

Queen's University Quality Assurance Processes

Cyclical Program Review Progress Report

This form is for use by academic units and Deans to report on the progress made on Cyclical Program Review Implementation Plans. Progress Reports are important steps in the overall cycle of continuous improvement as they provide opportunity for reflection as well as for planning ahead to the next stage of the Cyclical Program Review (QUQAP 6.9.3.1).

Please complete the table below to report on progress made in the past 18 Months against the implementation plan.

Once the unit completes their section of the form, please return a signed copy to gugap@queensu.ca. The form will then be sent to the Faculty Dean and the Dean, SGSPA (if applicable) for their comments and signatures, then to the Vice-Provost, Teaching and Learning for review and signature. It will then be submitted to the Senate Cyclical Program Review Committee (SCPRC) for review and approval, then to Senate for information. **All monitoring reports will be posted on the Provost's Quality Assurance website**, and academic units are strongly encouraged to post the reports on their own websites.

Name of Program(s) under Review	
Bachelor of Honors (BAH) in Religious Studies	
Bachelor of Arts (BA) in Religious Studies	
Master of Arts (MA) in Religious Studies	

Program Contacts			
Name:	Adnan Husain	Name:	
Title:	Director/Head	Title:	
Department:	School of Religion	Department:	
Email:	ah28@queensu.ca	Email:	

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1. Academic Unit Report

1.1 Recommendation 1: Addition of 4th-year courses

Reviewers found the lack of 4th year seminars to be idiosyncratic, unusual this both at Queen's and in similar programs across North America. They recommended the addition of a complement of 4th year seminar courses as valuable experiences for undergraduate students, and to help form a bridge to graduate courses. They recommended that graduate courses should be predominantly seminar- rather than lecture-based. Both undergraduate and graduate students made clear to reviewers that they would benefit from this change.

Proposed follow-up:	<p>School of Religion faculty members and Curriculum Committee to review 300- and 400-level courses.</p> <p>Consider redesigning several existing 300- level courses into 400- level seminars.</p> <p>Critically assess the suitability of undergraduate level courses to be cross-listed as graduate courses.</p>
Responsibility for leading follow-up:	School Director, Undergraduate Chair, Graduate Coordinator and Curriculum Committee
Timeline for addressing recommendation:	<p>Review during 2023- 2024 academic year.</p> <p>Course changes to be made during 2024- 2025.</p> <p>Revised courses offered from September 2025</p>
What is the current status of the follow-up?	In process
Include a completion percentage:	75%
Please provide a brief description of the current, completed or planned work:	<p>As indicated in the School of Religion's initial response to the review team's report, the undergraduate programs did have a few 400 level courses. In practical terms, most 300 level courses, those capped at 35 students, are indistinguishable from 400 level seminars and are open to both 3rd and 4th year students, as in many degree programs in the humanities and social sciences at Queen's. Similarly, the MA component of cross-listed 300/800 courses rely upon seminar style discussion and involve separate learning outcomes and assignments/assessments appropriate to MA level graduate work. The School of Religion has developed a new curricular model to reduce the percentage of cross-listed courses for MA's and to use more independent study/directed readings courses. In the current environment that makes courses under 10 undergraduate students or under 5 graduate students for graduate courses untenable, it is even more impractical to restrict courses only to degree concentrators in a program like ours by labelling them at 400 level courses. The School of Religion is considering the question if the enrolment situation changes or the budget models afford greater flexibility in curriculum decisions with the new modular degree plans.</p>

If the recommendation has not been fully addressed within the proposed timeline, please provide a rationale as well as a plan for moving forward:	The curriculum committee of the School of Religion is identifying courses currently listed as 300 level courses that might be candidates for reclassification at the 400 level during Winter 2025 term. It will be examining the intended learning outcomes as well as historic enrolments and propose a set of renumbered courses. These will be submitted for curriculum approval before September 2025. It will begin to consider new 400 level courses as appropriate or necessary.
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1.2 Recommendation 2: Hire to fill a glaring gap in Transnational Asian Religions

The lack of a full-time position with specialization in East Asia is a massive lacuna, given the prominence of the area geographically, demographically, and in the history of religion.

