

Final Assessment Report

English Language and Literature Graduate and Undergraduate Programs (reviewed 2016/17)

A. Summary

1. The Department's Self Study was considered and approved by the Academic Review Committee of Senate on November 29, 2016.
2. The Review Committee consisted of two external reviewers: Susan Hamilton (University of Alberta) and Eleanor Ty (Wilfrid Laurier University) and an internal reviewer, Sarah Matheson (Brock University).
3. The site visit occurred on January 25-27, 2017.
4. The Reviewers' Report was received on February 13, 2017.
5. The Department's response was received on March 17, 2017.
6. The Dean of Graduate Studies response from Jens Coorsen was received on March 20, 2016.
7. The Senate Undergraduate Program Committee response was received on March 24, 2017.
8. The Senate Graduate Studies Committee response was received on March 28, 2017.
9. The Dean of Humanities response from Carol Merriam was received on April 10, 2017.

The academic programs offered by the Department of English Language and Literature which were examined as part of the review were:

BA in English and Contemporary Culture
BA in English and Creative Writing
BA in English Language and Literature
BA with Major in English and Writing, Rhetoric and Discourse Studies
BA-BED in English Language and Literature
Certificate in Rhetoric and Professional Writing
Minor in English Language and Literature
Minor in Writing, Rhetoric and Discourse Studies
MA in English

This review was conducted under the terms and conditions of the IQAP approved by Senate on May 25, 2016.

The reviewers assigned the specific programs varying outcome categories:

Outcome Categories:

Program (s)	Excellent Quality	Good Quality	Good Quality with Concerns	Non-Viable
BA in English and Contemporary Culture			X	
BA in English and Creative Writing		X (New Program)		
BA in English Language and Literature		x		
BA with Major in English and Writing, Rhetoric and Discourse Studies*		X (New Program)*		
BA-BED in English Language and Literature		X		
Certificate in Rhetoric and Professional Writing		X		
Minor in English Language and Literature		X		
Minor in Writing, Rhetoric and Discourse Studies		X		
MA in English		X		

*Note - The BA with Major in English and Writing, Rhetoric and Discourse Studies was modified into a BA (Honours) in English and Writing, Rhetoric and Discourse Studies as the result of the approval of a Request for Major Modification by Senate on September 16, 2015. The BA with Major was subsequently discontinued through a Request for Program Discontinuation that was approved by Senate on October 7, 2015. Although the BA (Honours) was not part of this review, the Reviewers have conflated the old and new programs and given the new program an outcome category.

B. Strengths of the Program

The reviewers identified the following strengths of the program:

Dedicated, committed, and enthusiastic professors are at the heart of this English department. The department is commended for its very evident willingness to engage in curricular self-study and change, which has led to recent introductions of two new programs, English & Creative Writing and English and Writing, Rhetoric and Discourse Studies. Its strong collaborative spirit and attention to workload equity amongst the department's continuing faculty and staff has ensured a vibrant, responsive department atmosphere. Faculty members also value the many forms of mutual support on professional matters available in the department, and talked about good informal mentorship for junior and associate professors. They were happy with the research support provided by the Humanities Research Institute.

The undergraduate seminars are a unique strength at Brock University. Highly valued by students, they are a lynchpin of the undergraduate courses. The various BA programs provide a solid grounding in the foundations of English literature, creative writing, rhetoric and discourse studies, whilst also providing opportunities for all students to explore practical skills (CON-ED/WRDS) and creative expression.

The Graduate program's key strength is the strong faculty/student relationships, excellent research mentorship, and the opportunity to hone independent research skills through their MRPs on a topic of their choice. The program provides excellent intellectual and professional training, and has good success in preparing students for doctoral work elsewhere.

