

PROGRAM QUALITY ASSURANCE COMMITTEE (PQAC)
CYCLICAL REVIEW - FINAL ASSESSMENT REPORT & IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

DEGREE PROGRAM BEING REVIEWED:	BA International Development Studies
DEPARTMENT RESPONSIBLE:	International Development Studies
EXTERNAL REVIEWERS:	Dr. Richard Handler, University of Virginia Dr. Richard Sandbrook, University of Toronto
INTERNAL REPRESENTATIVE:	Dr. Jim Struthers, Trent University
DATE OF REVIEW VISIT:	March 7-8, 2013
OVERALL ASSESSMENT:	Good Quality
SUBMITTED FOR SENATE APPROVAL:	April 2014

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

During the academic year 2012-2013, the Department of International Development Studies completed a review of the BA in International Development Studies. The reviewers conducted a site visit on March 7-8, 2013, meeting with senior administrators, permanent and contract faculty, staff members, and undergraduate students. Based on the Departmental Self-Assessment and their site visit, the reviewers assessed the program as being 'of good quality'. After a thorough review of the following documents: Self-Assessment, Reviewers' Report, Departmental Response, and Decanal Response, the Program Quality Assurance Committee (PQAC) would concur with this assessment.

The International Development Studies program is well-established and there is clear evidence that its faculty demonstrate excellent teaching. It was the first program of its kind in North America and it remains a focus of innovative practice.

The reviewers consider International Development Studies to be one of Trent University's "flagship" programs. It is clear that they were extremely impressed by the overall quality of the program:

'Indeed, it should be obvious from our report that we find this program to be not just "good" but "outstanding".'

The program is fundamentally interdisciplinary in nature and in this it is felt to demonstrate exemplary practice. In the words of the reviewers:

'The accomplishment should be celebrated: at a time when almost all universities talk about interdisciplinarity but few know how to define it, much less practice it, Trent's IDST program has brought together scholars from across the social sciences (from disciplines that often can't or won't talk to one another) who work together to advance understanding of critically important issues.'

A distinctive and defining feature of the program is the opportunity for students in their third year to choose participation in the Year Abroad Program (YAP), with its two options: Trent in Ecuador and Trent in Ghana. The YAP combines third year University course work in a developing country context with hands-on experience obtained through a community placement. During the year students learn about the history and culture of another society, acquire skills in community development, engage in a cross-cultural living experience, and make contacts and friendships in a new community.

Although some students are not in a position to take advantage of the YAP, the reviewers agree it is an important part of the program:

'... whether or not the students choose to pursue careers in international development or international work, participating in a YAP makes them better and more effective global citizens. The YAPs provide a deeply comparative experience; they promote international and critical awareness, cultural sensitivity, and tolerance.'

SIGNIFICANT PROGRAM STRENGTHS

International Development Studies is a discipline that gathers together issues that are foundational across the social sciences. The ability of the program to do this in a thoroughly coherent manner indicates the strength of the program's curriculum. While the core and topical courses provide students with a good grounding in social scientific theories and methods, crucially, the curriculum provides students with a global perspective. It focuses on *'human wellbeing in a world of increasing economic inequality and ongoing political change'*. IDST 1000Y and 2000Y provide students with *'a broad-ranging introduction to development studies'*.

The effective interdisciplinary nature of the program is central to its success. The reviewers characterize this as follows:

'Scholars from different disciplines creating an integrated curriculum and a cohesive program that brings together students and teachers in a common enterprise.'

The holistic nature of the curriculum is also seen as a strength, with teaching and learning succeeding through the integration of both *'theoretical and practical or applied knowledge'*.

The faculty delivering the program are committed to small-group instruction. Students get to know their instructors well and have many opportunities for support and mentoring. Their experience is enhanced by involvement in the Department's stimulating intellectual life, with lunchtime talks, 'Transdisciplinary Research-in-Progress' (TRIPS), in which faculty from across the University present their current ongoing research to an interdisciplinary audience.