Proposed follow-up:	School to complete strategic hiring plan. Submit position proposal to available hiring opportunities. Submit grant funding proposal to external foundation/s
Responsibility for leading follow-up:	Hiring of new faculty members is in the purview of the Faculty Dean. School Director to submit hiring request.
Timeline for addressing recommendation:	Spring 2023 Spring 2023 and ongoing Winter 2023
What is the current status of the follow-up?	In process
Include a completion percentage:	<25%
Please provide a brief description of the current, completed or planned work:	The School of Religion completed a strategic hiring plan and submitted a position proposal. The situation curricularly has been affected negatively by the exhaustion of funds for the Flora Jane Baker Postdoctoral Fellowship that had been used 2020-2024 after the retirement and departure of two faculty members specializing in the field to supplement curriculum in Asian religions. The School of Religion has been working with Advancement since 2022 in anticipation of the end of the postdoctoral fellowship to find external supports, including returning to the Baker family. The Director has investigated a program for new faculty positions in Buddhist Studies offered by the Ho Family Foundation administered through the American Council of Learned Societies. However, this application for several hundred thousand US dollars requires some matching funds from the university and a commitment by the final year of the step funding that the position will be made permanent. The School of Religion has taken steps and worked concertedly and creatively to address the serious curricular problem posed. The Faculty however has not yet made these commitments on behalf of the University nor has Advancement yet been able to support the School of Religion in either renewing the postdoctoral fellowship or securing other new donors.

If the recommendation has not been fully addressed within the proposed timeline, please provide a rationale as well as a plan for moving forward:	The School of Religion is continuing to work with Advancement and will be ready to make an application to the Ho Family Foundation/ACLS when commitments are made by the University to support the terms of the grant application for a new faculty position. On that front, it is working with Advancement to develop donors to support a faculty chair or a postdoctoral fellowship and matching funds for a new position.
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1.3 Recommendation 3: Faculty Retention

Reviewers recommended that the School and Queen's deploy resources to retain the School's high-quality complement of early- and mid-career faculty members. SCPRC recommends that the School pursue multiple channels to increase its faculty members' external research funding and research profile, including university-wide competitions such as Queen's National Scholar, and developing joint research funding applications with other departments.

Proposed follow-up:	School Director and faculty members to work with Vice Principal (Research) and Associate Dean (Research), Faculty of Arts and Science, on developing research collaborations and external research funding applications. Once collaborations are in place, consideration of a potential research centre may develop over time.
Responsibility for leading follow-up:	School Director
Timeline for addressing recommendation:	Development of research collaborations and external research funding applications to begin immediately.
What is the current status of the follow-up? Include a completion percentage:	In process <25%
Please provide a brief description of the current, completed or planned work:	As indicated in the initial internal response, the School of Religion has worked hard and successfully to diversify its faculty and curriculum. Such gains are threatened by the need to support faculty and retain them. A research centre and other research supports would make Queen's and the School of Religion more attractive for such scholars. A CRC to support one of the numerous outstanding researchers would likewise be a welcome development. These excellent suggestions of the external reviewers however are beyond the authority of the School of Religion on its own without Faculty and University support. Faculty in the unit have been very effective in applying for external research grants, including large multidisciplinary collaborative grants. The Director has been investigating collaborative grants from other private foundations, like the Templeton Fund, and plans further consultation with both the VPR office and Advancement that might create a collective research

	environment and infrastructure to advance the research priorities of SoR faculty and retain them at Queen's.
If the recommendation has not been fully addressed within the proposed timeline, please provide a rationale as well as a plan for moving forward:	See above and the School of Religion's internal response from Fall 2022.

1.4 Recommendation 4: Development of a two-year MA

Reviewers recommended the School consider developing a 2-year thesis-centred MA program.

Proposed follow-up:	<p>Graduate Committee to consider whether development of a 2-year MA is desirable.</p> <p>Conduct thorough market analysis before making any decision on the introduction of a 2-year MA.</p> <p>If decision is made to develop a 2-year program, curricular development to take place involving the School's graduate and curriculum committees, consultation with CTL, VP Research, Faculty Office and SGSPA.</p>
Responsibility for leading follow-up:	School Director, Graduate Committee and Curriculum Committee.
Timeline for addressing recommendation:	<p>First, the existing 1-year MA should be strengthened by curriculum development of upper-year undergraduate and graduate courses (rec 1).</p> <p>Consideration of development of 2-year MA program to begin once curriculum changes made (scheduled for end of 2024-2025 academic year).</p>
What is the current status of the follow-up?	In process
Include a completion percentage:	50%
Please provide a brief description of the current, completed or planned work:	The School of Religion's curriculum and graduate committees have been investigating the structure of a two-year MA degree program.
If the recommendation has not been fully addressed within the proposed timeline, please provide a	Concern over the status of QGA funds for MA students impeded work during the Fall of 2024. However, in Winter 2025, both the Graduate Committee and the Curricular Committee are resuming work on program activities in the second year and funding arrangements. The School hopes to raise additional funding for graduate student support through outreach and Advancement. Plans for the second

