

Internal Academic Review 2006-2007
Department of History
Internal Academic Review Committee Report to Senate

The Internal Academic Review (IAR) of the Department of History is now complete. The Internal Academic Review Committee (IARC) has taken into consideration all of the submissions related to the IAR of the Department of History and respectfully submits the following report. The IARC Report to Senate is intended to supplement the findings of the attached Review Team Report and to provide a mechanism for the Head of the Department and the Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Science to jointly report on the progress in addressing the Review Team recommendations (please see the “Outcomes” section of this report).

Summary of the Internal Academic Review of the Department of History

The Department of History is to be commended for the progress accomplished since the last IAR in the areas of teaching, faculty recruitment, and innovative graduate programs. The IARC recognizes the Department’s continuing efforts to deliver innovative programs and research excellence in an environment of revitalization prompted by recent retirements and new faculty recruitment.

The IARC agrees with the Review Team recommendation to engage in a collective strategic planning exercise and develop a plan for long-term strategic hiring. It is recommended that a comprehensive review of the undergraduate curriculum and an analysis of the teaching load and faculty student ratios be undertaken to ensure an appropriate and effective allocation of resources between undergraduate and graduate programs.

The IARC recommends the Department actively monitor the decision to cease comprehensive field examinations, and take action if needed. The IARC notes that this decision may have long-term costs, such as lessening the ability of doctoral graduates to teach broadly in the curriculum.

The IARC recognizes the Department of History for its accomplishments during a time of renewal and change. The Department is maintaining high-level scholarship, robust research activities and generating a productive environment for teaching and learning.

The IARC fully supports the Department as it explores new ways to address the recommendations outlined in the Review Team Report.

Outcomes of the Internal Academic Review of the Department of History

*Joint response submitted by the
Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Science and the
Head of the Department of History*

The Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Science and the Chair of the Department of History welcome the very positive assessments of Department of History's work by the IARC, and are happy to provide the following in relation to specific points raised by the IARC.

Strategic Hiring Plan

We note that the department has already developed a long-term strategic hiring plan in line with the IAR Team's recommendation 'that the number of full-time tenure-track or tenured faculty members within the Department of History be increased...'. The Department has established priorities for three of the five positions needed to meet this recommendation: Modern Canadian History, African History, and Modern German History. The remaining two have been left unspecified given the fact that there has been no indication that they are likely to be filled within a predictable time period. The Faculty and the Department remain hopeful that there will be resources from the University to allow the implementation of this plan in the near future. The Department conducted an unsuccessful search in the first priority field in 2007 under the QNS programme; a search in the second field will be conducted under that programme in 2008.

Undergraduate Programme

A full review of the Department's undergraduate programme is currently under way. We note in this connection that a survey of the Department's 2008 concentrators, from second to fourth year, has indicated both a very high level of satisfaction with the Department's current focus on the seminar as the primary method of instruction and a corresponding reluctance to consider the economically more efficient but pedagogically less desirable lecture format as an acceptable alternative. At the same time we note that serious budgetary uncertainties and the resulting Faculty wide strategic planning exercise that is impending, potentially renders difficult the conduct of a purely Departmental exercise.

Graduate Programme

The Department continues to monitor the decision to cease comprehensive field examinations, as it has over the past decade since this change was implemented. We note that this specific recommendation was not included in the formal recommendations of the

IAR *Team* report and has thus been introduced at a very late stage in the IAR process. The Team report simply noted in the body of the text the ‘divergence’ of the department’s doctoral program in this respect from other North American universities and stated that ‘The faculty members provided a strong rationale for this change [...], although some doctoral students expressed concern about the possible *perceptions* [our italics] of this new approach.’ In response, the Department points to the report of the external OCGS consultants (Weaver/Marples fall 2007) on our Graduate programme. This presents a resounding endorsement of the way we do things: “... although there may have been a perception inside Queen’s and in some other universities that the elimination of a written comprehensive examination was a dramatic shift, the changes in degree requirements have not in the slightest compromised the objectives of this PhD programme which are to stimulate original research and thought, promote breadth, and instil professional development. The replacement of a written comprehensive field exam by the requirement to prepare and orally defend syllabi in the major and minor fields is a fine technique for self-directed learning.” The Faculty and the Department notes that the IAR self-study and the Departmental OCGS submission both emphasize that the Department *does* have field requirements even though it does not have comprehensive examinations and that the goal of *breadth* is central to the design of the PhD programme. We would add that recent placement figures for History graduates in academic positions suggest the change has had no negative impact on their marketability – quite the contrary – and we have been given absolutely no reason to believe that it has lessened their ability to ‘teach broadly in the curriculum.’ At the same time, research shows that the Department’s alternative model to comprehensive examinations is, in fact, not quite as unusual among North American Universities as the wording of the Report may suggest.