The continued development of a research culture in the department is exemplified in research supports for early career researchers, including reduced teaching in first year, pre-tenure half-sabbatical, and access to graduate teaching. There are several outstanding researchers in the program who have garnered significant external awards, research grants, book prizes (Governor General, SSHRC, Killam), and have excellent publication records. There are also a number of outstanding teachers, many of whom are recipients of internal and external teaching awards.

Department members provide service work not only to the different programs in English, but serve as Directors for other Master's and undergraduate interdisciplinary programs, as the Dean of Graduate Studies, and as committee members for interdisciplinary graduate programs.

C. Opportunities for Improvement and Enhancement

Recommendation 1

To hire additional support staff for the Graduate program.

In its response, the Department stated:

The Department wholeheartedly concurs with this recommendation for additional administrative support for our programs, recognizing that, in fact, this is the **second** external review that has recommended that we should have additional administrative support. The Department has campaigned actively for this position in more than one budget submission and will continue to do so. The Department also notes that some of the other recommendations in this Reviewers' Report--specifically ones that suggest developing more experiential learning opportunities--are contingent on the Department receiving the recommended additional support staff in order to have sufficient human resources for the running of such initiatives in addition to the increasingly heavy workload of administration associated with undergraduate and graduate programs. The Department has, however, no power to implement this recommendation unless our budget request is approved at **all** levels of upper administration.

The Faculty Dean stated:

Additional support is planned for in the budget submitted for 2017-18.

The Dean of Graduate Studies stated:

I note that for all departments and programs, provision of additional support staff lies within the purview of the Dean of the home Faculty. However, there are 7 MA students currently registered in English (5 FT and 2 PT); for 2017/18, 11 have accepted an offer and we will have to await how many finally register. Thus, considering this from only the Graduate perspective, I would suggest that a well documented case would have to be made in terms of a need for additional support staff if student numbers remain relatively fixed and there is no further planned growth in Graduate programming.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers the recommendation to be worthy of consideration but outside of the jurisdiction of the Committee. It is expected that the program will proceed through normal channels of advocacy for these administrative support resources.

Implementation Plan

Recommendation not accepted.

Recommendation 2

To eliminate the BA in English and Contemporary Culture.

In its response, the Department stated:

The Department notes that although the numbers in this program are low, eliminating the program would free up no resources, as courses we offer for this program serve all of our other programs. However, as part of our larger discussions of curriculum (which take place prior to our calendar submission), we will include conversation about the advantages and disadvantages of eliminating this program.

The Faculty Dean stated:

Elimination of this program has been discussed since the time of the Senate [Ad Hoc] Program Review [and Prioritization Report], and action was delayed until the receipt of the External Reviewers' Report. It seems the time has come to let this program go.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC understands that discussions are underway within the Department to consider the discontinuation of the program. The Committee considers the recommendation to be accepted and in the process of implementation.

Implementation Plan (1st Priority)

Responsible for approving:	Department
Responsible for resources:	Department
Responsible for implementation:	Department
Timeline:	Dean of Humanities to report by the end of academic year 2017/18

Recommendation 3

Diversify and enlarge the MA application stream by exploring options for additional for-credit experiences within MA, eg. Internships and/or experiential learning with local arts and community groups; curatorial collaborations with Special collections.

In its response, the Department stated:

The Department certainly wishes to "diversify and enlarge the MA application stream" and will continue to have discussions as to how best to accomplish that goal. As part of those discussions, the Department agrees to consider additional experiential education options for the MA. We would like to recognize that current Research Assistantships, Research Fellowships, and Teaching Assistantships do offer our MA students experiential education opportunities as part of their degree; although these opportunities are associated with funding rather than course credits, it might be possible to make these options more robust and more recognizably experiential- learning opportunities (for example, in promotional materials).

In terms of new possibilities for experiential education, the Department has a number of potential ideas (including an in-house journal or magazine), but also a number of concerns. First of these concerns is administrative support; without the fulfilment of Recommendation #1, it would not be possible to add experiential opportunities that inevitably require more administrative co-ordination and management. Other concerns include the integrity of classes if the size of the cohort is small in any given year and the integrity of the cohort's sense of community if students are taking quite different paths through the degree.

