

Internal Academic Review Committee Report on the Review of the Department of Classics

Department of Classics

The Department of Classics has a long and distinguished history at Queen's. The External Consultants and the Review Team applaud its excellent record in teaching at both the undergraduate and graduate (M.A.) level. Dedicated faculty and staff have met recent challenges facing the Department through exceptional commitment and efficient operations. In particular, the unit has responded creatively and energetically to higher student demand for undergraduate elective courses.

The reports suggest that the Department's increased focus on undergraduate teaching may have been derived from a sense of vulnerability and that over time, these efforts may have contributed to weaknesses in other areas. For example, it was noted by reviewers that the Department's record in publication and research funding is below the level expected for a research-intensive university such as Queen's. Furthermore, there is a concern that ultimately the overall educational experience could be impacted. In response to these issues, the IARC makes the following recommendations in support of the continued development of a strong Department of Classics.

Major Recommendations

1. **TEACHING and RESEARCH:** The External Consultants and the Review Team expressed concerns about the long-term effect on the educational experience of students and the scholarly production of the faculty which may be evolving due to the Classics Department's strategy to keep overall enrolments high through service teaching. In the short term, the Faculty of Arts and Science has responded quickly with a commitment of two three-year non-renewable appointments to bolster the faculty complement. The IARC commends these efforts but encourages the Department and Faculty to consider longer-term strategies.

Though the overall learning experience of students was reported to be excellent, the Review Team suggests, and the IARC concurs, that the rising enrolment may eventually

lead to a lower quality student experience. All reviewers hold the conviction that writing is an integral part of the liberal arts experience. The concern is that large class sizes which include non-concentrators, especially at the upper levels, may lead to a dilution of the level of the material offered and result in less requirement for, and evaluation of, written work from students. The IARC encourages the Department to explore approaches that would limit senior seminars to Classics concentrators.

The IARC commends the Faculty and the Department on their efforts to date and recommends they continue to work together to strengthen the Department and develop long-term solutions to sustain an appropriate balance between teaching and research.

2. STUDENT GOVERNANCE: Queen's encourages a high level of student participation in matters of governance. The Internal Academic Review of the Department of Classics noted that student participation in Departmental decision-making is by and large *ad hoc* and informal.

The IARC recommends that Classics, in consultation with the Faculty of Arts and Science, consider enhancing student involvement in departmental policy decisions.

Other recommendation the Department may wish to consider

1. The IARC agrees with the recommendation of both the External Consultants and the Review Team that the Department commit to building its library holdings over the long-term to support the research efforts of both faculty and students.

Outcomes of the Review

Response submitted by the Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Science and the Head of the Department of Classics

Outcomes of the Internal Academic Review of the Department of Classics Joint Response from the Department of Classics and the Faculty of Arts and Science

Recommendation 1: Teaching and Research

The Faculty Office greatly appreciates the work of the Classics Department in teaching large numbers of students who report high satisfaction with their courses.

The Dean's commitment of two three-year non-renewable appointments to the Department of Classics for the period 2004-2007 arose out of a recognition that the Department is under-staffed and is handling more than its share of students in "service" courses. In academic year 2006-07, it will be important for the next Dean to consider, in consultation with the next Head of Department, the possibility of authorizing the release of one or more tenure-track positions to the Department.

Moreover, Dean Silverman has explicitly stated that humanities units should consider, where possible, reducing their teaching "load" from 2.5 courses to 2.0 courses. However, there are limits to which this is possible in Classics, given that the Department is already offering the minimum number of necessary courses for the programmes it supports. The only alternative, then, would be to cut a programme of study.

Only concentrators are allowed in third-year Latin and Greek courses. However, the popularity of CLST courses is such that non-concentrators are permitted in third-year CLST courses, if they have the appropriate prerequisites. At the fourth-year level, only concentrators are permitted to take CLST courses.

In humanities courses it is preferable for students to have the opportunity to write papers. Nonetheless, even in courses using multiple choice examinations, students are appreciative of the instruction they receive. In order to introduce writing assignments into all Classics courses, the Department would necessarily have to drastically reduce the size of some of its courses.

Recommendation 2: Student Participation

The willingness and availability of students to participate in departmental policy decisions varies from one cohort to another. The Department is willing to consider developing a set policy to try to ensure that students are involved.

