

FINAL ASSESSMENT REPORT – CYCLICAL REVIEW

MA Theory Culture and Politics

DEGREE PROGRAMS BEING REVIEWED	MA in Theory, Culture and Politics
EXTERNAL REVIEWERS	Dr. Scott Henderson (Brock University) Dr. Shannon Bell (York University)
INTERNAL REPRESENTATIVE	Dr. Rita Bode , Trent University
DATE OF REVIEW VISIT	November 6 and 7, 2014

SUMMARY

This Final Assessment Report (FAR), in accordance with Trent University's Institutional Quality Assurance Policy (IQAP), provides a synthesis of the cyclical review of the undergraduate degree programs. The report considers four evaluation documents: the Program's Self-Study, the External Reviewers' Report, the Program Response, and the Decanal Response. A summary of the review process is as follows: the academic unit(s) is responsible for completing a self-study which encompasses all degree programs under review. The self-study addresses all components of the evaluation criteria as outlined in Trent's IQAP. Appendices will include the course outlines in each of the degree programs and CVs for full-time faculty members teaching in the degree programs. Qualified external reviewers are invited to conduct a review of the degree programs which involves a review of all relevant documentation (self-study, appendices, IQAP), and participating in a university site visit. During the site visit reviewers meet with the Provost and Vice President Academic, relevant Dean(s), the Chair and or Director of the degree program(s), full- and part-time faculty, support staff and students. Once the external reviewers' report is received both the program and dean provide responses to the report.

The Cyclical Program Review Committee (CPRC) reviews and assesses the quality of the degree programs based on the four review documents and reports on significant program strengths, opportunities for improvement and enhancement, and the implementation of recommendations.

The Implementation Plan identifies those recommendations selected for implementation, and specifies: proposed follow-up, who is responsible for leading the follow-up, and the timeline for addressing the recommendation.

During the academic year 2014-2015, a review of the MA in Theory, Culture and Politics was completed. Two arm's-length external reviewers (Dr. Shannon Bell, York University; Dr. Scott Henderson, Brock University) and one internal member (Dr. Rita Bode) were invited to review the self-study documentation and then conducted a site visit to the university on November 6-7, 2014.

The Cyclical Program Review Committee reviewed and discussed the self-study, the external reviewers' report, and responses from the program and dean. A Final Assessment Report was developed and includes an Implementation Plan which addresses specific recommendations, proposed follow-up and implementation dates. The Program will submit an Implementation Report in March 2016.

CPRC proposes to Senate that the MA in Theory, Culture and Politics be granted approval to continue; in order to optimize the program's sustainability it must adhere to a strict implementation plan. CPRC also recommends to the Provost that the Dean of Graduate Studies provide a full report to the Provost on the sustainability of MA in Theory, Culture and Politics in 3 years (December 2018).

SIGNIFICANT PROGRAM STRENGTHS

The Theory, Culture and Politics MA program is a model of Trent's interdisciplinary mission; drawing faculty and courses from a number of humanities and social science departments and programs.

TCP requirements and Learning Objective outcomes are clearly stated and fully in line with Trent's graduate Degree Level Expectations and the Reviewers note that the program meets these outcomes as evidenced by TCP graduates being:

- Competent participants in the broader intellectual community and taking an active role in the local and international culture of critical engagement with multiple subjects;
- Capable of self-directed learning, critical writing and listening and reflexive theoretical practice
- Skilled in participating in multi-disciplinary colloquia and leading seminars, writing and presenting a thesis proposal, and writing a research thesis.

The Theory, Culture and Politics MA program shows innovation in the delivery of cluster seminars that bring together first and second year MA students in TCPS 5000Y.

The program's greatest strengths are the space it opens to different theories, its requirement of students to pursue their own project and research design, its involvement of students in their own education process, including student led seminars, student organized symposia, and a student organized conference.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT AND ENHANCEMENT

It was recommended that the TCP website be improved in order to enhance the student experience and improve recruitment of new students by:

- Ensuring that relevant forms and other key program information such as the Thesis Proposal requirements, Student Progress Report, and Supervisor Form be available here, and that the TCP faculty know that they are required to fill out the faculty portion of the Student Progress Report and the Supervisory Form.
- Clarifying the program content and focus (as it is not entirely clear what students will study and how it can be applied in their studies).
- Ensure the website highlights contemporary culture and media in order to appeal to a broader field of candidates.