rationale as well as a plan for moving forward:	year of an MA degree would involve developing new opportunities like conference organizing and other forms of research dissemination as a possible part of its MA professional development course or internship/placements in the second year of the program during the thesis research and writing. More work on determining the market feasibility, funding resources, and supervisory capacity needs to be undertaken in the graduate committee and Faculty of Arts and Science. If those conditions are positive, it would plan to submit a proposal for a two year MA degree over the course of 2025-26 for a launch in a subsequent year once approved and the funding circumstances are clearer.
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1.5 Recommendation 5: Unifying Theme for the MA

The previous theme of Religion and Modernity was dropped some years ago. The core seminar in Modernity remains. Reviewers reported that students enjoyed the course, but felt it was a poor fit in their program. Reviewers recommended that a new theme be developed, and with it, a new core seminar.

Proposed follow-up:	<p>Initial follow up to strengthen the MA program is listed in recommendation 1.</p> <p>Further to those actions, Graduate Committee and Curriculum Committee to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Review appropriateness of continuing with core seminar in Modernity Consider if a unifying theme for the MA program is possible and desirable. <p>Consultation with faculty members, students, and colleagues from cognate units to be carried out.</p>
Responsibility for leading follow-up:	Graduate Committee and Curriculum Committee
Timeline for addressing recommendation:	<p>First, the existing 1-year MA should be strengthened by curriculum development of upper-year undergraduate and graduate courses (rec 1).</p> <p>Consideration of core seminar in Modernity may take place as part of curriculum response, or separately in 2024- 2025.</p> <p>Consideration of development of unifying theme to begin once curriculum changes made (scheduled for end of 2024-2025 academic year).</p>
What is the current status of the follow-up?	In process
Include a completion percentage:	50%
Please provide a brief description of the current, completed or planned work:	The School of Religion discussed RELS 801, the core course in Religion and Modernity at its retreat. The curriculum committee and graduate committees are currently developing a new graduate core course to better reflect the diverse focus of teaching and research in Religious Studies as a field and in the unit and to complement the RELS 802 core course in Religion and Theory

<p>If the recommendation has not been fully addressed within the proposed timeline, please provide a rationale as well as a plan for moving forward:</p>	<p>The School of Religion is currently consulting with current MA and former MA students currently enrolled in PhD programs about core courses to assess needs. It has come to the conclusion that a Research Methods and Approaches course in Religious Studies will better serve graduate student needs and success in the MA and future PhD preparation. A trial version of a research methods style course is being offered currently as RELS 801 that engages the problems of modernity while introducing new methodologies of research. It is expected that a newly designed course will be submitted for curriculum approval in 2025-6 academic year. In response to the need to define the identity of the MA program, the graduate committee and School of Religion has held numerous discussions and decided to develop a few thematic foci that reflect the diversity but coherent orientations of teaching and research. These will be determined by the end of the current academic year and ratified for 2025-26 recruitment of MA students.</p>
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1.6 Provide 2-3 examples of how the program(s) under review have improved as a result of the cyclical program review process.

The cyclical review encouraged clarification the role of cross-listed courses in the MA program and encouraged accentuating components to distinguish further the experience of MA students through rigorous research requirements and appropriate assessments to meet separate learning outcomes. Moreover, it highlighted the quality of MA research, based in part on the School's ability through competitive funding to recruit high quality MA students, and has encouraged considerations on how to strengthen promotion of MRE outcomes and to find collaborations with faculty research projects. These opportunities would be enhanced by a two-year MA but funding requirements and staffing capacity have paused these ambitious program goals. Similarly, abandoning the identification of the MA program with Religion and Modernity has created opportunities for participation by all faculty in graduate teaching and supervision by expanding the focus. A new research methodologies course will better prepare MA students and express the diverse and innovative orientations of faculty research and teaching in the School of Religion.

