

**HISTORY BA AND MA DEGREE PROGRAMS
FINAL ASSESSMENT REPORT
PROGRAM QUALITY ASSURANCE COMMITTEE**

April 2013

The Program Quality Assurance Committee recommends to Senate that the following report on the external review of the degree programs in BSc History and the MA History be approved.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Trent University Program Quality Assurance Committee (PQAC) discussed the external review of the BA and MA in History on February 13, February 27, and March 13. The Committee was satisfied that the program quality assurance process provided a clear and helpful review of the work of the Trent University BA History and MA History programs.

As confirmed by the External Reviewers, the History Department has a long-standing reputation for research and teaching excellence, thereby identifying the Department as being closely aligned with Trent University's mission as a liberal arts and sciences teaching and research institution. The Reviewers identified governance, service and workload issues as priorities that must be addressed by the Department. They recommended some restructuring of the graduate program involving fields of specialization and number of courses offered. PQAC affirms faculty and program strengths, including intellectual diversity and commitment to interdisciplinary endeavours, and affirms the urgency of addressing the Reviewers' recommendations, specifically regarding governance, service and workload.

INTRODUCTION

The programs were reviewed by Dr. Doris Bergen, Department of History, University of Toronto, Dr. Peter Gossage, Department of History, Concordia University, Dr. Bonny Ibhawoh, Department of History, McMaster University, and Dr. Alan O'Connor, Cultural Studies, Trent University. A site visit was scheduled and conducted March 21st and 22nd, 2012 and the Reviewers interviewed senior administrators, permanent and contractual faculty. They also met with a number of current students.

Objective: To assess the BA in History and the MA in History at Trent University.

ASSESSMENT

BA History – Good Quality
MA History – Good Quality

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Except where noted, in the case of all recommendations relating to the undergraduate program, it is understood that:

Approval required by: Humanities Dean
Resources provided by: Humanities Dean
Executor: Humanities Dean, Undergraduate Chair
Timeline for Acting on: Immediate
Timeline for Monitoring: January 2014

Except where noted, in the case of all recommendations relating to the graduate program, it is understood that:

Approval required by: Graduate Dean
Resources provided by: Graduate Dean
Executor: Graduate Dean, History MA Director
Timeline for Acting on: Immediate
Timeline for Monitoring: January 2014

Recommendation 1 *(undergraduate)*

The Department needs to come up with a clear governance document. It need not be overly detailed, but it should provide some firm guidelines regarding procedures. This document might be drafted by a group of faculty, discussed by the Department as a whole, and then put forward for a vote.

Recommendation 2 *(undergraduate)*

There should be regular department meetings at which issues are openly discussed. Colleagues should be encouraged to participate in person except under extraordinary circumstances.

Recommendation 3 *(undergraduate)*

Proxy voting should be restricted to special circumstances and be valid for only one specific issue at one meeting. The current system of designating a proxy for the entire year has to end.

Recommendation 4 *(undergraduate)*

Unless there is absolute consensus within the Department as to who should be the next Chair, the University should consider appointing an interim chair, perhaps from another department or from among the retired faculty, for a term of no more than two years. This person would preside over the development of governance procedures for the History Department.

Recommendation 5 *(undergraduate, graduate)*

The Provost, Dean, Chair, and all members of the Department should actively encourage shared intellectual projects for those historians who want to work together.

Recommendation 6 *(undergraduate)*

Members of the Department should think hard about how to promote more interaction, even at very basic levels. There seem to be few opportunities to engage one another on a daily basis, when picking up mail, getting a cup of coffee, or eating lunch. It is hard to build intellectual community if people do not even encounter let alone know one another.

Recommendation 7 *(graduate)*

The Graduate Program Committee should play a more active role, not simply as advisory to the Graduate Director. There should be regularly scheduled meetings devoted to discussion of significant issues.

Recommendation 8 *(undergraduate)*

The History Department could collaborate more closely with other units, notably Canadian Studies.

Recommendation 9 *(undergraduate)*

More attention needs to be paid to the Oshawa campus. The Department might consider whether the next tenure-track appointment might be in Oshawa. Other ways to encourage more cooperation between the campuses should also be encouraged.

Recommendation 10 *(undergraduate)*

Workload issues should be discussed openly, with an eye to developing practices and attitudes that promote fairness without being divisively legalistic. Teaching should be assigned and valued in a fair manner, taking into account different styles of pedagogy and including teaching and supervision in the MA Program. A good idea might be a system in which graduate teaching and supervision are rewarded by credits towards an undergraduate course release.

Recommendation 11 *(undergraduate)*

At this crucial moment, with a number of retirements on the horizon and the University involved in a major planning exercise, historians at Trent need to engage one another in a series of conversations to plan for the future. It is important to build on existing strengths in Canadian history and also to support the work Trent historians are doing on many other parts of the world.

Recommendation 12 *(undergraduate)*

It is valuable to continue the tradition of small-group teaching and also to develop other approaches that may be necessary, more efficient, even more appropriate under some circumstances. Colleagues need to move beyond seeing these possibilities as “zero-sum” relationships in order to come up with priorities that will benefit the Department as a whole.