Follow-up on these recommendations and issues will take place during the annual academic planning and budget process between the Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Science and the Vice-Principal (Academic).

Attachment:

Review Team Report

**Internal Academic Review (IAR) Team Report
For
Department of History
February 2007**

Team Membership

**Mr. Randy Booth, School of Rehabilitation Therapy
Ms. Jennifer Foote, Biology Graduate Student
Dr. John Freeman, Faculty of Education
Dr. Gerhard Pratt, Geological Sciences & Geological Engineering
Dr. Joan Stevenson, School of Kinesiology and Health Studies (Chair)
Dr. Mark Walters, Faculty of Law**

Table of Contents

Introduction to Report	2
Faculty, Research and Scholarship	2
Undergraduate Program	3
Graduate Program	4
Resources	5
Services and Administration	5
Equity	6
Self Evaluation and Future Prospects	6
Recommendations	6

Introduction to Report

During the period of the review process for History, the Internal Academic Review (IAR) team met on five occasions before and after the External Academic Review period and attended the majority of the sessions with the external reviewers on Novembers 9th and 10th, 2006. In addition, the IAR sought additional information from the Department and asked specific additional questions of the external review team. Based on a review of the History Self Study Reports (Vol. I, II and III) and additional information gathered during the process, the following report identifies issues and suggestions relevant to the Department and a series of recommendations for consideration.

Faculty, Research and Scholarship

The Department of History has undergone a metamorphosis since its last academic review. Due to budget cuts in the Faculty of Arts and Science and increased student enrolment, the Department has become very lean. With retirements and departures, only one third of the Department's members are considered senior. Younger faculty members have joined the Department in recent years, bringing a range of expertise and potential in areas of History not previously covered. In general, however, our Committee was impressed by the positive signs of the Department's long-term status as a centre for research excellence. The Department produces scholarship of a very high standard. The external reviewers conclude that the "level of scholarly excellence seems to have been maintained despite the stresses of rapid turnover." A review of curricula vitae in Appendix III suggests that the Department's members are actively and consistently engaged in research and writing, and their work is being published by respected journals and university presses. This is a very productive Department.

The rapid changes within the Department do present challenges. First, younger scholars have diversified the Department's research, but they tend to be in the early stages of their careers and are only just beginning to attract external research funding and, in general, to build reputations. These younger scholars show the "promise to become leading figures in their subfields," as the external reviewers suggest, but that "promise" will only be fulfilled over time. Second, the Department still has a number of leading scholars in its areas of traditional strength (especially in Canadian History), and these scholars attract a disproportionate number of graduate students. Although this imbalance is to be expected until scholars working in other areas become more established, it is a cause for concern in the short and medium terms. The interesting twist is that the undergraduates want more diversity (less Canadian) whereas the graduate workload seems to be falling more on the shoulders of Canadian faculty members. Finally, it is difficult to see how the Department can meet its mandate with the current size of the faculty complement. The diversity of areas that must be covered in a comprehensive History program requires a larger number of scholars than the Department presently has.

The Department is in an exciting time of renewal and scholarly revitalization, and its present status as an excellent research department therefore hinges upon the extent to which it can support and encourage its younger members to move to the next stages of

scholarly development, sustain its senior members in their research and mentorship of graduate students, and expand its number of tenure and tenure-track faculty positions.