Areas relating to the program that could be improved were summarized as follows:

- The Department needs to take steps to promote/foster willingness amongst faculty to take on the role of thesis supervision.
- It is important that faculty presence in the second term seminar/colloquium portion of TCPS 5000Y and at the two yearly lectures be increased.

The Reviewers suggested that offering the option of a Master's Research Paper or Project would address concerns relating to average time to completion and also encourage additional enrolment.

The Reviewers recommend evaluating a shift in emphasis from continental theory to cultural theory and digital and media theory in order to align the program with the new demographics of incoming students. This would also help to revitalize the program.

COMPLETE LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

- Recommendation 1: Offer the option of a Master’s Research Paper/Project (MRP)
- Recommendation 2: Addition of a “Media Theory” course as a core TCP course
- Recommendation 3: That TCP remain an autonomous MA program, but be affiliated with Cultural Studies
- Recommendation 4: Enhance 2nd year student experience
- Recommendation 5: Ensure that graduate supervision is credited
- Recommendation 6: Ensure thesis supervisors are assigned to students
- Recommendation 7: TCP work with Grad Dean to establish and reach sustainable enrolment targets
- Recommendation 8: Website improvement
- Recommendation 9: Reassign equipment to TCP for Media Research Facility

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

* *The applicable Dean, in consultation with the Academic Program shall be responsible for monitoring the Implementation Plan and for submission of an Implementation Report by the due date provided. Reports should be submitted electronically to the Office of the Provost and copied to the applicable Dean(s). The Report should address recommendations that require follow-up and should include details of the proposed follow-up and status of the follow-up (i.e., in progress, completed, not attainable) in accordance with the Implementation Date provided (if any)*

Implementation Report Due: March 2016

In some cases programs may be asked to submit an earlier report for a specific recommendation. This will be clearly indicated in the final column under *Timelines for Addressing Recommendation*.

Recommendation	<u>Proposed Follow-Up</u> If no follow-up is recommended please clearly indicate ‘ <u>No follow up report is required</u> ’ and provide rationale.	Responsibility for Leading Follow-Up *	Timeline for Addressing Recommendation (If required)
<u>Recommendation 1</u> Offer the option of Master’s Research Paper/Project [MRP]		Director in consultation with Grad Dean	<u>Implementation Date</u> Fall 2016
<u>Recommendation 2</u> Addition of a “Media Theory” course as a core TCP course		Director	<u>Implementation Date</u> Fall 2016

Recommendation	Proposed Follow-Up If no follow-up is recommended please clearly indicate ' No follow up report is required ' and provide rationale.	Responsibility for Leading Follow-Up *	Timeline for Addressing Recommendation (If required)
Recommendation 3 That TCP remain an autonomous MA program, but be affiliated with Cultural Studies	<i>This is not a quality issue. As such, no follow-up report is required.</i>		
Recommendation 4 Enhance 2 nd year student experience.		Director and Dean of Graduate Studies	<u>Implementation Date</u> Winter 2016
Recommendation 5 Ensure that graduate supervision is credited	Under consideration with the introduction of the RCM budgeting process	Dean of Graduate Studies, Director & Provost	
Recommendation 6 Ensure thesis supervisors are assigned to students	<i>No follow-up report is required.</i> <i>Policy has changed and supervisors will now be assigned in letter of offer.</i>		
Recommendation 7 That TCP work with Grad Dean to establish and reach sustainable enrolment targets		Director and Dean of Graduate Studies	
Recommendation 8 Website improvement	<i>This is in progress. No follow-up report is required.</i>		<u>Implementation Date</u> Feb 2016
Recommendation 9 Reassign equipment to TCP for Media Research Facility	<i>No follow-up report is required.</i> <i>The equipment was redeployed by the Office of Research to the Centre for Aging.</i>		