The School of Religion has been very active in curricular and program development, particularly at the undergraduate level, since the review. The validation of its curricular move toward developing thematic courses in the first year while maintaining the traditional (and successful) "World Religions" model has led to a revision of its in-person world religions course into separate one term courses, Western Religions and Eastern Religions. Since the review, many new courses related to new ways of organizing the study of religion like Black Religions and Indigenous traditions and knowledges have enriched the curriculum.

Overall, the reviewers were enthusiastic about the School of Religion's direction and accomplishments. Most of their suggestions revolved around ways to enhance, strengthen and expand the curriculum and research of the School. These recommendations, like hiring in Asian Religions, retaining our outstanding

and diverse faculty through research centres and a CRC, are beyond the authority of the School of Religion and require resources and collaboration beyond our unit.

2. Decanal Response

2.1 Include any general comments on the Progress Report:

The School of Religion has made good progress on many of the report recommendations. In particular, consideration of shifting some 300-level courses to the 400-level and cross listing with graduate courses (recommendation #1), starting discussions about the feasibility of a 2-yr MA (recommendation #4), creating a unifying theme for the MA including redevelopment of RELS 801 (recommendation #5).

2.2 Comment on any recommendations that have not been addressed within the proposed timeline:

The academic unit has been unable to make progress on the two recommendations related to hiring and retention of Faculty members for understandable reasons. The Faculty of Arts and Science is currently under a hiring freeze and is expecting to shrink in size through retirements over the next several years to resolve a large structural financial deficit. The School of Religion developed a strategic hiring plan and identified a matching-fund opportunity to hire a position in Buddhist studies through the Ho Family Foundation (recommendations #2). However, the Faculty does not have the matching funds to pursue this opportunity. For recommendation #3, the academic units has taken initiative on development of collaborative grant writing, but the University and Faculty do not have the resources to meet the full recommendations of the external reviewers.

2.3 Comment on any recommendations that require the Dean's action, such as recommendations that involve budgetary considerations.

See comments in 2.2 and 2.1 for budgetary context.

3. Decanal (School of Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs) Response (if applicable)

3.1 Include any general comments on the Progress Report:

The School of Religion has made laudable progress in addressing the recommendations, particularly in light of the structural constraints faced by the School, the Faculty of Arts and Science, and the university as a whole. I would especially like to acknowledge the School's efforts to enhance the graduate student experience through thoughtful curricular review and program development. Important initiatives include the introduction of a Research Methods course and the addition of new thematic foci, both of which will contribute to raising the School's profile and strengthening its ability to attract prospective students.

We are hopeful that the proposed expansion of the MA program to a two-year model can be realized once current fiscal constraints are resolved. The envisioned second year offers a well-considered academic and professional development framework that would further enrich the student experience and better prepare graduates for success in their post-degree pathways.

3.2 Comment on any recommendations that have not been addressed within the proposed timeline:

The fiscal constraints currently faced by both the School and the Faculty of Arts and Science have posed significant challenges to the full implementation of all recommendations. Initiatives such as the hiring of a full-time faculty member and the extension of the MA program to a two-year model are understandably difficult to advance in the present financial climate.

The School is encouraged to continue its dialogue with Advancement to explore potential funding opportunities for a full-time position. We also remain hopeful that discussions with FAS regarding a potential hire in Buddhist Studies through the Ho Family Foundation can be revisited when conditions permit.

Regarding the suggestion of appointing a postdoctoral fellow to fulfill the functions of a needed full-time position, some caution is warranted. In the absence of a faculty member with expertise in this area, a postdoctoral fellow may lack the appropriate academic supervision and support to succeed and/or thrive in the role. Nevertheless, the School is strongly encouraged to pursue external funding to support the recruitment of postdoctoral fellows, where feasible, as part of its broader research and teaching strategy.

Authorizations



February 7, 2025

Signature of Unit Head

Date



B. Lemieux, PhD

July 21, 2025

Signature of Faculty Dean

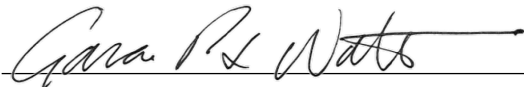
Date



July 29, 2025

Signature of Vice Provost and Dean, SGSPA

Date



Signature of Vice-Provost, Teaching and Learning

August 22, 2025

Date

September 24, 2025

Date of Review and Approval by the Senate Cyclical Program Review Committee