Although the Department has made some changes recently that will assist in meeting these challenges – for instance the move to a 2-2 teaching load, we suggest other initiatives to help the development of the younger faculty and decrease the demands on senior faculty. To mentor the younger faculty, the Department should consider increasing the number of departmental events (speakers, workshops, visitors, etc.) and interdisciplinary endeavours (e.g., participation in ‘humanities’ centres) that develop interaction and collaboration within the Department and the larger University community. Furthermore, Departmental seminars can help unite a department. For example, a required seminar for graduate students (and faculty) could create: better learning across areas of expertise; a forum for graduate students and faculty to introduce their topics; and a chance to host speakers from other departments.

One possible change would reduce the workload on all faculty members, most particularly the senior members. In terms of the appointments process, the Department presently considers applications for faculty positions through a departmental committee-of-the-whole. This is a cumbersome method of making decisions, and the Department may wish to consider moving to an appointments committee model. Under such a model, all members of the Department would be entitled to attend candidate job talks, consult candidate application files, and make written submissions to the appointments committee, but candidate interviews and the subsequent discussions and decisions about hiring would be conducted by the appointments committee in private.

Overall, though, continued growth and development of the Department rests on having more tenure and tenure-track positions. The Department may wish to consider, for example, whether it should continue to diversify or whether it should now consolidate particular areas as areas of research strength. It may also decide to move to a theme-based approach as areas of strength as suggested by the external reviewers. These decisions would be best taken in light of the Department’s ongoing examination of its research priorities.

Undergraduate Program

In terms of student satisfaction, the undergraduate History students rank their academic experience as very high. In teaching evaluations and 4th year exit polls, History courses are most often above the average for both Arts and Science and for Queen’s. This feeling of overall satisfaction was presented to reviewers as well in the undergraduate meetings.

Despite the high level of student satisfaction with the undergraduate courses, concerns were expressed by the students who attended the IAR meetings and by the external reviewers. Course accessibility emerged as a concern. For example, senior History students are limited to only four seminars (advanced) courses for upper years. Therefore, in fourth year, students are forced to take 200 level courses that are watered down for non-History majors. In addition, several professors allowed students into courses if they

were 'hounded'. It was the only way students could get what they wanted; however, other students resented this approach and found it inequitable. Course offerings were another concern. The students felt that there was too much Canadian history, with not enough selection for other areas or cultures. They also indicated that numerous courses are listed in the calendar, yet never taught. The external reviewers recommended that the Department consider a "breadth requirement now that it has a more global coverage."

The course numbering system used in History was confusing for students, external reviewers, and members of the Internal Academic Review committee. We agree with the external reviewers that the current numbering system may also prove difficult for others outside Queen's University to interpret, for example, graduate chairs in other universities. The faculty argued that this numbering system cannot be changed so that the first number of the course code represents the usual year in which the course is taken because of inadequacies in the University's computer system. To move to a revised numbering system, one possibility would be to change the letters representing History in advance of the course number (using HSTY, for example) for the transition period.

The Undergraduate Program in History is delivered to an exceptionally large group of students. According to the Department's self-assessment, they offer a total of over 3,000 full time equivalent in-classroom enrollments each year. Of these more than 700 spaces are offered in first year courses. Given financial constraints at Queen's on Departmental resources, and given the Faculty complement for History, it is apparent that delivering this program demands innovation to maintain the high standards that this program clearly has demonstrated. To meet this objective, the Department has opted to increasingly rely on a large complement of adjunct faculty, sessional adjuncts, and teaching fellows to deliver much of their program. According to figures available to this committee, only one-third of all courses are delivered by tenure track faculty members. Adjunct faculty and teaching fellows teach the remaining workload. Although this reliance on non-tenure/tenure-track faculty is required at the present time, it has a major disadvantage in creating "the entrenchment of a second tier of professors who tend not to be engaged in research" (External Reviewers' Report). This situation can only be reversed by an increased number of tenure/tenure-track faculty members.

Graduate Program

We, like the External Reviewers, would like to commend the History Department for its ongoing commitment to renewal within the graduate program and its innovative approaches. These innovations have created a "distinctive profile" and have allowed students to complete their degrees in a most timely fashion. However, there seem to be at least three pressures that could potentially hinder the future success of the History Department's graduate plans.

