

History

Graduate & Undergraduate Programs Review

Year 3 (2024) - FAR Implementation Report (reviewed 2020/21)

Recommendation #1

Strong recommendation that the department prune their course offerings to reflect what they can reasonably offer.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

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

Implementation Plan (1st Priority)

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|---------------------------------|--|
| Responsible for approving: | Department |
| Responsible for resources: | Department |
| Responsible for implementation: | Department |
| Timeline: | Dean of Humanities to report by the end of academic year 2021/22 |

| Actions | Responsibility | Year One | Year Two | Year Three |
|--|----------------|----------|----------|------------|
| Action #1 Course offerings have been reviewed and extraneous courses identified for removal. | Department | C | | |
| Action #2 Remove extraneous courses from calendar. | Department | T | C | |

Comments 2022:

List of Courses proposed for removal are:

Undergraduate Courses

- 1F90: Empires and Revolutions
- 1P98: Western European Society & Politics to 1800
- 1P99: Western European Ideas & Worldviews to 1800
- 2P62: Africa to 1800
- 2Q92: The United States, 1870-1930
- 3P21: Race, Class, & Gender

3P52: African American Experience
 3P81: History of Technology
 3P99: The Challenge to Social Order in 18thC England
 3Q93: Crusades
 4P35: Witchcraft Episodes in Britain & America, 1500-1700
 4P41: The Holocaust
 4P49: Science and Culture in the Nineteenth Century

Graduate Courses

5V33: Chinese Communist Revolution
 5V40: Women & Work

Comments 2023:

Course pruning has been completed, approved by the UPC, and reflected in the University course calendar.

Comments 2024:

Process ongoing. We continue to monitor the course calendar and add or delete courses when appropriate.

Recommendation #2

That the department investigate the possibility of providing more on-line offerings especially in the spring and summer semester.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers the recommendation to be accepted for consideration. The Committee recognizes that the Department regularly offers online courses in spring and summer and expects that it is best positioned to determine appropriate strategies to offer “more”.

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 2021/22

| Actions | Responsibility | Year One | Year Two | Year Three |
|--|----------------|----------|----------|------------|
| Action #1 Explore possibilities for expanding online offerings, including spring and summer semesters. | Department | 0 | | |

Comments 2022:

Up to 2020 we had a single online course. The shift to online teaching during the COVID pandemic provided the opportunity to experiment with online format. We can report that at least nine of our courses will be offered online next year.

Comments 2023:

Ten (10) courses were offered online this year and the Department has formalized processes for determining online course offering.

Comments 2024:

Eight (8) courses were offered online this year.

Recommendation #3

That the department consider ways of providing more flexibility for their MA students and reconsider the thesis by “Invitation” option.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers the recommendation to be accepted for consideration. The Committee recognizes that the program already offers a fair degree of flexibility through the offering of either an MRP or thesis, based on student research interest and direction. ARC encourages the Department to clarify how the “by invitation” thesis option works and find ways to communicate this to students.

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 2021/22

| Actions | Responsibility | Year One | Year Two | Year Three |
|--|----------------|----------|----------|------------|
| Action #1 Consider providing increased flexibility to MA students. | Department | D | T | O |

Comments 2022:

We will begin this consideration next year.

We do inform and encourage our students to explore the “thesis” stream to prepare them for future doctoral programmes. The pushback has always been that Brock offers not enough financial support to help offset the cost of research. Nonetheless, we demand every MA

student complete a Major Research Paper, which though not a thesis has many of its ingredients. Students had to go to the archives sometimes, outside of Canada, depending on the topic, and produce an original essay.

On providing more flexibility, we do not have enough MA students to offer more courses, or we might end up with only 2 or 3 students in a class. But we give students the option of Directed Reading Classes where a student works with a Professor on an agreed subject/topic for a semester and it counts as a full course. Some students have taken this route to meet their unique needs.

Comments 2023:

The MA program was the subject of an agenda item at the History Department retreat held on 28 April 2023. The GPD reported on the current state of the program and enrolments. Given the small size of the program, more flexibility in course offerings is problematic. Discussion included methods of attracting more external applicants.