The Faculty Dean stated:

The Dean agrees about the desirability of adding more experiential components to the graduate program, and suggests that the Department work with the new Humanities co-ordinator from Co-op, Career, and Experiential Education to find and implement opportunities. The concern about the impact on the graduate cohort's sense of community if students are on multiple different paths is valid, and caution should be exercised.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers the recommendation to be accepted and in the process of implementation. The Department is encouraged to work with the Faculty of Humanities Coordinator for Career, Co-op and Experiential Education to address this recommendation.

Implementation Plan (1st Priority)

Responsible for approving:	Department
Responsible for resources:	Department
Responsible for implementation:	Department
Timeline:	Dean of Humanities to report by the end of academic year 2017/18

Recommendation 4

Consider offering Creative Writing at the Grad level.

In its response, the Department stated:

"Offering Creative Writing at the Grad Level" is an option that has been raised in past Departmental discussions, and we will continue to explore it. Options already imagined include a critical-creative Major Research Project (MRP), which can happen within the program as it is currently structured and with the expertise of our current faculty. The Department does not agree that "a course . . . in Creative Writing could be easily added" to the current MA program: it would have to be an extra variable topics course, since some students would not have the background in Creative Writing to take it at the graduate level, so any creative writing course would require more resources; it would also risk compromising the size of our other variable topics courses. As to offering a Creative Writing MA, the Department believes that such an option will depend on additional resources to provide a program of comparable quality to those already established in Ontario. In short, we will continue to consider creative writing options that work for our program and our students.

The Faculty Dean stated:

The Dean supports the Department's plan to explore this option.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers the recommendation to be accepted for consideration by the Department. The Committee expects that the availability and allocation of resources required for the implementation of the recommendation will be included in this consideration.

Implementation Plan (1st Priority)

Responsible for approving:	Department
Responsible for resources:	Department
Responsible for implementation:	Department
Timeline:	Dean of Humanities to report by the end of academic year 2017/18

Recommendation 5

To be pro-active in incorporating experiential learning at the Undergraduate and Graduate levels.

In its response, the Department stated:

The Department is open to exploring further experiential learning as appropriate in its curriculum. It has incorporated experiential learning in the undergraduate curriculum in the development of its new programs (for discussion of graduate possibilities, see Recommendation #3, above), and these opportunities will increase as these programs develop further. The English and Creative Writing degree, with its workshop courses, is one example of experiential learning opportunities for students. The Honours degree in Writing, Rhetoric, and Discourse Studies included two fourth-year courses (WRDS 4P00 Internship in Writing, Rhetoric, and Discourse Studies and WRDS 4P01 E-portfolio for Rhetoric, Writing, and Discourse Studies) as part of its ARC [Senate Academic Review Committee] submission; WRDS 4P01 is currently available for students as a project-course, and WRDS 4P00 will be added to the calendar once discussions with the Co-op, Career, and Experiential Education team have been completed so that the most accurate wording can be used and up-to-date course design implemented.

Some experiential learning initiatives (such as internships) require administrative resources, so this recommendation, if interpreted narrowly, does depend on the fulfilment of Recommendation #1. The Department also notes that experiential education takes many forms: Brock University's Experiential Education Definitions include 27 categories. Where appropriate, the Department includes different types of experiential education in the design of individual courses.

The Faculty Dean stated:

The Dean supports the Department's intention to explore further experiential components in both the graduate and undergraduate programs as appropriate.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers the recommendation to be accepted. The Committee encourages the Department to work with the Faculty of Humanities Coordinator for Career, Co-op and Experiential Education to address this recommendation.