First, pressure comes from the divergence of the department's doctoral program--in terms of the lack of field comprehensive examinations--from other North American universities. The faculty members provided a strong rationale for this change in the doctoral program, although some doctoral students expressed concern about the possible

perceptions of this new approach. We would suggest that the excellent presentation of the doctoral program's strengths be widely publicized, so that other history departments and the History Department's own students fully understand the merits of the Queen's University use of alternative forms of comprehensive examinations.

Second, pressure comes from the provincial government's imperatives to increase the size of the master's program. Although the department has responded to this challenge by making the master's program more compact and limiting increases at the doctoral level, it is difficult to see how these strategies can have long-term results without additional measures being put into place, especially given the likelihood that the current expansion of master's programs might be transferred to doctoral programs. The chief measure that would allow for a realistic expansion of the graduate program is an increase in the number of tenure stream faculty members. These faculty would be able to absorb the extra work such an increase in graduate students would surely entail.

Finally, pressure comes from the desire of the department to increase its breadth in areas of concentration, while retaining depth in Canadian history, the area of highest student interest. The External Assessors made a number of suggestions with respect to this dilemma. The point we would like to emphasize is the following: "The department should continue to diversify, but by adding positions, not by shifting lines from Canadian history to other areas." Again, it is clear that the department cannot continue its current high level of graduate work without more tenure stream faculty members.

Resources

Justly so, the History department is feeling pressured about resources. The poverty of departments in resources is endemic to Queen's and History is no exception. Still while the situation may be similar across all departments in Arts and Science, there remains a need to address the problem. Support staff members are feeling the pressure, consumables budgets are at an all time low, and office space is being created out of seminar rooms and any other convertible space possible. Although History appears to have among the lowest costs per student in the University, we suspect this is primarily because of the low cost of adjunct faculty who support 66 % of their undergraduate teaching. The University thus needs to consider the resource needs of the History department in its efforts to rationalize space use and staff/faculty deployment across campus, particularly considering History's major position within the Faculty of Arts and Science.

Services and Administration

The History faculty appears to have an unusually high administrative load. The IAR team concurs with the external reviewers about possible strategies to lighten the administrative load on faculty. Based on observations from other departments, we believe that a competent well-trained staff member (or perhaps an adjunct faculty member with a light teaching load) can serve as an undergraduate coordinator if accompanied by undergraduate advisor(s) who are faculty members. This change should bring better

continuity and more enthusiasm to the role and thus help in initiating changes to the undergraduate offerings.

Equity

History has been improving in its proportion of individuals associated with minority groups. The Department is to be complimented for its progress, and we encourage continued striving toward equity in the next cycle as well.

Self Evaluation and Future Prospects

The History Department appears to be a strong department at Queen's. Their teaching is normally above the Queen's average and their research has maintained its strength, despite the rapid faculty renewal that has taken place. Overall, the department appears to have found ways to maintain their libertarianism approach and reach consensus on decisions so that they progress with exciting and innovative changes to their programs. Improvements are still possible in the next cycle. It would appear that the challenges to research and scholarship, the undergraduate and graduate programs, and resources can be addressed through the joint efforts of the History Department, the Faculty of Arts and Science, and the University.

Recommendations

We conclude with two recommendations representing what we feel are required. The previous text also presents suggestions representing possibilities that might well improve the Department.

1. That the number of full-time tenure-track or tenured faculty members within the Department of History be increased so that the Department is able to develop and deliver a diverse set of courses to undergraduate students without an over-reliance on non-tenure/tenure track faculty, meet the needs of its current and future graduate students, and consolidate its developing strengths in research and scholarship. To justify these additional hirings, the Department must provide the Faculty of Arts and Science with a concrete plan of the positions needed to accomplish these objectives.
2. That the undergraduate program be thoroughly reviewed and analyzed by the Department in a similar fashion to what has already taken place with the graduate program. In particular, the course numbering, the current level of restriction of number of seminars to History majors, the admission criteria for individual courses, the course calendar reflecting actual course offerings, and the employment of non-tenure/tenure track faculty in the undergraduate program need to be seriously explored in a comprehensive manner.