Comments 2024:

The department has revised the MA programme from a Major Research Paper (MRP) focused study to a thesis-stream. The revision entails finetuning length of thesis, programme duration, course offerings, and thesis committees. The revised programme will take off in 2024/25 academic year.

Recommendation #4

That the department make more detailed course descriptions and course requirements available at course selection.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers the recommendation to be not accepted. The Committee recognizes that course descriptions are curtailed by UPC rules on space in the calendar. The Committee expects that the Department is best-positioned to investigate other methods of publicizing course descriptions and requirements.

Implementation Plan

Recommendation not accepted.

Recommendation #5

That department members use their research funds in a targeted way to attract graduate students.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers the recommendation to be not accepted. The Committee agrees that this is current practice while recognizing that research funds are the purview of individual members of the Department.

Implementation Plan

Recommendation not accepted.

Recommendation #6

That department and administration rethink the delivery of the co-op program.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers the recommendation to be accepted for consideration.

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 2022/23

| Actions | Responsibility | Year One | Year Two | Year Three |
|--|----------------|----------|----------|------------|
| Action #1 The Department will discuss and consider the delivery of the Co-op programme. | Department | T | T | O |

Comments 2022:

We are in discussions with Brock Co-op Career and Experiential (CCEE) office on how to make the programme more effective. COVID restrictions and lack of placement positions for students have been a big challenge in the last two years. We will revisit this in the 2022/23 academic year.

Comments 2023:

The Co-op program was the subject of an agenda item at the April 28 retreat representatives from the CCEE office made a brief presentation on the program, which was followed by discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of the program, and ways to attract more

students. We are studying Work-Integrated Learning programmes in other schools with a view to better situating our programme in a changing work environment.

Comments 2024:

History courses are now required to incorporate practicum Work-Integrated Learning elements.

Recommendation #7

That the department update some of their course titles to reflect current historical trends and language.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers the recommendation to be not accepted as it is already current practice.

Implementation Plan

Recommendation not accepted.

Recommendation #8

That the department undertake an anonymous student survey to learn more about student concerns.

ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

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

Implementation Plan (1st Priority)

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|---------------------------------|--|
| Responsible for approving: | Department |
| Responsible for resources: | Department |
| Responsible for implementation: | Department |
| Timeline: | Dean of Humanities to report by the end of academic year 2021/22 |

| Actions | Responsibility | Year One | Year Two | Year Three |
|--|----------------|----------|----------|------------|
| <p>Action #1 The Department is discussing and has begun planning for a student survey or town hall to learn more about student concerns.</p> | Department | T | C | |

Comments 2022:

The Department is committed to learning more about the concerns and needs of our students and as indicated in the review document we believe that an anonymous student survey or a town hall-style meeting would be an excellent method to do this. Upon reflection, and after consultation with the English Department, the Department believes that a town hall style discussion/meeting would be an ideal format for such a forum, and could provide an opportunity to gather History students in the wake of the pandemic induced disruptions and begin to rebuild a sense of community. Therefore, the Department is committed to holding an in-person town hall style meeting, but it also recognizes that this would be well-nigh impossible to facilitate before the end of the current academic year when students and faculty disperse for the summer. The Department commits to organizing such a meeting at the earliest possible convenience, possibly in the Fall of 2022 or Winter of 2023.

Comments 2023:

The Department organized a Student Town Hall on Nov 17, 2022, attended by 127 students.

The COVID-19 pandemic and associated public health restrictions significantly impacted “normal” teaching. The objectives of the Town Hall were to learn from students to enhance their experience and retention rates. This means mobilizing feedback to tailor our program design, course delivery, and engagement initiatives specifically to student needs and concerns. By involving our student constituencies in departmental planning, we ensure dynamic, student-facing experiences for everyone who takes a history course at Brock. This report organizes feedback into four areas: (i) Program and Offerings; (ii) Personnel and Support; (iii) Course Design; and (iv) Community.

Comments 2024:

We continue to use student feedback. We are also planning another History Town Hall Session for Fall 2024.

