

# Medieval and Renaissance Studies

## Undergraduate Program Review

### Four-Year Report (2018)

#### A. Summary of Review

This review was conducted under the terms and conditions of the IQAP approved by Senate on June 6, 2011.

1. The academic programs offered by the Centre for Medieval and Renaissance Studies which were examined as part of the review were:
  - 2007-2012 -BA Pass and Honours, Minor
  - 2012-Present -BA Pass and Honours Combined Major, Minor
2. The Review Committee consisted of two external reviewers: Paul Dutton (Simon Fraser University) and Kenneth Graham (University of Waterloo) and an internal reviewer: Paul Zelisko (Brock University).
3. The site visit occurred on March 5-7, 2014.
4. The Final Assessment Report was approved by Senate on December 3, 2014.
5. The reviewers assigned the following Outcome Category: Category 2, "Good Quality".
6. The next review of the graduate and undergraduate programs in the Centre for Medieval and Renaissance Studies will be in 2021/22.

## B. Recommendations

The reviewers provided 16 recommendations.

### Recommendation #1

that MARS design standard and cleaner course outlines.

#### ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

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

#### Implementation Plan (First Priority)

Responsible for approving: Centre  
 Responsible for resources: Centre  
 Responsible for implementation: Centre  
 Timeline: Dean of Humanities to report by end of academic year 2014/15

Actions Taken	Year Action Started	Year Action Completed
Action #1 MARS Committee addressed the recommendation, and implemented a template for all MARS syllabi.	2014-15	2014-15

#### Explanation of Actions Taken, Status and Results:

MARS continues to use a standardized course outline template for all core courses offered.

### Recommendation #2

that MARS develop and maintain a list of digital addresses (e-mail, twitter, etc.) by which to communicate with its students and faculty about up-coming events, future courses, and developments in the field.

#### ARC Disposition of the recommendation

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

#### Implementation Plan (First Priority)

Responsible for approving: Centre  
 Responsible for resources: Centre  
 Responsible for implementation: Centre  
 Timeline: Dean of Humanities to report by end of academic year 2014/15

Actions Taken	Year Action Started	Year Action Completed
Action #1 MARS Committee met to address the recommendation.	2014-15	2014-15
Action #2 With the help of the MARS Administrative Assistant we developed a list of students and faculty (full & part time) to use in promoting events.	2014-15	2015-16

### Explanation of Actions Taken, Status and Results:

The MARS Administrative Assistant continues to keep an up-to-date list of students and faculty to use in promoting events. As well, this year we have been working with the Humanities Social Media Coordinator, and the Director and Administrative Assistant revived the student association (BUMARS) to help promote events and new courses. If an event interests another Department (e.g., 500th Anniversary of Martin Luther's Theses; the Viking Exhibit), we also seek the help of the Admin. Assistant of the other Department (in this case History) to send out announcements to faculty and students.

### Recommendation #3

that once a year or once a semester MARS mount a social event with its faculty, majors, and minors, and interested visitors.

#### ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers the recommendation to be consistent with existing practice and no additional action is required.

#### Implementation Plan

No further action required.

### Recommendation #4

that MARS be granted its own, permanent meeting room for holding its meetings, student gatherings, common room service, and other activities.

#### ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers the recommendation to be not accepted as it lies outside of ARC's area of responsibility. The Committee expects that the Centre will proceed through normal channels of advocacy for space resources.

#### Implementation Plan

Recommendation not accepted.

**Recommendation #5**

that MARS find ways to raise its profile at Brock beyond the creation of a mailing list (see Recommendation 16 as one of the possible activities), both within the university and outside.

**ARC Disposition of the Recommendation**

ARC considers the recommendation to be accepted and believes that the Unit is best-positioned to determine appropriate strategies to move forward on this issue.

**Implementation Plan (Second Priority)**

Responsible for approving: Centre  
 Responsible for resources: Centre  
 Responsible for implementing: Centre  
 Timeline: Dean of Humanities to report by end of academic year 2015/16

Actions Taken	Year Action Started	Year Action Completed
Action #1 Discussed by the MARS Committee and agreed that MARS needed more visibility within and outside the university.	2014-15	2014-15
Action #2 To improve visibility, the Director of MARS organized three successful events for students, faculty and the general public: Lectures on Gothic Architecture in England and in Canada, a film night, and a presentation on Historic Fencing and Martial Arts in the Renaissance. The Director also revived the student association (BUMARS).	2014-15	2015-16
Action #3 The Director of MARS co-organized 2 major successful events: i) "Sweet '16: Centenaries from 1016-2016" (Conquest of England, Cervantes, Shakespeare etc.); ii) the 38th Canadian Conference of Medieval Art Historians on (March 17 & 18, 2017).	2014-15	2016-17

**Explanation of Actions Taken, Status and Results:**

MARS continues to improve its visibility both on and off campus. For example, the Conference of Medieval Art Historians was held in the Marilyn Walker complex not only to improve Community Outreach, but also to allow participants to experience our new venue in downtown St. Catharines. This year MARS organized lectures to mark the 500th Anniversary of Martin Luther's 95 Theses at the Lutheran Seminary, and are in the process of organizing a trip to the ROM for the Viking Exhibit.