Implementation Plan (1st Priority)

Responsible for approving:	Department
Responsible for resources:	Department
Responsible for implementation:	Department
Timeline:	Dean of Humanities to report by the end of academic year 2017/18

Recommendation 6

Pursue competitive funding for MA students, and maintain opportunities for them to be teaching assistants.

In its response the Department stated:

The Department wholeheartedly concurs with this recommendation. The Department already offers the maximum number of TA hours to our graduate students (and TAships offer the highest wage per hour of any on-campus job, enabling students to optimize the financial benefits of working within the 10-hour-per week policy). In addition, we have in the past few years taken advantage of Research Fellowship opportunities to provide additional funding to students; we have designated a Grants Officer as a member of our graduate committee whose responsibility includes running annual grants workshops and mentoring students through the application process to help increase their chances of securing external funding; and our GPD includes information and model grant-writing exercises as part of our required professionalization course and in information sessions directed to third- and fourth-year students who might apply to the program. We will continue to pursue these avenues and others toward securing the best available graduate funding for our students, and hope that other units (such as the Faculty of Graduate Studies) with greater control over such funding will recognize our students' needs.

The Faculty Dean stated:

The Dean supports the Department's intention to continue its efforts to provide the best possible funding for its graduate students.

The Dean of Graduate Studies stated:

the Department of English Language & Literature has the same access to TAships and other forms of graduate funding as all other academic entities at Brock. Although provided through the Faculty of Graduate Studies, much of the funding available to Departments for graduate student support is actually recommended by the Department itself or their home Faculty. This Dean would however be happy to consult directly with the Department on this matter. The Faculty of Graduate Studies has already this year, more than in the past I believe, made substantial additional effort to find 'extra' funding to support the selective recruitment of a sought-after international Graduate student into the MA in English. Regrettably, in the end, the student chose to go elsewhere due to the onerous international tuition fees here. The Department will recognize that the Faculty of Graduate Studies has no control over the setting of such fees; nonetheless we have been actively advocating for a reduction or at least a freeze of these fees for students in research-based graduate programs.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers the recommendation to be accepted and in the process of implementation. The Committee expects the Department to work through normal channels of advocacy for the means to address this recommendation.

Implementation Plan (3rd Priority)

Responsible for approving:	Department
Responsible for resources:	Department
Responsible for implementation:	Department
Timeline:	Dean of Humanities to report by the end of academic year 2019/20

Recommendation 7

Increase diversity of literature course options.

In its response, the Department stated:

The Department would very much like to increase its diversity of course offerings, but significant change is not possible without further resources. As a way of responding to the concern that our courses reflect "changes in the student body at Brock, which is increasingly diverse," individual instructors include texts, where appropriate, that reflect the diversity of our classrooms. In the future, further hiring of faculty members grounded in diverse fields of research / teaching would give us even more flexibility, as the Department has identified gaps in disciplinary areas that have the potential to address diversity.

In the Executive Summary (Section 1.0), the reviewers comment that "The Department is in the enviable position of having enough faculty to cover different periods of English literature." That coverage, however, is affected adversely by administrative positions and teaching in or service to other programs in the University. These factors limit the "diversity" of courses offered (if understood as a range of options for students).

The Faculty Dean stated:

The Dean acknowledges that the members of the Department already include texts, as appropriate, that reflect the diversity of their classrooms and the University. Attention to diversity in fields of teaching and research as faculty positions come available will answer the intent of this recommendation.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers the recommendation to be accepted. The Committee expects that this issue will be included in regular curricular review using the curriculum map developed for the Self Study.

Implementation Plan (3rd Priority)

Responsible for approving:	Department
Responsible for resources:	Department
Responsible for implementation:	Department
Timeline:	Dean of Humanities to report by the end of academic year 2019/20

Recommendation 8

Develop indigenous literature course offerings, and explore options for inviting Indigenous scholars into program (eg. Tenure track position; Indigenous Writer in Residence; Indigenous Postdoctoral Fellow).