Recommendation 13 *(undergraduate)*

The History Department should participate actively in recruiting new students to Trent. This effort should mobilize faculty, students, and alumni and should focus on increasing enrollments at the University as a whole at least as much as on maintaining or raising the number of history majors. Initiatives might include visits to high schools, hosting an event on one of the campuses for students from local schools, and publicizing the successes of graduates from Trent.

Recommendation 14 *(undergraduate)*

The first year thematic courses are innovative and a great way to recruit students into the history program; there is evidence that students and instructors find the small group teaching model effective. Others, however, are less enthusiastic and would like to experiment with different models of teaching. There should be benchmarks that allow people to innovate and provide fair ways to evaluate alternative models of teaching.

Recommendation 15 *(undergraduate)*

Team teaching brings people together and should be encouraged.

Recommendation 16 *(undergraduate)*

The History Department should explore opportunities to cross-list courses. The Department could also initiate collaborative courses with other departments that could be co-developed in a way that fully meets the needs of both departments.

Recommendation 17 *(graduate)*

More attention should be paid to recruitment of strong applicants to the graduate program. This effort should involve the website and other online possibilities but also make use of faculty members' professional networks across Canada and internationally.

Recommendation 18 *(graduate)*

The website should be constantly updated and made as "rich" as possible. Apparently the majority of students apply to a graduate program based on its website. There might be a Facebook page to give viewers a sense of daily life in the History MA for faculty and grad students.

Recommendation 19 *(graduate)*

Printed materials describing the reorganized program could be mailed (and/or emailed) to colleagues around the world to attract applicants. Trent is one of very few universities to offer a funded, two-year degree program with a thesis. The Department should use this advantage to recruit excellent students from other universities who intend to go on to doctoral work.

Recommendation 20 *(graduate)*

The 2-year thesis option has wide appeal and is a valuable feature of the Trent program. If the Department want to keep both the 1 and 2 year options, the 1-year program needs to be restructured so that students can complete it within one year.

Recommendation 21 *(graduate)*

The 6 graduate fields should be reassessed. Their purpose needs clarification, and the number of fields could be reduced. Graduate students, we were told, are not actually admitted into fields. It is useful to outline the core strengths of the program as a recruitment tool, but any such descriptions and categories should be accurate reflections of what faculty and students actually do in the MA program.

Recommendation 22 *(graduate)*

The number of graduate courses offered needs to be reduced. These should be mostly thematic courses (perhaps team-taught) that draw students from across the Program and even from elsewhere in the university. Highly specialized courses that attract only 1 to 3 students might be offered instead as independent studies.

Recommendation 23 *(graduate)*

Students should be discouraged from taking most of their courses with their thesis supervisor. There could be a cap on the number of independent studies each MA student can take.

Recommendation 24 *(graduate)*

MA students might be permitted to take one fourth-year undergraduate course for graduate credit. (The fact that these are full-year and not one-semester courses might present some complications, however.) Students might also be permitted to take one of their courses outside the History Department.

Recommendation 25 (graduate)

The Department should discuss what to do with about the compulsory course on Historiography, whether to keep it as a full course, divide it into 2 half-courses, or reduce it to a single half-course. If it is to be required of all MA students, it may need to be changed to a half-course.

Recommendation 26 (graduate)

The MA Program needs a clear governance document to establish basic procedures and regulations. In the assessment of the external reviewers, the guidelines for the MA Program should be incorporated into the governance document of the Department as a whole.

Recommendation 27 (graduate)

The part-time administrator in the MA program is over-stretched. He should be given more hours to work for History or assigned some additional help, at least during the busiest times of the year.

Recommendation 28 (graduate)

Funding for the Library needs to be a priority so that acquisition of the books necessary to sustain an active undergraduate and MA program in History can resume and continue.

Approval required by: Provost, University Librarian
Resources provided by: Subject to available funding
Executor: University Librarian
Timeline for Acting on: Immediate
Timeline for Monitoring: January 2014

Recommendation 29 (undergraduate)

The Undergraduate Dean recommends that the university endeavor to build more classroom space. History needs additional classroom space, particularly for classes of 100 students. In fact, there is significant need for classrooms of this size across campus.

Recommendation 30 (undergraduate)

The Undergraduate Dean recommends that the Chair delegate departmental service to faculty in an equitable manner.

Approval required by: Provost, Humanities Dean
Resources provided by: Humanities Dean
Executor: Humanities Dean, Undergraduate Chair
Timeline for Acting on: In progress, Deadline June 3, 2013
Timeline for Monitoring: January 2014

Recommendation 31 (undergraduate/graduate)

The Undergraduate Dean recommends that decanal support be provided for History administration and intradepartmental relations.

Recommendation 32 (undergraduate/graduate)

The Undergraduate Dean recommends that Faculty Renewal take place between 2014-2017.

Approval required by: Provost and Vice President Academic
Resources provided by: Provost
Executor: Humanities Dean, Undergraduate Chair
Timeline for Acting on: address each year in staffing plans for 2014 to 2017
Timeline for Monitoring: January 2014