

CARLETON UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE ON QUALITY ASSURANCE

Cyclical Review of the undergraduate program in Religion

Executive Summary and Final Assessment Report

This Executive Summary and Final Assessment Report of the cyclical review of Carleton's BA program in Religion is provided pursuant to the provincial Quality Assurance Framework and Carleton's Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP).

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The BA program in Religion is administered by the University's College of the Humanities, an academic unit in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences.

As a consequence of the review, the program was categorised by the Carleton University Committee on Quality Assurance (CUCQA) as receiving GOOD QUALITY (Carleton's IQAP, articles 7.2.12 and 7.2.13.2).

The External Reviewers' Report, submitted to the College of Humanities on January 4, 2016, offered a positive assessment of the programs and made a number of recommendations for the continuing enhancement of the programs. These recommendations were addressed by the Director of the College of Humanities and the Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, in a response to the External Reviewers' Report that was submitted to CUCQA on April 27, 2016. Concerns raised by CUCQA were addressed in a second report provided by the unit on June 16, 2017.

An Action Plan detailing how, when, and by whom the recommendations will be implemented was received and approved by CUCQA on February 28, 2018.

DATE: January 31, 2018

TO: Dr. Lorraine Dyke, Vice-Provost and Associate Vice-President (Academic); Chair,
Carleton University Committee on Quality Assurance

FROM: Dr. Shane Hawkins, Director, College of the Humanities

CC: Dr. Wallace Clement, Interim Dean of FASS
Dr. Richard Mann, Associate Dean of FASS (Curriculum, Programs and Planning)
Christina Noja, Manager, Office of the Vice-Provost and Associate Vice-President
(Academic)
Tiffany Douglas, Program Review Officer, Office of the Vice-Provost and Associate Vice-
President (Academic)

RE: **Religion BA Action Plan**

As requested in the September 7, 2017 memo from Dr. Lorraine Dyke, this Action Plan takes into account the issues identified by the external review and those subsequently identified by CUCQA, particularly in the memo of May 16th, 2016 from Dr. John Shepherd. We have also taken to heart a suggestion made in the same September 7, 2017 memo: "CUCQA also recognizes that Religion has already made progress on many of the recommendations, as outlined in their reports. This should allow the Action Plan to be succinct on such items, summarizing the steps taken."

Recommendations made by the external reviewers:

1. Recommendation: That there be greater financial transparency in how resources are allocated across the College of Humanities.
This recommendation was made in the context of College governance. The specific items noted by the external reviewers were: "The Religion Program has no control over its budget; it can be difficult to obtain accurate data for the Religion Program alone; and the necessity of supplying faculty for two BHum courses (from which Religion students are excluded) is a drain on faculty resources." It is true that the current Director of the College does not come from the Religion program, and it might be said therefore that Religion does not control the budget for the Religion program. Since, however, Religion is housed in the College and is administered, like the other College programs, by a Director whom it has recommended to the Dean through a collegial selection process, there is really no question of it controlling this budget. On the other hand, the Religion Program does have access to a significant endowment (Davidson Fund), and faculty members do control its funds. The issue of supplying faculty for two BHum courses has now been resolved by opening those courses to Religion students.

Steps to be taken: None

Personnel responsible: N/A

2. Recommendation: That the Religion Faculty move towards including clearly stated Learning Objectives and linked Outcomes on all undergraduate syllabi as the mechanism through which student learning is assessed and monitored.

Steps to be taken: The exercise of formulating Learning Objectives and linked Outcomes for the BA program was included in our June 16th Report to CUCQA. We will now move toward the goal of including these as a part of the undergraduate syllabi in the program, with a goal of including them in all most of our syllabi for the 2018-19 academic year.

Personnel responsible: Religion undergraduate coordinator, Religion faculty

3. Recommendation: That the Program's website delineate undergraduate courses offered on a regular basis (annually or biannually) from courses offered occasionally or rarely. The Program should aim to reduce or eliminate many of the latter courses with particular attention to reducing dependence on CIs.

Steps to be taken: None. This list has been created and is now posted on our website: <https://carleton.ca/religion/undergraduate-courses/> Courses rarely offered have been removed from our Calendar entry through the curriculum changes process. Courses to be offered in the 2018/2019 academic year have been carefully chosen to reflect those most necessary for meeting the degree requirements.

Personnel responsible: N/A

4. Recommendation: That the Program improve student engagement by upgrading advising, communication, and the Program's web page.
In the June 16th report we outlined two actions for meeting this recommendation. One was a process of mandated individual March advising, and the other was fostering an active Religion Student Society.

Steps to be taken:

- 1) We will divide up the students among our faculty members and have each member contact the students to set up advising meetings in March. At the meetings, faculty members will let students know what courses will be offered in the coming year, and ensure that the students understand the state of their audit and what is required for them to graduate. We will also encourage Religion minors to attend such meetings.

