

**CARLETON UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE ON  
QUALITY ASSURANCE**

**Cyclical Review of the undergraduate and graduate programs in History  
Executive Summary and Final Assessment Report**

This Executive Summary and Final Assessment Report of the cyclical review of Carleton's undergraduate and graduate programs in History are provided pursuant to articles 4.2.5.b-4.2.6.a-b of the provincial Quality Assurance Framework and article 7.2.23 of Carleton's Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP).

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The undergraduate and graduate programs in History (B.A. Honours, B.A. Combined Honours, B.A. General, MA History, MA Public History and PhD) reside in Carleton University's Department of History, a unit administered by the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences.

As a consequence of the review, the programs were categorised by the Carleton University Committee on Quality Assurance (CUCQA) as being of **GOOD QUALITY** (Carleton's IQAP 7.2.12).

The external reviewers' report, submitted to the Department of History on March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2016, offered a very positive assessment of the programs. According to the reviewers 'the faculty's excellent research, its focus on student engagement, and its effort to ensure that students graduate with an array of skills demonstrate that the department supports the university's strategic goals.' The reviewers were impressed with the level of engagement and enthusiasm of the students they met, writing that 'Undergraduates expressed gratitude to the department for the quality of advising and the care with which faculty members interacted with students. The graduate students were also very enthusiastic and spoke about the "positive" community in the department and praised the "collaborative" environment.' Speaking more specifically about the master's program in Public History, the reviewers stated that 'it provides important, career-focused training for graduate students and takes advantage of the rich resources of Ottawa for public history projects and internships.'

Within the context of this positive assessment, the report nonetheless made a number of recommendations for the continuing enhancement of the programs. These recommendations were productively addressed by members of the Department as well as the Deans of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences and the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs in a response to the report of the External Review that was submitted to CUCQA on June 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2016.

An Action Plan detailing how, when and by whom the recommendations will be implemented was received and approved by CUCQA on January 11<sup>th</sup>, 2017.

## FINAL ASSESSMENT REPORT

### Introduction

The undergraduate and graduate programs in History (B.A. Honours, B.A. Combined Honours, B.A. General, MA History, MA Public History and PhD) reside in Carleton University's Department of History, a unit administered by the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences. As a consequence of the review, the programs were categorised by the Carleton University Committee on Quality Assurance (CUCQA) as being of **GOOD QUALITY** (Carleton's IQAP 7.2.12).

The site visit, which took place on January 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup>, 2016, was conducted by Dr. Juanita De Barros from McMaster University and Dr. Elizabeth Elbourne from McGill University. The site visit involved formal meetings with the Assistant Vice-President (Academic), the Deans of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences and the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs, and the Chair of the Department of History. The review committee also met with faculty members, contract instructors, staff, as well as large groups of graduate and undergraduate students. The Reviewers also toured the Department's facilities, the Carleton Centre for Public History, and the library archives.

The External Reviewers' report, submitted to the Department on March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2016, offered a very positive assessment of the programs.

This Final Assessment Report provides a summary of:

- Strengths of the programs
- Challenges faced by the programs
- Opportunities for program improvement and enhancement
- The Outcome of the Review
- The Action Plan

This report draws on eight documents:

- The Self-study developed by members of the Department of History (please see Carleton's IQAP 7.2.1-7.2.3) (Appendix A)
- The Report of the External Review Committee (IQAP 7.2.9.16) (Appendix B).
- Communication from CUCQA regarding the outcome of the external review (IQAP 7.2.9.18) (Appendix C)
- The response from the Department of History and the Deans of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences and the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs to the Report of the External Review Committee (IQAP 7.2.9.19) (Appendix D).
- The internal discussant's recommendation report (IQAP 7.2.11) (Appendix E).
- The communication from CUCQA regarding the outcome of the review (IQAP 7.2.15) (Appendix F).
- The Department's Action Plan (IQAP 7.2.16) (Appendix G)
- The acceptance by CUCQA of the Action Plan (Appendix H)

Appendix I contains brief biographies of the members of the External Review Committee.