In its response, the Department stated:

The Department will explore ways to meet this recommendation; indeed, we are already doing so. When the opportunity arose, we cross-listed CANA 3V90 Iroquois Cosmological Narratives (2016-17), a course taught by a visiting Fulbright Scholar. We have already identified Indigenous Studies courses that would be appropriate for our majors, and we will be discussing options with INDG (Indigenous Studies) (for example, adding such courses to a list of those that can be used by students as major credits). The Department likes the idea of a Writer in Residence, but needs to explore opportunities for funding.

The Faculty Dean stated:

The Dean supports the Department's interests in developing connections with INDG, as well as other options to develop indigenous course offerings and involve indigenous scholars in the Department's work.

The Senate Undergraduate Program Committee stated that:

Recommendation #8...fits well with recommendations coming from the Indigenous Education Advisory Committee.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers the recommendation to be accepted and in the process of implementation. The Committee encourages the Department to connect with the Two Row Council to explore options for implementing this recommendation.

Implementation Plan (1st Priority)

Responsible for approving:	Department
Responsible for resources:	Department
Responsible for implementation:	Department
Timeline:	Dean of Humanities to report by the end of academic year 2017/18

Recommendation 9

Consult with English Undergraduate Association to explore additional ways to develop a strong undergraduate community, including space and/or other amenities.

In its response, the Department stated:

The ESA creates virtual spaces for its members through Facebook and Twitter, but the Department would like to explore additional ways to create a sense of community in its undergraduate students. We have noted the strong community created in the graduate program, which happens in part because of a dedicated space for graduate students to gather and study together. In Section 5.5.1, the reviewers comment that "The physical space of the department fulfills its basic needs," but as this phrasing suggests, only the most basic needs are being met. One problem with our current location is its isolation and lack of space for students to gather as a community (for example, an undergraduate lounge or reading room).

The Faculty Dean stated:

The Dean supports the Department's plan to explore ways to develop a greater sense of community among the undergraduate students. The desirability of dedicated space is noted. Until such can be found, the students are encouraged to make use of the Humanities Undergraduate Student Lounge, on the third floor of the International Centre.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers the recommendation to be accepted. The Committee believes that the Department is best positioned to determine appropriate strategies to move forward on this issue.

Implementation Plan (2nd Priority)

Responsible for approving:	Department
Responsible for resources:	Department
Responsible for implementation:	Department
Timeline:	Dean of Humanities to report by the end of academic year 2018/19

Recommendation 10

Consider offering one or two online courses.

In its response, the Department stated:

As noted above (Points of Clarification), the Department already offers at least one or two online courses per year, where faculty interests and course content make this format appropriate.

The Faculty Dean stated that the recommendation was "Already in effect." and further clarified:

The phrasing of Recommendation #10 suggests that the Department does not currently offer online courses. In fact, the Department has offered online ENGL 1F95 (SE 2016, 2015, 2014), ENGL 4P37 (FW 2016, SE 2015, 2014, 2013), WRIT 2P12 (SE 2015, SU 2014), and WRIT/WRDS 3P15 (SE 2016, FW 2015, 2013). The Department will be offering this spring ENGL 2F62, ENGL 2P17, and WRDS 3P15; both 2F62 and 2P17, because of the agreements under which they were developed, will be offered at least twice more in the next 5 years.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers the recommendation to be current practice. No further action is required.

Implementation Plan

No further action required.

Recommendation 11

Confidential Recommendation

As per the IQAP Section II J. 6. f) regarding confidential recommendations “relating to personnel issues or other matters involving specific individuals” found in the Reviewers’ Report, this section “ will only be released to the Dean(s), the academic unit and ARC.”

D. Summary of Recommendations:

First Priority:

Recommendations 2,3,4,5,8

Second Priority:

Recommendations 9,11

Third Priority:

Recommendations 6,7

Not accepted:

Recommendation 1

Not requiring further action:

Recommendation 10