Other Recommendation: Library Holdings

Both the Faculty Office and the Department of Classics welcome the recommendation of building library holdings to support research efforts.

Follow-up on these recommendations and issues will take place in the annual budget and staffing strategy meetings between the Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Science and the Vice-Principal (Academic).

Department of Classics
Internal Academic Review 2003-2004

HISTORY

The Department of Classics (hereafter: *Classics* or *the Department*) was one of the first to be reviewed when Queen's University inaugurated its system of seven-year reviews in 1997. This report marks Classics' second Internal Academic Review (IAR). It is the opinion of the present IAR team that the Department has addressed most of the recommendations made in its first IAR, so this report will not make reference to the 1997 document.

The present IAR was initiated in 2003. The team has met with the Head and the external reviewers. The report of the external reviewers has been discussed with the Department as a whole. In addition to Classics' self-study report, we also examined the profiles of the departments Classics named as external comparisons in the University of Western Ontario, University of Victoria, and the University of Georgia. We are satisfied that these departments furnish a reasonable basis for comparison. We also were in contact with the departments of Classics in Princeton and Stanford, two universities that Queen's has named as institutions it would like to be compared with. Our opinions arise from a synthesis of these sources of information.

The report of the external academic reviewers is appended to this report. The external reviewers express many of our concerns and also our appreciation for what Classics has accomplished. For this reason, we borrow substantially from the external reviewers' report in describing the current state of Classics at Queen's.

OVERVIEW

The Department has a long and distinguished history. It is well run and composed of congenial and very hard-working faculty and staff. It has an excellent record in teaching at both the undergraduate and graduate (M.A.) level, but its record in publication and research-funding is below the level we would expect for a research-intensive university like Queen's. Our report expands upon these different aspects of the Department's performance. But nothing should be allowed to detract from our overall evaluation that this Department has done and is doing a superb job in difficult circumstances.

The present faculty is stretched to the limit. They are engaged in an enormous amount of teaching, to the extent that the Head receives no reduction for administrative duties, no faculty member can be guaranteed a solid day for research during the Fall and Winter semesters, and the standard course load of 2.5 courses does not include the graduate program. In other words, the M.A. in Classics is carried by the faculty entirely on a *pro bono* basis.

It is our understanding that both Classics and the Faculty of Arts & Science are content with the current enrolment picture in the Department. Classics has a very high level of service teaching but also a respectable number of concentrators (about 140). The result is that the ratio of full-time undergraduate enrolments to faculty positions is approximately 45:1, by far the highest among departments in the Faculty of Arts & Science. What emerges as particularly remarkable in this picture is the high regard that students hold for Classics' instructors and courses. Classics' students clearly appreciate the interest that their professors show in them as persons, their dedication, and the quality of the Department's course offerings.

Classics is adamant that its enrolment numbers must remain at current levels for two reasons. First, the Department is convinced that there is a direct relationship between high levels of service teaching and the ability to attract concentrators to its programs. Secondly, Classics continues to live under the apprehension that its academic unit might be eliminated in a time of budget constraints. Maintaining high enrolments is seen as a guarantee of its usefulness to the University.

But high teaching loads come at a price. The price being paid by the Department is clearly stated by the external reviewers and we agree with their opinion. Classics is not generating the profile that one associates with the research-intensive university that Queen's aspires to be. There is no suggestion this situation is due to a lack of competence among the faculty. On the contrary, we have every reason to believe that Classics has gathered together a highly qualified group of people. But this faculty cannot do any more than is now being asked of them. If a better balance between teaching and research is desired in the profile of Classics, changes are required. But these cannot be initiated by the Department on its own.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Our recommendations address five aspects of departmental life: Faculty, Research, Teaching, Resources, and Governance.

Faculty

THE UNIVERSITY AND THE DEPARTMENT MUST WORK TOGETHER TO ENSURE THAT THE STAFFING PICTURE IN CLASSICS FOR 2004-2005 BECOMES THE NORM, NOT AN ANOMALY.

The statement above is the controlling recommendation of this report. If it is not heeded, no substantial change can be initiated in Classics nor will the Department be able to achieve the balance between teaching and research that marks a research-intensive university.