Recommendation #9

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| That the department organize a retreat. | |
| 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: | Department |
| Responsible for resources: | Department |
| Responsible for implementation: | Department |
| Timeline: | Dean of Humanities to report by the end of academic year 2021/22 |

| Actions | Responsibility | Year One | Year Two | Year Three |
|--|----------------|----------|----------|------------|
| Action #1 The Department is striking a committee to organize the retreat as part of our committee assignments for 2022-23. | Department | C | | |
| Action #2 The Department is actively planning an in-person retreat for Spring 2023. | Department | T | C | |

Comments 2022:

The Department is committed to holding an in-person retreat. However, despite the loosening of COVID restrictions at the time of writing, it is now too late in the academic year to organize an in-person retreat for the spring of 2022 (April or May being the desired time of year for a retreat before members of the Department disperse for the summer). The Department is committed to organizing an in-person retreat at the earliest convenience, ideally in the Spring of 2023. As a first step in this process, an ad-hoc retreat committee has been created to organize the retreat in the upcoming academic year (2022-23).

Comments 2023:

The Department retreat was held on April 28, 2023 to review:

- Course offerings; Program requirements, lists & pathways; first year courses and teaching; Communication of the “real world value” of historical studies/Humanities broadly; MA course offerings and thesis by invitation option; and the delivery of Co-op program.

An added motivation for organizing the retreat was the sense of isolation resulting from online teaching and working from home between 2020 and 2022. It provided an opportunity to get everyone together, share class innovations during a roundtable session and ultimately build collegiality. Participants included Faculty, TAs, Administrative Staff and colleagues from CPI and CCEE.

Some policies going forward are listed in responses to Recommendations 3, 6 and 8 above. Other implementations will appear in our 3rd-year report.

Comments 2024:

Under our revised MA programme we hope to cultivate research skills, but also foreground specialized fields of study. Rather than rely on broad coursework that introduces students to a range of fields, the new arrangement allows students to specialize their MA experience around their topic of study and research focus. This encourages deeper knowledge and mastery of a given field to better prepare for the writing of their thesis.

An individual, specialized system also allows for the tailoring of MA admissions around faculty research projects. This could include MA admittances organized around an advisor/PI's major grant and thus includes additional external funding for students. It could also resemble UK models, in which advisors widely advertise for MA and PhD candidates to collaboratively work on a collective research project, which produces co-written publications, exhibitions, and other modes of knowledge dissemination.

History MA supervisors will be expected to take on greater responsibility. This includes advisors actively recruiting prospective grad students through their scholarly networks; provision of external and/or additional funding (e.g. SSHRC; Brock Explore or BUAF; HRI; PER); offering of a directed reading course in connection with the thesis; support for student applications to external funding bodies (e.g. SSHRC and OGS); support throughout the writing of the thesis; and organization of the final oral defense, including externals.

The Graduate Program Director will also take on enhanced responsibilities in supporting students through the thesis experience. This includes course planning sessions in June with each of the incoming students, to help them identify and register for the most relevant courses in the department and across the university. It also means redesigning the full-year HIST5F01 (Historiography) into two courses -- HIST5P01 and HIST5P02 (History Seminars 1 and 2). Coverage includes but isn't limited to grant writing workshops that conclude with all History MA students applying for SSHRC and OGS in their first term of study; introduction to resources including the library and Brock Archives; career development including resume building exercises; applications to conferences; poster development and presentations; general researching and writing skills; works-in-progress workshops; participation in the History Department Speakers Series; TAing and mentoring undergraduate students. The GPD will help develop a standardized curriculum for future iterations of the History Seminar.

We have also instituted an Annual History Forum bringing together Teachers, TAs, Students and selected Alumni. The forum aims to showcase the alumni, celebrate their achievements, facilitate exchanges between past and current students and demonstrate potential career paths for current students. The first of this forum is planned for April 10, 2024.

Finally, we have resumed promotional exchanges between the Department and Elementary and Secondary Schools in the Niagara Region. We met with selected teachers and students at the St Catharines Collegiate in November 2023 and another where Brock History students share their research with senior high school students in Grimsby which takes place on April 5, 2024. This is an opportunity to entice Niagara High schoolers intending to study History in university - as well as for our MA candidates to gain experience communicating their research to receptive audiences.