outside the classroom.*”

The Faculty Dean responded as “*outlined in the Reviewer’s report and the Departmental Response, the department will face some challenges in terms of faculty staffing. The reviewers recommend seven positions which are new or renewals. Combined with the budget issues Nipissing is facing, and the enrollment decrease in History, the timelines given by the reviewers is unrealistic. The only way to address the challenges will be by taking a long-term view of the History program. Therefore my recommendation is that the Department develops a staffing plan for the next five years, while taking into an account the implementation of the new initiatives listed for addressing the enrollment decrease.*”

PPC response is as follows: **PPC notes according to Quality Assurance Framework Reviewers are asked to comment on the “Appropriateness and effectiveness of the academic unit’s use of existing human, physical and financial resources in delivering its program(s)”. In making this assessment, reviewers must recognize the institution’s autonomy to determine priorities for funding, space, and faculty allocation.” Accordingly, PPC refers this matter to the Dean for consideration as part of the normal budgetary process.**

6. At least one of the LTAs should immediately be converted into a tenure track position. At this time, the most appropriate one would be [name deleted], whose contributions to the department and to the Faculty of Arts and Science has been exemplary. It would be next to impossible to replace him, and both the undergraduate and graduate programs would be seriously compromised without this appointment.

The Department responded that “*the continued health and vitality of our undergraduate and graduate programs, as well as the success of history’s contributions to the Human Rights and State Violence program, depends on the conversion of our LTA 2 to a tenure-track position. This position was created to support our graduate program in two ways: first, to develop courses in world history that add depth to our*

undergraduate curriculum; second, to attract students to our undergraduate and graduate programs. It is notable that the courses [name deleted] has developed since 2008 are always oversubscribed. As such, they strengthen our undergraduate program. These courses are also the largest source of recruitment to our graduate program, drawing seventeen students to the M.A. in history and additional students to the M.Ed since 2008. Without this position our ability to offer our program and attract and retain students will be seriously eroded. As funds have already been committed to this position, this decision would be budget neutral.”

The Faculty Dean see response to recommendation #5 above.

PPC response is as follows: **PPC notes according to Quality Assurance Framework Reviewers are asked to comment on the “Appropriateness and effectiveness of the academic unit’s use of existing human, physical and financial resources in delivering its program(s)”. In making this assessment, reviewers must recognize the institution’s autonomy to determine priorities for funding, space, and faculty allocation.” Accordingly, PPC refers this matter to the Dean for consideration as part of the normal budgetary process.**

7. The university should consider instituting at least one bridging appointment for future retirements beyond 2015, and should commit that all the retirement positions will be replaced so that vital teaching specialties are not lost. This is particularly a concern for the areas of medieval and premodern history.

The Department advised that *“in the next twelve months, the retirement of [name deleted] will seriously compromise the breadth of our program offerings. This is an area of student interest that, as you will note below, we are working to expand to attract more undergraduate and graduate students. Given the seniority of [name deleted], an LTA replacement will provide budget savings without compromising the strength of the history program.*

Over the next five years, we are likely to face further retirements. To maintain the quality of our program it is essential that we establish a plan to replace these positions.”

The Faculty Dean *“recommends that the Department develop a staffing plan for the next five years.”*

PPC response is as follows: **PPC notes according to Quality Assurance Framework Reviewers are asked to comment on the “Appropriateness and effectiveness of the academic unit’s use of existing human, physical and financial resources in delivering its program(s)”. In making this assessment, reviewers must recognize the institution’s autonomy to determine priorities for funding, space, and faculty allocation.” Accordingly, PPC refers this matter to the Dean for consideration as part of the normal budgetary process.**

8. The university should open up two new LTA positions in history to reduce the need for short term, course-by- course appointments.

The Department – see response to recommendation #6 above.

The Faculty Dean - see response to recommendation #5 & 6 above.

PPC response is as follows: **PPC notes according to Quality Assurance Framework Reviewers are asked to comment on the “Appropriateness and effectiveness of the academic unit’s use of existing human, physical and financial resources in delivering its program(s)”. In making this assessment, reviewers must recognize the institution’s autonomy to determine priorities for**

funding, space, and faculty allocation.” Accordingly, PPC refers this matter to the Dean for consideration as part of the normal budgetary process.

9. The university must increase the library budget substantially, including the allocation to the history department. Without this, not only will the quality of programs be compromised and faculty’s ability to continue with ground-breaking research be put at risk, but efforts to enhance overall recruitment will be seriously undermined.