This Final Assessment Report contains the Action Plan (Appendix G) agreed to by the Department of History and the Deans of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences and the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs, regarding the implementation of recommendations for program enhancement to have been advanced as a consequence of the cyclical program review process.

The Action Plan provides an account of who is responsible for implementing the agreed upon recommendations, as well as of the timelines for implementation and reporting.

### **Strengths of the programs**

#### *General*

The External Reviewers' Report states that 'the faculty's excellent research, its focus on student engagement, and its effort to ensure that students graduate with an array of skills demonstrate that the department supports the university's strategic goals.' The Reviewers commented that History has 'a healthy departmental culture, [which] seems to be linked to an appropriate governance structure that enables diverse voices to be heard.' The Reviewers also emphasized the Department's 'long tradition of encouraging and supporting experiential learning at the undergraduate level,' and praised the Co-operative Education Option for providing 'valuable training for history students and opportunities for future employment.'

#### *Faculty*

The Reviewers observed that 'the department boasts some remarkable senior scholars.' They commended especially faculty members who specialize in Public History. They 'were impressed at the hard work and creativity of the faculty members teaching in the exciting and demanding area.' The Reviewers added that 'Carleton has several faculty members with interest in public history and/or digital history. The department does an excellent job of bringing these faculty members together to maintain a flourishing Public History program at the MA level and pertinent courses at the BA level.'

#### *Students*

The Reviewers noted 'the enthusiasm of undergraduates, both in conversation... and in their responses to survey questions. Undergraduates expressed gratitude to the department for the quality of advising and the care with which faculty members interacted with students. The graduate students were also very enthusiastic and spoke about the "positive" community in the department and praised the "collaborative" environment.' The Reviewers also mentioned that students 'really enjoy [their] courses and learn a great deal from them.'

### **Challenges faced by the programs**

While the Reviewers praised the devotion of faculty and staff, they expressed concerns that the amount of work required to run the Public History program 'may place an undue burden on some faculty members and may not be adequately recognized and compensated.'

In terms of undergraduate courses, the Reviewers reported that 'students expressed a desire for better communication in a centralized venue about what courses were on offer, including better advertising for new courses.' Similarly, graduate students 'said that better internal communication would make them more aware in a timely fashion of courses outside the department and of the possibility of directed reading classes.' The Reviewers noted as well that both graduate and

undergraduate students ‘expressed the desire for a wider range of courses.’ Furthermore, the Reviewers noticed ‘that some courses are only offered every two years, and [...] that some students had to return for an extra year to finish the program as a result.’ While undergraduate students seemed satisfied with the program generally, the Reviewers commented that they ‘expressed greater dissatisfaction with TAs than with any other aspects of the program.’

The Reviewers stated that in response to previous program reviews, the Department has undertaken to reduce the number of required courses for the MA program and eliminate all combined (or piggy-backed) BA/MA courses. While the Reviewers supported this initiative, they were ‘concerned that one inadvertent consequence of reducing combined MA/BA classes may be a shortage of graduate course offerings and that this may discourage prospective students from enrolling in the program.’

In terms of human resources, the Reviewers commented that ‘administration takes up a great deal of time for some faculty members, including teaching-related administration (such as identifying and developing internships) and communications work, such as maintaining the website.’ They also observed that contract instructors ‘feel excluded from the department, and are not in touch with colleagues or aware of debates as they unfold.’ The Reviewers also reported that the administrative staff is overworked: ‘Both the Departmental Administrator and the Graduate Administrator said they worked well in excess of 40 hours a week – the head administrator said she routinely worked over 60 hours a week and sometimes 80.’ It was clear to the reviewers that ‘the office needs at least another half position.’

### **Opportunities for program improvement and enhancement**

The External Reviewers’ Report made 16 recommendations grouped under seven general rubrics:

#### **Review Process:**

1. Given the delay between the completion of the Self-Study in August, 2014 and the site visit in January 2016, the Reviewers recommended that future reviews have access to more recent information.
2. Given the usefulness of the meeting with contract instructors, the Reviewers recommended that future reviews include meetings with the contract faculty members.

