Final Assessment Report

BA General Humanities
Undergraduate Program
(reviewed 2019-20)

A. Summary

1. The Program Self Study was considered and approved by the Senate Academic Review Committee on October 22, 2019.
2. The Review Committee consisted of two external reviewers: Kathleen Kellett (Ryerson University) and Gavin Brockett (Wilfrid Laurier University) and an internal reviewer, Christie Milliken (Brock University).
3. The site visit occurred on January 15-17, 2020.
4. The Reviewers' Report was received on February 13, 2020.
5. The Undergraduate Program Committee response was received on February 26, 2020.
6. The Associate Dean's response was received on February 26, 2020.
7. The Dean of Humanities response was received on February 26, 2020.

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

Based on their knowledge of the discipline, the content of the Self-Study and the interviews conducted during the site visit, the Review Team gave the BA in General Humanities program an Outcome Category of:

Program(s)	Excellent Quality	Good Quality	Good Quality with Concerns	Non-Viable
BA General Humanities			X	

The reviewers did not explicitly state reasons for the concerns. In their Executive Summary, the Review Team provided this overview of the program:

> The peer-reviewers found that the 3 year BA in General Humanities is a very worthwhile degree that serves two primary roles: 1) offering a three-year pass degree in the Humanities for those who seek a generalist degree allowing for a multidisciplinary exploration of the Humanities and who may or may not choose to move on to a major; 2) retaining and supporting students in the Humanities who have been adjudicated out of their major program after receiving a CGPA of less than 60% in their major. These students then have the possibility of remaining in the GHUM program or improving their academic performance and re-entering their major program or a new major. The program thus provides considerable flexibility and ensures accessibility for students. The Peer-review team (PRT) considers this a useful and effective program that could nonetheless be improved to make it a more validating choice for students.
>
> As the self-study indicates, this non-major program is unusual in that it has no specific academic home or dedicated faculty but functions under the auspices of the Dean of Humanities Office. For this reason, many of the usual criteria covered in periodic program reviews are not applicable.
>
> The report concludes with seven recommendations intended to enhance the value of the degree to students by presenting it in a positive framework rather than as a default option. To this end, the PRT recommendations will emphasize: 1) the importance of advising and effective communication to facilitate retention and improve graduation rates; 2) a slightly more structured curriculum that will enhance the value of the degree without creating obstacles to graduation; 3) the possible addition of experientially-based capstone courses and/or independent studies, particularly in view of adding the option of a four-year degree in Humanities.

B. Strengths of the Program

The reviewers noted the following strengths:

According to the self-study (p. 8-10), the program evolved from the original GESD in 1994 to a stand- alone program in 2013-2014, along with the two pass BA degrees in Social Sciences and in Science. The program requirements are consistent with a Pass BA without major at Brock University. The three programs serve a similar role in supporting accessibility, curricular choice and student retention.

The program plays an important role in: 1) providing a space for students who have been required to leave their major due to weak academic performance and who wish to either complete the BA GHUM or have the opportunity to improve their CGPA in order to re-enter their major or choose a new major; 2) providing a three-year BA option to students who wish to explore subjects in the Humanities and to direct their own studies outside the major framework, while having the possibility of taking one or more minors; 3) allowing entering students a flexible array of options from which they may choose a major after one or more semesters of study. Its relatively open structure, without a major or required minor, gives it a great deal of flexibility and makes it particularly accessible to mature students and part-time students.

While the program offers a useful option for students needing academic support either because of a relatively low entering average (mid 70s is standard for this program and lower averages are also considered) or weak performance in their chosen major, it could also be perceived and promoted in a more positive way as a multi-disciplinary Humanities degree with opportunities for minors, independent study and experiential or project-based learning.

C. Opportunities for Improvement and Enhancement

Recommendation #1

The word "General" be dropped and that the program be referred to as the three-year "BA Pass Degree in Humanities".

In response, the Associate Dean stated:

> This is a very good suggestion, both for the reasons articulated by the reviewers and because the nomenclature will correspond to the generalist degrees offered by other Faculties at Brock ("Sciences" and "Social Sciences").