A major strength of the program is the range of opportunities available for students to gain real-life experience and hands-on training. The program has a *'rich set of choices to learn about development on the ground, to gain practical experience, and to reflect on how development projects work, or fail.'* The program is one of only a handful of international development studies programs in North America that offers the option of a full year 5-credit study abroad. The Year Abroad Programs in Ghana and Ecuador offer first rate opportunities for students to study abroad. The faculty responsible should be recognized for the amount of time and commitment involved in maintaining these programs.

The distinctive nature of the program means that it continues to attract excellent and motivated students who come from across Canada and internationally to contribute to the life of the University. Graduates from the program go on to contribute to wider society by pursuing careers such as law, journalism, academia, medicine, civil service, international development management, and other professions.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT AND ENHANCEMENT

The YAP offers a wonderful opportunity to those students who can afford it and feel able to commit to spending so much time abroad. For those students unable to do this, there may be advantages to accessing a shorter, more affordable experience. Faculty could consider developing a shorter abroad experience to widen student participation and thereby enrich the quality of learning for all.

The YAP program demands large amounts of faculty time and the department needs to be vigilant and seek creative solutions to ensure that it remains financially sustainable.

Students may feel more comfortable spending extended periods of time in both Ecuador and Ghana if they are exposed to more of the history and current developments in Latin America or Africa.

International Development Studies is a unique program of high quality. The university should consider ways of building on this success through maximizing its marketing potential, both for the sake of recruitment to the program and enhancing Trent's profile.

COMPLETE LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1

IDST should consider creating a four-month program for third-year students either in place of the existing Year Abroad Programs in Ecuador and Ghana or in addition to the existing programs.

Recommendation 2

IDST should consider requiring all single-major students (at least) to enroll in either one of the semester abroad programs or IDST 3700Y.

Recommendation 3

IDST should emphasize to all incoming majors the importance of taking basic language instruction in Spanish or French in their first and/or second years.

Recommendation 4

IDST should consider a new requirement that all students in single or joint major programs enroll in at least one area-studies course in their second year.

Recommendation 5

We recommend that cooperation between the IDST and Environmental and Resource Studies be strengthened, preferably in the form of a joint appointment.

Recommendation 6

We recommend that the department consult with students on the question of the "practical" nature of their education in IDST.

Recommendation 7

Although we do not recommend the creation of an interdisciplinary school incorporating the existing IDST programs along with others, such as a School of Global Studies, we do believe there is room for more cooperation between the IDST Department and related departments.

Recommendation 8

IDST should reconsider its commitment to Trent-in-Oshawa.

Recommendation 9

Fees paid by Letters of Permission students from other universities who register in one of IDST’s two Year-Abroad Programs (YAPs) in Ecuador and Ghana should be wholly directed to the department.

Recommendation 10

A key priority for Trent University’s Advancement Office should be targeting endowed scholarships and bursaries for students pursuing IDST’s Year-Abroad Programs.

Recommendation 11

Trent University’s Marketing and Communications Office and the Recruitment and Admissions section of the Registrar’s Office should devote more resources to recognize and promote the IDST program within and outside of the university.

PRIORITIZATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS SELECTED FOR IMPLEMENTATION

IMMEDIATE ACTIONS (0-6 months)

Recommendation 1

IDST should consider creating a four-month program for third-year students either in place of the existing Year Abroad Programs in Ecuador and Ghana or in addition to the existing programs.

Recommendation 2

IDST should consider requiring all single-major students (at least) to enroll in either one of the semester abroad programs or IDST 3700Y.

Recommendation 6

We recommend that the department consult with students on the question of the “practical” nature of their education in IDST.

Recommendation 9

Fees paid by Letters of Permission students from other universities who register in one of IDST’s two Year-Abroad Programs (YAPs) in Ecuador and Ghana should be wholly directed to the department.

Recommendation 10

A key priority for Trent University’s Advancement Office should be targeting endowed scholarships and bursaries for students pursuing IDST’s Year-Abroad Programs.