Classics will enjoy an “anomalous” situation in the academic year 2004-2005. We are very pleased that the Dean has seen fit to offer a non-renewable three-year appointment to Classics beginning July 2004. As a result, faculty complement will stand at 8.2 FTE. At the same time, 2004-2005 will be the first year in quite a while that a member of the Classics faculty will not be on sabbatical. This state of affairs has allowed the Head to limit undergraduate teaching load to 2.0 courses per faculty member in 2004-2005. One result of this is that graduate teaching in Classics will count as part of the load rather than as *pro bono* activity.

Both the University’s administration and Classics must capitalize on this unique opportunity. Several related recommendations follow from this primary concern. Since we think this situation can only be addressed by mutual collaboration between the administration of the University and the Department, our recommendations regarding faculty are divided into two parts. First, we will state what we think the University should be doing; then we will address responsibilities of Classics.

A. University Actions

1. That the three-year non-renewable appointment recently made by the Dean of Arts & Science become permanent.

Commitment from the University should take the form of a modest increase in faculty strength. The fact that Classics is able to attract such large numbers of students should make it easier for the University to direct some resources this way, particularly since an important result would be greater research output.

2. That the Dean of Arts & Science provide one-time funds to support the application by the Department for a QNS.

We address the importance of seeking a QNS appointment as part of the renewal of the Department below. Because of the costs associated with making a QNS application, the Committee recommends that the Dean of Arts & Science provide one-time travel funds for interviewing one or two possible candidates and funds for the time required to prepare a competitive, well-documented application. We suggest a half-course release for a faculty member.

B. Departmental Actions

Even with another faculty member, Classics will ordinarily still fall beneath full complement due to sabbatical leaves. The solution is to tap various resources that can increase faculty complement. One obvious, though difficult, route is to apply for a Queen’s National Scholar (QNS). At the same time, grant programs like those of the

Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) have some latitude for relieving faculty of a certain amount of marking or teaching load. The Committee sees a need for self-education within the Department to enable it to take full advantage of additional resources that might be available. The two areas in which self-education can play a critical role are Classics' efforts to secure a QNS and the ability of its faculty members to submit successful grant applications to SSHRC.

3. That Classics engage in self-education by actively seeking advice on its QNS application.

We commend Classics for undertaking a search for a QNS applicant. In order to mount a successful application, a department must be knowledgeable about the process and invest considerable time and financial resources to (a) attracting an excellent candidate, (b) bringing the candidate to Queen's to attend an interview and make a scholarly presentation, and (c) preparing a strong, well-documented case. The Committee urges Classics to engage in self-education about the QNS process, and to seek advice about the preparation of the application and scrutiny of the prepared application from a number of sources. These should include other Humanities Departments that have been successful in securing QNS appointments, as well as the current and former assistant to the Principal with responsibility for the QNS program.

4. That Classics contact the Office of Research Services to arrange a SSHRC workshop for all members of the Department

External funding for research in Classics can be an important source for resources. In particular, RAs as well as TAs can help instructors manage teaching and marking loads. Programs such as SSHRC can address resource as well as research issues. The Office of Research Services assists departments and individuals in preparing applications; the Department should arrange a workshop on SSHRC for all its members. Also, SSHRC program officers visit Queen's frequently and welcome questions from potential applicants.

Research

1. That Classics faculty focus on research output in 2004-2005, when teaching loads will be lighter than usual.

Given their improved teaching load, 2004-2005 will be an ideal and strategic time for members of Classics to prepare and submit papers for publication, and most importantly to prepare grant applications for submission to SSHRC in Fall 2005. An increase in research output may help to convince the administration of the University that increased faculty numbers and decreased teaching can translate into higher productivity in the Department.

2. That Classics faculty develop collaborative research endeavours with colleagues in the Humanities at Queen's and with colleagues in Classics at other universities

Other Humanities departments at Queen's and other University departments of Classics have developed enviable track records securing funding for text analysis and other forms of research similar to research activities of members of the Department. Talking with these colleagues (e.g., in departments like History and English) and educating themselves about what is currently required for successful grant applications for research in the Humanities is especially important for early-career members of Classics. Because the judgment of a SSHRC proposal is made on both the merits of the proposed research and the track record of the applicant, it is critical that young faculty build a record and secure funding in their first few years at Queen's.