The Dean responded:

> The Dean supports this recommendation.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers the recommendation to be accepted and in the process of implementation.

Implementation Plan (1st Priority)	
Responsible for approving:	Unit
Responsible for resources:	Unit
Responsible for implementation:	Unit
Timeline:	Dean of Humanities to report by the end of academic year 2020/21

Recommendation #2

HUMA 1P50 be designated a required course for all students graduating with the BA Pass Degree in the Humanities.

In response, the Associate Dean stated:

> This is another very good suggestion to explore, though one that does have budget implications (for example: for 2020/2021, the target intake for GHUM is 35, which would translate to an additional 2 seminars of HUMA 1P50 students). Beyond budget, there are two additional concerns (one major and one minor):
> 1. It is sometimes the case that a student in third year realizes that they cannot complete their major Pass program (either because of an inability to earn enough credits in their major or an inability to reach a 60% major average). A student in this situation is simply trying to graduate, and the best option is sometimes entry into the GHUM program, which requires fewer credits in one subject and/or in which all earned credits can be used to reach the 60% threshold). The requirement of HUMA 1P50 for a student in this situation would be an impediment to graduation.
> 2. Some students who apply for GHUM via OUAC may very well decide, once they have arrived at Brock, to change into a degree program with a major. Though taking HUMA 1P50 in their first year would certainly not impede the choice to change programs, it would represent an "unnecessary" elective.
>
> A counterweight to the above concerns, however, is the value of HUMA 1P50, not only in terms of retention, but also in terms of the potential to create a sense of a GHUM "cohort," perhaps by grouping GHUM students in one HUMA 1P50 seminar.

The Dean responded:

> This is an interesting recommendation that bears consideration, but there are concerns, as identified. Perhaps "strongly recommending" HUMA 1P50 would be a middle road.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers the recommendation to be accepted for consideration.

Implementation Plan (1ˢᵗ Priority)	
Responsible for approving:	Unit
Responsible for resources:	Unit
Responsible for implementation:	Unit
Timeline:	Dean of Humanities to report by the end of academic year 2020/21

Recommendation #3

The creation of a third-year HUMA .5 credit independent study course that would be optional to students in the BA Pass Degree in the Humanities.

In response, the Associate Dean stated:

> This is a very good suggestion, which need not necessarily have a significant budget implication if the course can be added to the calendar as a Directed Reading course. The main difficulty with this approach would be to help students find willing and appropriate supervisors, especially given the lack of a program committee or dedicated faculty members assigned to GHUM. It may be possible to explore listing some already existing Directed Reading courses offered by units in the Faculty of Humanities, and examining ways to make some of those available to GHUM students. Making this an optional course makes very good sense, especially given cases of students – described above – who enter GHUM in their third year, simply to meet their objective to graduate.

The Dean responded:

> The opportunity for students to engage in research with faculty members is always good, but, again, there would be drawbacks with making this mandatory for GHUM students. The compromise of making students aware of independent study opportunities that already exist makes sense.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers the recommendation to be accepted for consideration as an option for students. The Committee understands that the program may be constrained by limited resources and therefore opt to use existing Faculty of Humanities independent study courses or a directed reading course to address this recommendation.

Implementation Plan (2nd Priority)	
Responsible for approving:	Unit
Responsible for resources:	Unit
Responsible for implementation:	Unit
Timeline:	Dean of Humanities to report by the end of academic year 2021/22

Recommendation #4

The Faculty investigate the possibility of creating a four-year Bachelor of Arts in Humanities that would include a fourth-year capstone course.

In response, the Associate Dean stated:

This is a very good suggestion, one that the Dean's Office in the Faculty of Humanities does wish to explore. The one complication seems to be nomenclature, as the non-Honours 4-year degree option offered at Brock is the 4-Year Degree with Major degree. GHUM students, however, do not hold a major. If the nomenclature issue can be solved, the 4-Year degree option for GHUM students would be a top priority. With respect to the idea of a capstone course for 4-Year GHUM students, this might also be developed as a Directed Reading course (to circumvent budget implications), though a seminar course, emphasizing interdisciplinary/multidisciplinary methods and an independent project, would be ideal.