#### **Tenured and tenure-track Faculty:**

1. The Reviewers recommended that the university enhance its support of research by creating a small-grant program to support early-stage faculty research.
2. The Reviewers supported the request of the department to make a senior hire of a Canadianist to replace forthcoming retirements.
3. The Reviewers recommended that some mechanism be found to compensate faculty members for teaching extra reading courses

#### **Public History:**

1. The Reviewers recommended that the university and the department consider implementing supportive measures, possibly in terms of providing a course release for the faculty members involved in this area.

**Contract Faculty:**

1. The Reviewers recommended that the university investigate ways to improve the compensation offered to these important instructors and that the History Department consider opening department meetings to contract academic staff for optional attendance in a non-voting capacity.
2. The Reviewers recommended that contract faculty who teach more than a certain number of courses be provided with a financial supplement to reimburse them for time to attend meetings and to write letters for students and provide mentorship.

**Graduate Students:**

1. The Reviewers recommended allocating more hours to training for students who work as TAs in a particular area of expertise for the first time and occasionally raising the ceiling of 130 hours per course to better prepare students. They also recommended that the department attempt to allocate TA's according to areas of expertise.
2. The Reviewers recommended that more financial and other resources be made available to part-time graduate students.
3. The Reviewers recommended that the History Department clearly indicate in advance when courses will be offered, offer alternatives (such as courses outside the department and reading courses), and work with students to ensure that they can complete their degrees in one year. They also recommended that the Department schedule courses in such a way as to ensure that it is structurally possible to finish the MA in a timely fashion.
4. The Reviewers recommended that reimbursements for student travel costs should be done in a timely fashion and that the students should be informed in advance of the reimbursement schedule.

**Undergraduate students**

1. The Reviewers recommend that the Department and upper administration should consider how to implement a better communication strategy to ensure that students are aware of course offerings well in advance, know where to go to find out about new courses (including new on-line courses), and are generally given full information in a centralized location to plan their degrees.
2. The Reviewers recommended that students should have the possibility of access to private advising with the Undergraduate Administrator, if desired (rather than in an open office).

**Additional Resources**

1. The Reviewers recommended that at a minimum an additional half-time position be added to the departmental administration; if resources permit, a full-time position would be valuable.
2. The Reviewers recommended that the space available to the Centre for Public History be enlarged and upgraded.

CUCQA recognized that some recommendations related to issues that are beyond the purview of the Department, such as the cyclical program review process and financial compensation for contract

instructors. Nevertheless, CUCQA encouraged the Department to provide its perspective on those issues with a view to improving the quality of Carleton's programs in general.

### **The Outcome of the Review**

As a consequence of the review, the undergraduate and graduate programs in History were categorised by the Carleton University Committee on Quality Assurance (CUCQA) as being of **GOOD QUALITY** (Carleton's IQAP 7.2.12).

### **The Action Plan.**

All the recommendations that were put forward as a result of the review process were productively addressed by the Department and the Deans of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences and the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs in a response to the report of the External Review that was considered by CUCQA on June 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2016. An Action Plan detailing how, when and by whom the recommendations will be implemented was received and approved by CUCQA on January 11<sup>th</sup>, 2017.

The Department was generally pleased with the report and agreed to implement all the recommendations that fall within its purview. It also provided useful comments on the recommendations that related to issues beyond its jurisdiction.

It is to be noted that Carleton's IQAP (7.7.1) provides for the monitoring of action plans: 'A report will be filed with the Office of the Vice-Provost by the Faculty Dean(s) and academic unit(s) when the timeline is reached for the implementation of each element of the Action Plan. This report will be forwarded to CUCQA for its review.'

In the case of History, the monitoring will be achieved by means of an update on the Action Plan, which will be due on November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2017.

### **The Next Cyclical Review**

The next cyclical review of the undergraduate and graduate programs in History will be conducted during the 2021-22 academic year.