3. That Classics faculty identify projects for using graduate Research Assistants, funded by SSHRC and other sources, to conduct library research and to free faculty for writing and other research tasks

External funding demands that faculty focus energies on research and writing and enables faculty to hire and mentor graduate students as Research Assistants. It is our understanding that, currently, graduate students in Classics do not have the opportunity for research assistantships.

Teaching

1. That the Department monitor its use of TA's in order to keep faculty as free as possible for grading written assignments.

We are pleased to see that the Dean of Arts & Science has expressed commitment to Classics by providing funds for four additional TAs in September of 2003. Moreover, we are not implying by this recommendation that Classics is remiss in its use of TAs now. But both the IAR team and the external reviewers hold the conviction that writing is an integral part of the liberal-arts experience, particularly in an area like Classics. Faculty need as much relief as possible from other marking duties in order to properly evaluate written work and to provide helpful and informed feedback.

2. That the Department restrict at least one 300-level course per academic year to concentrators.

The external reviewers thought that enrolment should be capped in several of the upper-level history and archaeology courses, to promote opportunities for written assignments. It also suggested that the Department should do as other units do: limit senior seminars to Classics concentrators. The thought was that, in both cases, these changes would result in an improvement in the intellectual experience for students and faculty. Classics rejects

these recommendations. It believes that its upper-level seminars contain adequate provisions for written assignments. It also believes in the necessity of keeping enrolment levels high and, therefore, of keeping courses at the upper-levels open to non-concentrators.

We suggest, however, that there is room for compromise. Our recommendation addresses the use of CLST courses at the 300-level. The Department's enrolments in CLST courses at the 300-level averaged around 51 students per course in 2000-2001 and 66 students per course in 2002-2003. We appreciate Classics' position, that there is relationship between a high level of service teaching and its ability to attract concentrators. Nevertheless, these growing numbers are of concern in terms of creating an atmosphere for fostering the formation of specialists in the discipline. Other departments confine certain courses at the 300-level to declared concentrators, and we think that Classics could afford to experiment with such approach without unduly threatening its overall enrolments. The payoff could be an opportunity for promoting a quality of engagement and writing that is essential for specialists in the discipline.

Resources

1. That the University should provide a one-time grant to Classics to compensate for lost library funds during the fiscal year, 2002-2003.

During the fiscal year 2002-2003, Classics withheld spending a significant sum of library funds in an anticipation of the new hire in Roman archaeology beginning July 2003 (approximately \$2000). These funds were earmarked for support of this new position. Unfortunately, these funds were not rolled over into the next fiscal year and were effectively lost to the Department. We think that this one-time grant can serve a number of purposes. First, and most obviously, it will support the work of a new faculty member at Queen's and Classics. Second, it will address concerns of the external consultants regarding library holdings and their recommendations that they be built up, thus diminishing reliance on interlibrary loans. Thirdly, this grant is the kind of tangible gesture from the central administration that would communicate the commitment of the University to Classics at Queen's.

Governance

1. The Department needs to give student representatives a vote in departmental policy decisions, including hirings, renewals, and promotions.

Both the self-study document and conversation with the Department reveal that student participation in the decisions of the Department is by and large *ad hoc* and informal. Our opinion is informed both by our knowledge of other units in the University and the fact that Queen's has generally encouraged a high level of student participation in matters of

governance. We appreciate that, in current practice, departmental meetings often include discussion of the progress of individual students and that confidentiality may be served by restricting such discussions to faculty. But there are other ways of addressing this concern than by depriving students of a formal voice in departmental decisions. Many other units distinguish discussion of student progress from other items on a departmental agenda. We see no reason why this distinction cannot also be implemented by Classics. In our understanding, it is the norm for departments at Queen's to give students a vote in decisions regarding departmental governance, including hirings, promotion, and tenure.

SUMMARY

A theme running through a number of our concerns and recommendations is that faculty and other resources are presently too limited for what is recommended. The small size of Classics together with – and, indeed, considerably driven by – departmental insecurity has resulted in a teaching workload that is very heavy and that effectively blocks any significant increase in research. An integral and long-standing element of Classics' departmental culture is the belief that, as a very small department, it might be sacrificed by the University in the interests of economies. Concrete moves from the Faculty of Arts and Science and the University are necessary to affirm Queen's commitment to the Department. The results will be a reduction in Classic's chronic sense of insecurity and the breathing room necessary to build its research profile.

Respectfully submitted by the Internal Academic Review team:

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For the Review Team,

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