The Undergraduate Program Committee (UPC) responded:

The Committee would like to acknowledge the value in retaining a three-year degree option. Should a four-year program be developed, it would not be advisable to discontinue the three-year program. The three-year program provides a viable option for undecided students, but also enables students with academic difficulties to graduate and aids in the overall retention efforts of the University.

The Dean responded:

A four-year degree option is a very good idea that we shall explore. The 4th year could include a capstone such as an independent study or a project- or problem-based seminar course.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers the recommendation to be accepted and in the process of implementation.

Implementation Plan (1st Priority)	
Responsible for approving:	Unit
Responsible for resources:	Unit
Responsible for implementation:	Unit
Timeline:	Dean of Humanities to report by the end of academic year 2020/21

Recommendation #5

Clarification of the notation that appears on a student's record when they are adjudicated out of a Major to ensure that it is both accurate and conveys a positive message.

In response, the Associate Dean stated:

This is a very good suggestion, and one that can be raised with the Registrar's Office.

The Dean responded:

This should definitely be discussed with the Registrar.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers the recommendation to be accepted and in the process of implementation. ARC understands that consultation with the Registrar's Office will be necessary to assess the viability of this recommendation.

Implementation Plan (1st Priority)	
Responsible for approving:	Unit
Responsible for resources:	Unit
Responsible for implementation:	Unit
Timeline:	Dean of Humanities to report by the end of academic year 2020/21

Recommendation #6

Ensure improved tracking of GHUM students through the program with annual audit by the Associate Dean, Faculty of Humanities, and Academic Advisors for the Faculty and the Student Success Centre to provide students with advice regarding (re)-enrolment in a major or in one or more minors as well as advice regarding academic support.

In response, the Associate Dean stated:

This is a very good suggestion, one that can be implemented from the Associate Dean's Office almost immediately (for example via an audit of all current GHUM students at the end of the Fall/Winter 2019/2020 term and via reaching out to those students who enter the university in Fall 2020 as GHUM students). This implementation of this tracking will, ideally, be done in consultation with the academic advisors in the Student Success Centre and in the Faculty of Humanities.

The Dean responded:

A very good suggestion; plans for implementation seem to be already in progress.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers the recommendation to be accepted and already in progress.

Implementation Plan (1st Priority)	
Responsible for approving:	Unit
Responsible for resources:	Unit
Responsible for implementation:	Unit
Timeline:	Dean of Humanities to report by the end of academic year 2020/21

Recommendation #7

The Dean's Office commit effort and resources to developing a sense of shared identity and community among all students in the BA Pass Degree in the Humanities.

In response, the Associate Dean stated:

This is another very good suggestion. While the issue of "resources" (that is, budget) is not my purview, there may be other ways of developing a sense of shared identity and community among GHUM students that are primarily a matter of care and effort (for example, communicating with this group – as a group – more often; making sure they are included in invitations to participate in activities, especially when those invitations are emanating from academic units; considering GHUM students for student awards; addressing the GHUM students at orientation events, etc.) A key hurdle to implementing such ideas is the lack of a home unit looking out for these students, and the three-year turnover for the Associate Dean, Undergraduate. Thus, the Office of the Dean in the Faculty of Humanities will have to develop a handbook of some sort for incoming ADs, so that this group of students does not get "lost" in between cyclical reviews.

The Dean responded:

A very good recommendation; the social aspect that department- or programme-based clubs and activities adds to a student's university time is important to retention and success. A sense of identity, and of belonging to something, can be very beneficial.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers the recommendation to be accepted and in the process of implementation. The Committee understands that the unique nature of the program and a diverse student cohort will make efforts to foster a shared sense of identity and community a challenge.

Implementation Plan (1st Priority)	
Responsible for approving:	Unit
Responsible for resources:	Unit
Responsible for implementation:	Unit
Timeline:	Dean of Humanities to report by the end of academic year 2020/21

D. Summary of Recommendations:

First Priority:
   Recommendations 1,2,4,5,6,7

Second Priority:
   Recommendation 3