Recommendations 1, 2, 6, 9, 10 all relate to students’ practical experiences and/or the Year Abroad Program offered by the program. PQAC notes that the program’s Self-Study document makes repeated reference to the integral role of the Year Abroad Programs to the degree program; however, as an optional component many students do not take part in and it is not a requirement for graduation from the program.

- 1) *PQAC asks that the program respond to recommendations 1,2,6,9,and10 by providing a report on the practical experiences gained by students, specifically as provided by the Year Abroad Program, and its contribution to the quality of the degree program;*
- 2) *PQAC understands that the Year Abroad Program has resource implications, both financial and in terms of faculty commitment, and request that the program provide a plan for the sustainability of the Year Abroad Program in Ecuador and Ghana.*

<i>Approval required by</i>	<i>Not applicable</i>
<i>Resources provided by</i>	<i>Program (based on PQAC’s requests)</i>
<i>Unit/person responsible for action/implementation</i>	<i>Program (based on PQAC’s requests)</i>
<i>Recommended action/implementation date</i>	<i>Not applicable</i>
<i>Report on progress of implementation to PQAC</i>	<i>September 2014</i>

SHORT-TERM ACTIONS (6 months to 1 year)

Recommendation 3

IDST should emphasize to all incoming majors the importance of taking basic language instruction in Spanish or French in their first and/or second years.

The Program indicated that it would be re-doubling of its efforts to emphasize the importance of taking basic language instruction. PQAC looks forward to hearing the department's plan.

Approval required by	Not applicable
Resources provided by	Not applicable
Unit/person responsible for action/implementation	Program
Recommended implementation date	Not applicable
Report on progress of implementation to PQAC	September 2014

Recommendation 5

We recommend that cooperation between the IDST and Environmental and Resource Studies be strengthened, preferably in the form of a joint appointment.

PQAC acknowledges that there are discipline-specific needs in the areas of faculty appointments that should be recognized in related future discussions. When budgets allow, additional tenure-track positions should be approved to enhance the faculty complement in International Development Studies. Recommendation 19 of the Academic Plan commits to hiring one new tenure track position for every two retirements.

Approval required by	Provost
Resources provided by	Provost
Unit/person responsible for action/implementation	Program and Dean
Recommended action/implementation date	Dependent on budget
Report on progress of implementation to PQAC	September 30, 2014

RECOMMENDATIONS THAT DO NOT REQUIRE REPORT

Recommendation 4

IDST should consider a new requirement that all students in single or joint major programs enroll in at least one area-studies course in their second year.

PQAC does not feel strongly that this be a requirement; students are currently exposed to single area studies in the third and fourth years of study.

Recommendation 7

Although we do not recommend the creation of an interdisciplinary school incorporating the existing IDST programs along with others, such as a School of Global Studies, we do believe there is room for more cooperation between the IDST Department and related departments.

PQAC noted that the program does cooperate with other academic units within the university and a significant number of required courses are cross-listed with other departments.

Recommendation 8

IDST should reconsider its commitment to Trent-in-Oshawa.

IDST currently offers courses in Oshawa however currently does not have the capacity to offer more courses there.

Recommendation 11

Trent University's Marketing and Communications Office and the Recruitment and Admissions section of the Registrar's Office should devote more resources to recognize and promote the IDST program within and outside of the university.

PQAC notes that this recommendation is not directly relevant to the quality of the program.

NEXT STEPS

The Final Assessment Report and Implementation Plan will be distributed to the Department Chair, the Dean of Arts & Science (Social Science), to Senate for Approval, to the Board of Governors (*Executive Summary and Implementation Plan only*), and finally to the Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance. The Program will be asked to submit an Implementation Report to PQAC reporting on the timelines set out in the Implementation Plan. PQAC will submit an annual report to Senate on the progress of programs carrying out the Implementation Plans.

The Executive Summary and Implementation Plans will be posted on the Provost's website.