The Department responded that *“we concur that the library budget seriously “jeopardizes the department’s ability to continue its mandate- to ensure a high quality of education for all levels and to promote and sustain its research-intensive agenda.” We appreciate the work of our colleagues in the library and recognize the challenges they face trying to support us with tremendously limited resources. A well-supported archive with a mandate to broaden its collection will strengthen the research culture of the university by attracting a wider number of graduate students to our university and increasing the quality of research produced at the institution.”*

The Faculty Dean *“concurs with the recommendations of the reviewers concerning the library. However given our budgetary constraints, achieving these recommendations may not be possible in the short term.”*

PPC response is as follows: **PPC notes that the acquisitions budget for the library was increased by 20% in 2015-2016.**

10. Departmental discretionary funds should be increased by at least 50%.

The Department advised that *“our limited discretionary funds make it difficult to support our departmental activities and, as a consequence, the vitality and innovation of our program. Securing funds to respectfully support Elders is a principal concern.”*

The Faculty Dean *“supports the recommendation to increase the discretionary departmental budget. This request could be put forward to the budget committee with a good rationale.”*

PPC response is as follows: **PPC notes according to Quality Assurance Framework Reviewers are asked to comment on the “Appropriateness and effectiveness of the academic unit’s use of existing human, physical and financial resources in delivering its program(s)”. In making this assessment, reviewers must recognize the institution’s autonomy to determine priorities for funding, space, and faculty allocation.” Accordingly, PPC refers this matter to the Dean for consideration as part of the normal budgetary process.**

11. We recommend that the current LTA at the Muskoka Campus be converted into a tenure track position.

The Department responded *“that the joint LTA position shared with Muskoka provides important linkages between the satellite and main campus, while also providing important support for teaching, particularly replacements for leaves and sabbaticals. We are thankful for the work of [name deleted] and his willingness to travel great distances for our undergraduate and graduate programs. We are hopeful that recent initiatives at Muskoka will revitalize this campus and the place of history courses there. The conversion of this LTA will strengthen both programs and draw from funds already committed to this position.”*

The Faculty Dean *see response to recommendation #5 above.*

PPC response is as follows: **Since the Bracebridge campus is being closed, the recommendation is no longer pertinent.**

12. The department needs an “office” and ongoing administrative support.

The Department *“agreed that there is no doubt that departments need “dedicated administrative support” to relieve pressure on department chairs, graduate advisors and support personnel in FASS and Print Plus.”*

The Faculty Dean *“noted that administrative support for the departments in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences is a reoccurring recommendation in each of the program reviews. Nipissing University is working on this issue.”*

PPC response is as follows: **PPC notes according to Quality Assurance Framework Reviewers are asked to comment on the “Appropriateness and effectiveness of the academic unit’s use of existing human, physical and financial resources in delivering its program(s)”. In making this assessment, reviewers must recognize the institution’s autonomy to determine priorities for funding, space, and faculty allocation.” Accordingly, PPC refers this matter to the Dean for consideration as part of the normal budgetary process.**

13. Faculty offices should be grouped together to enhance communication and cooperation among various members.

No specific response given by Department or Faculty Dean

PPC response is as follows: **the primary object of this recommendation is outside the scope of the IQAP program review. However, it should be noted that the University agrees that offices for faculty within the same academic unit should be grouped together to create what could be described as “departmental space”. The issue of how to provide logistical support is under review.**

14. History students – undergraduate and graduate – should be provided with a “history room” at which they could gather, display their work, etc.

No specific response given by Department or Faculty Dean

PPC response is as follows: **PPC notes according to Quality Assurance Framework Reviewers are asked to comment on the “Appropriateness and effectiveness of the academic unit’s use of existing human, physical and financial resources in delivering its program(s)”. In making this assessment, reviewers must recognize the institution’s autonomy to determine priorities for funding, space, and faculty allocation.” Accordingly, PPC refers this matter to the Dean for consideration as part of the normal budgetary process.**

D. Specific Recommendations

Below are the recommendations that require specific action as a result of the Review, along with the identification of the position or unit responsible for the action in question. Notwithstanding the position or



unit identified as the being responsible for specific recommendations, the Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Science has the overall responsibility for ensuring that the recommended actions are undertaken.

Recommendation	Responsible	Projected Date
PPC recommends that the Department review its course offerings, and in particular consider the introduction of a methods course.	Department	December 2016
PPC recommends that the Department review HIST1405 with the view of having it recognized as a “transition to university” course.	Department	May 2017