- 2) We will actively look for students who might take the initiative with faculty support to form a student society for Religion. Such a society would help students develop a sense of community with each other and facilitate interaction between students and faculty.

Personnel responsible: Religion undergraduate coordinator, Religion faculty

5. Recommendation: That the Program expand the dedicated Religion Program Writing Lab. The College has been able to continue this program, which is funded almost entirely through ODFASS, but there are not resources available to expand the program at this time.

Steps to be taken: None.

Personnel responsible: N/A

In the May 16, 2016 memo sent on behalf of CUCQA from Dr. John Shepherd regarding the Outcome of the Cyclical Program Review for the BA Program in Religion, the CUCQA committee identified several issues of concern to which it asked the program to respond in our report of June 16, 2017. These issues were the following:

Issue #1: Structure of the program and the manner in which the curriculum is determined on an annual basis

As related in the June 16, 2017 Religion report, (under “4. Structure of the Program,” p. 10-15) the Religion program proposed a series of steps to restructure the Religion BA and thereby ensure breadth of knowledge, achieve program-level learning outcomes, respond to student requests regarding course content, and to regularize course offerings. This initiative involved numerous changes to the calendar. All of the proposed changes have been made and the program has been restructured as indicated in the report. Calendar changes are currently working their way through the university’s system for approval.

Steps to be taken: none
Personnel responsible: N/A

Issue #2: Curriculum mapping of Program Learning Outcomes

Steps to be taken: None. This exercise was completed and included in the June 16th report.
Personnel responsible: N/A

Issue #3: The number of courses in the calendar

One of CUCQA’s major concerns was the large number of courses offered by the program. We responded in the June 16th report: We conducted a review of all the courses that have been taught in the BA over the last five years, and determined which courses could not be offered by existing full-time faculty in a meaningful timeframe. We have identified 19 such courses to be removed from the calendar. A further 6 language courses can be subsumed under a generic language tutorial course code. The proposed changes will bring the total number of RELI courses in the calendar down from 89 to 64. An additional 5 of these are cross-listed courses, which are therefore neither controlled nor taught by the Religion Program. This brings the number of courses in the Religion BA down to 59.

Steps to be taken: None.
Personnel responsible: N/A

Issue #4: Reliance on contract instructors

As noted in the June 16th report, we are pleased to note that the program received two limited-term Instructors (Jewish Studies: one year; East Asian Studies: two year), whose teaching load will be 3/4. Our CI request for 2018-19 has been reduced to 4.5 credits from 8.5 the previous year (2016-17) and 7.5 in 2015-16.

Steps to be taken: None
Personnel Responsible: N/A

Recommendation	Steps to be taken and timeline	Personnel responsible
1. That there be greater financial transparency in how resources are allocated across the College of Humanities.	None.	N/A
2. That the Religion Faculty move towards including clearly stated Learning Objectives and linked Outcomes on all undergraduate syllabi as the mechanism through which student learning is assessed and monitored.	The exercise of formulating Learning Objectives and linked Outcomes for the BA program was included in our June 16 th Report to CUCQA. We have now move toward the goal of including these as a part of the undergraduate syllabi in the program, with a goal of including them in all of our syllabi for the 2018-19 academic year.	Religion undergraduate coordinator, Religion faculty
3. That the Program's website delineate undergraduate courses offered on a regular basis (annually or biannually) from courses offered occasionally or rarely. The Program should aim to reduce or eliminate many of the latter courses with particular attention to reducing dependence on CIs.	None.	N/A
4. That the Program improve student engagement by upgrading advising, communication, and the Program's web page. In the June 16 th report we outlined two actions for meeting this recommendation. One was a process of mandated individual March advising, and the other was fostering an active Religion Student Society.	1) We will divide up the students among our faculty members and have each member contact the students to set up advising meetings in March. At the meetings, faculty members will let students know what courses will be offered in the coming year, and ensure that the students understand the state of their audit and what is required for them to graduate. We will also encourage Religion minors to attend such meetings. 2) We will actively look for students who might take the initiative with faculty support to form a student society for Religion. Such a society would help students develop a sense of community with each other and facilitate interaction between students and faculty.	Religion undergraduate coordinator, Religion faculty
5. That the Program expand the dedicated Religion Program Writing Lab.	None. The College has been able to continue this program, which is funded almost entirely through ODFASS, but there are not	N/A

	resources available to expand the program at this time.	
Issue #1: Structure of the program and the manner in which the curriculum is determined on an annual basis.	None.	N/A
Issue #2: Curriculum mapping of Program Learning Outcomes.	None.	N/A
Issue #3: The number of courses in the calendar.	None.	N/A
Issue #4: Reliance on contract instructors.	None.	N/A