

Final Assessment Report

Academic Review

Philosophy Program Cyclical Review 2014-15

A. Summary

- i. The Self Study was reviewed at PPC on January 23, 2015.
- ii. The Review Committee consisted of two external reviewers: Dr. Real Fillion, University of Sudbury and Dr. John MacKinnon, Saint Mary's University and two internal reviewers, Dr. Darren Campbell and Dr. Gyllian Phillips.
- iii. The site visit occurred on March 5 and 6, 2015.
- iv. The Reviewers' Report was received on April 8, 2015.
- v. The Department's response was received on May 7, 2015.
- vi. The Faculty Dean's response was received on May 12, 2015.

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

BA Honours Specialization
BA Specialization
BA Major
BA Minor

This review was conducted under the terms and conditions of the IQAP approved by the Nipissing University Senate on May 17, 2013, and ratified by the Quality Council on June 28, 2013.

B. Strengths

The Review Team noted the following in relation to the Philosophy Program's strengths: *"At the time of this report, the Philosophy Program is delivered by two dedicated full-time tenured faculty, a cross-appointed tenure-track faculty with responsibilities to both the Philosophy Program and the Political Science Program, and a part-time instructor. This amounts to very limited resources to deliver its various programs, which includes an Honours program. And yet, with such limited resources, the program manages to offer a wide variety of courses, partly through the inclusion of a number of cross-listed courses, but mostly through the energy, commitment, and leadership of the faculty to ensuring that students are exposed to a variety of approaches and issues. This commitment, together with a supportive administration and an obviously engaged and appreciative cohort of students, reflects the governing ideals featured in the University's mission and vision statements, as well as its declaration of values."*

C. Opportunities for Improvement and Enhancement

The Review Team offered the following specific recommendations:

1. That appropriate distinctive administrative support and appropriately located office spaces be considered for the Philosophy program.

In its response, the Department advised that recommendations (1-6) concern decisions which must be taken by the administration of the University.

The Faculty Dean advised that *“this recommendation appears in all Arts and Science IQAP reviews. I support the recommendation. However, this will depend on the availability of resources for the Faculty of Arts and Science.”*

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.**

2. Given the small number of faculty dedicated to the programs of philosophy, it is recommended that sabbatical replacements be secured in order to maintain a regular delivery of offerings.

The Faculty Dean *“supports the recommendation. Such sabbatical replacements will be more crucial in the upcoming years in order to attract and retain students, in particular in programs with a small number of faculty.”*

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.**

3. Given the role that cross-listed courses play in the ability of faculty to deliver all of its programs, including an Honours program, it is recommended that the course syllabi of the cross-listed courses and the curriculum vitae of those contributing to the program be included in the documentation submitted to future reviewers so that they can assess the full scope of the offerings contributing to the philosophy degree.

The Faculty Dean *“fully supports this recommendation.”*

PPC response is as follows: **PPC agrees with this recommendation for all program reviews.**

4. That the provision of writing assistance become an institutional priority across programs.

The Faculty Dean noted that as an institution, *“we took some steps towards making sure that academic writing is a priority across programs with the introduction of academic writing courses. We need to examine our support in developing writing skills. I will be following up on this matter with [name deleted], Assistant Vice-President Students, and the Arts and Science Executive.”*

PPC response is as follows: **PPC notes that the existing ACAD courses and writing skills assistance (Student Development Services) are provided at this time.**

5. That the University consider authorizing the Philosophy Program to invite applications for tutorial positions, or perhaps a single tutorial position, from recently completed doctoral students in Ontario, or indeed across the country, to assist in the running of large first-year introductory courses.

The Department responded to the above five (5) recommendations as such: *“The members of the Philosophy program enthusiastically support these recommendations. In particular, we wish to note that the failure to provide a sabbatical replacement for [name deleted] sabbatical in 2011-12 had a demonstrably negative affect on the number of courses offered in the program, the number of students enrolled in philosophy, and on the amount of revenue Philosophy contributed to the University. The philosophy program requires the equivalent of 3 full-time regular teaching loads on a yearly basis, and meeting this requirement involves not only the provision of sabbatical replacement teaching, but ensuring that [name deleted] obligations to the Political Science program do not excessively impact his contribution to Philosophy.”*

The Faculty Dean *“supports this recommendation. Having such positions will depend on our budget.”*

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. That the University give consideration to consulting faculty members in all academic programs on matters concerning the marketing and branding of the Nipissing University.

The Faculty Dean stated that *“the issue of the marketing and branding of Nipissing University, in particular, the Faculty of Arts and Science, as well as consultation with faculty members on matters concerning marketing, has been brought up in many forms. The Dean and the Arts and Science Executive will again be discussing this issue in the upcoming months to come up with more effective communication and marketing strategies for the programs in Arts and Science.”*

PPC response is as follows: **PPC considers this recommendation to be somewhat outside the scope of the program review. However, PPC recommends that the relevant University units (Recruitment, Marketing and Communications) continue to consult with all academic units and the Deans in the development of their marketing/recruitment/communications strategies.**

7. That the Philosophy Program consider initiating discussions with colleagues at other universities in northern Ontario to found a regional Philosophy society, with a view to arranging annual, or at least occasional, conferences, where hosting duties would rotate among member institutions.

The Faculty Dean *“fully supports this recommendation. This is an excellent idea to increase the ties among the Philosophy programs in Northern Ontario.”*

PPC response is as follows: **PPC considers this to be outside the scope of a program review.**

8. That the University, bearing in mind the benefits of establishing ties with the Bora Laskin Faculty of Law at Lakehead University, give serious long-term consideration to hiring a specialist in the philosophy of law, to be cross-appointed with Philosophy and Criminal Justice, or perhaps Philosophy, Criminal Justice and Political Science.

The Department advised that *“as we mentioned in our self-study, one of our core course offerings has already been included in the new Minor in Law program, and we would indeed like to develop a course in the philosophy of law, in which the Law program has expressed an interest. However, at present, it is unclear whether we would have the resources to actually offer it. Finally, we endorse the idea of making explicit contacts with the new school of law at Lakehead (where one of our students began his studies this year) to discuss their entrance desiderata, our program, and so on.”*

The Faculty Dean responded *“although I strongly support this recommendation, creation of a new faculty position will be difficult under current budgetary conditions.”*

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. PPC 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. In this case, there are no specific actions recommended to be undertaken.