**Recommendation #6**

that MARS appoint a library representative to maintain closer contact with its liaison librarian and the collections side of the library.

**ARC Disposition of the Recommendation**

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

**Implementation Plan (First Priority)**

Responsible for approving: Centre

Responsible for resources: Centre

Responsible for implementing: Centre

Timeline: Dean of Humanities to report by end of academic year 2014/15

Actions Taken	Year Action Started	Year Action Completed
Action #1 The MARS Committee elected a library representative, and the position is now included in the Centre's Rules of Procedures.	2014-15	2014-15

**Explanation of Actions Taken, Status and Results:**

The role of MARS Library Representative has been added to our Rules of Procedure (and therefore permanent), and the Rep will be elected at the beginning of every academic year.

**Recommendation #7**

that MARS continue to keep prerequisites for enrolment in its courses low or absent so that it might serve the wider community of interest in medieval and renaissance Studies at Brock.

**ARC Disposition of the Recommendation**

ARC considers the recommendation to be consistent with existing practice and no further action is required.

**Implementation Plan**

No further action required.

**Recommendation #8**

that some means be found to offer a second section of 1F90 each year.

**ARC Disposition of the Recommendation**

ARC considers the recommendation to find some means to increase enrolment in MARS 1F90 to be accepted and in the process of implementation. The Committee expects that the Centre is best positioned to determine strategies to move forward on this issue.

**Implementation Plan (First Priority)**

Responsible for approving: Centre  
 Responsible for resources: Centre  
 Responsible for implementation: Centre  
 Timeline: Dean of Humanities to report by end of academic year 2014/15

Actions Taken	Year Action Started	Year Action Completed
Action #1 MARS Committee discussed ways to increase enrolment in 1F90, and look into offering another section.	2014-15	2014-15
Action #2 Due to budgetary restrictions, it was not possible to add another section of 1F90. The Director consulted with the Instructor and all Teaching Assistants, and it was decided that a full online course was not in the best interest of the students; therefore, a blended course was instituted (with the online component limited to the seminar).	2014-15	2015-16
Action #3 The blended course (with a seminar online component) seemed to work rather well for TAs and students. If enrollment increases, a case will be made to add another section of 1F90.	2014-15	2016-17

**Explanation of Actions Taken, Status and Results:**

The blended course is working quite well and enrollment remains satisfactory at just over 100. We shall continue to monitor enrollment and - if warranted - we shall request the necessary funding for a second section of MARS 1F90.

**Recommendation #9**

that MARS consider creating a course on the Science of the Middle Ages and Renaissance.

**ARC Disposition of the Recommendation**

ARC considers the recommendation to be worthy of consideration. The Committee believes that the Centre is best positioned to determine strategies to move forward on this issue.

**Implementation Plan (Second Priority)**

Responsible for approving: Centre  
 Responsible for resources: Centre  
 Responsible for implementation: Centre  
 Timeline: Dean of Humanities to report by end of academic year 2015/16

Actions Taken	Year Action Started	Year Action Completed
Action #1 Action taken with the History Department to cross-list HIST 2P75 ("Western Science from Aristotle to Newton")	2014-15	2014-15
Action #2 The cross-listing of MARS/HIST 2P75 became permanent.	2015-16	2015-16

### Explanation of Actions Taken, Status and Results:

MARS is pleased with the cross-listing of HIST/MARS 2P97, "Western Science from Aristotle to Newton", which helps expand our offerings and choices for the students.

### Recommendation #10

that Brock work with the Ontario Universities Application Centre (OUAC) to improve the application and registration process for combined or double majors.

#### ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers the recommendation to be not accepted as it lies outside of the Committee's area of jurisdiction. The Committee believes that this recommendation brings up an issue that should be referred to the attention of the Provost.

#### Implementation Plan

Recommendation not accepted.

### Recommendation #11

that MARS and the History Department find a way to address the problem that MARS students have gaining access to History's courses.

#### ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

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

#### Implementation Plan (First Priority)

Responsible for approving:	Centre, Dept. of History, Dean of Humanities
Responsible for resources:	Centre, Dept. of History, Dean of Humanities
Responsible for implementation:	Centre, Dept. of History, Dean of Humanities
Timeline:	Dean of Humanities to report by end of academic year 2014/15

Actions Taken	Year Action Started	Year Action Completed
Action #1 An important recommendation, and MARS moved forward to try to implement it.	2014-15	2014-15
Action #2 The History Dept. agreed to stagger its registration. With HIST students still having priority, MARS students were able to register for those cross-listed courses before they opened to general registration.	2015-16	2015-16
Action #3 MARS continued to collaborate with the History Dept. to ensure that MARS students have access to cross-listed courses (housed in HIST) before general registration.	2016-17	2016-17

#### Explanation of Actions Taken, Status and Results:

MARS will continue to collaborate with the History Dept. and Scheduling to ensure that MARS students have priority (after HIST students) to HIST/MARS cross-listed courses. However, since Directors and Admin. Assistants often change, this matter will have to be handled on a year-to-year basis. N.B.: MARS has proposed 3 additional cross-listings with HIST in order to enhance our offerings and provide students with more options.

#### Recommendation #12

that MARS and Brock try to mount a study-abroad course or courses every second year since this is a popular and innovative feature of the program.

#### ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers the recommendation to be accepted as worthy of consideration but recognizes that implementation will depend upon the availability of fiscal resources.

#### Implementation Plan (Second Priority)

Responsible for approving: Centre  
Responsible for resources: Centre  
Responsible for implementation: Centre  
Timeline: Dean of Humanities to report by end of academic year 2014/15

Actions Taken	Year Action Started	Year Action Completed
Action #1 The MARS Committee agreed that Study Abroad courses are valuable experiences for students would give our Program greater visibility.	2014-15	2014-15
Action #2 The MARS Committee discussed a plan for study abroad courses. It was agreed that every two years, MARS would try to offer (or be involved in) a cross-listed study abroad course. The Director proposed the cross-listed course: HIST/ITAL/MARS/VISA 3F50 ("Reading the Italian Medieval and Renaissance City") for Spring-Summer of 2016.	2015-16	2015-16
Action #3 In Spring 2016, HIST/ITAL/MARS/VISA 3F50 ("Reading the Italian Medieval and Renaissance City") was organized and taught by the Director of MARS. The course included 3 weeks of classes on campus, followed by a 15-day Study Tour of 4 Italian cities. An unprecedented number of students registered: 29, and the course was a great success (a "life-changing" experience for many students).	2016-17	2016-17

### Explanation of Actions Taken, Status and Results:

While the Course in Italy was hugely successful, it was also extremely demanding to organize. Brock offers very little support for Study Abroad courses. The students need some financial support (however minimal), while the instructor needs assistance in promotion, organization, and especially in finance-related matters. Brock's International Services would be in the best position to provide support (more than just general travel orientation). As well, the university must acknowledge that organizing study a abroad courses requires much more preparation than a regular course offered on campus. Organizing travel (flights and ground transportation abroad), accommodations, meals, itineraries, galleries, museums etc. (in 4 cities) require weeks of preparation (equivalent to at least a half-course), and the additional work must be recognized.

### Recommendation #13

that Brock consider increasing the Administrative Assistant's hours from 8 to 12 per week in order to better accommodate student needs.

### ARC Disposition of the Recommendation

ARC considers the recommendation to be not accepted as it lies outside of the Committee's jurisdiction. It is expected that the Centre will proceed through normal channels of advocacy for these administrative resources.

### Implementation Plan

Recommendation not accepted.

**Recommendation #14**

that the Dean maintain the MARS faculty complement of 1.0 by hiring tenure-track replacement upon [the Director's] retirement.

**ARC Disposition of the Recommendation**

ARC considers the recommendation to be not accepted as it lies outside of the Committee's jurisdiction. It is expected that the Centre will proceed through normal channels of advocacy for these teaching resources.

**Implementation Plan**

Recommendation not accepted.

**Recommendation #15**

that MARS remain a Centre. In the event that [the Director] is not replaced, which we would regret, we recommend that interdisciplinary MARS not be incorporated for administrative or other reasons into an established discipline and department (which would constitute a contradiction of their natures), but retain its autonomy as a Centre, perhaps under the aegis of the Dean of Humanities' office, and that the resources be supplied, even if stipendiary, to replace the lost teaching resources and to support the director of MARS in maintaining the program.

**ARC Disposition of the Recommendation**

ARC considers the recommendation to be not accepted as it lies outside of the Committee's jurisdiction.

**Implementation Plan**

Recommendation not accepted.

**Recommendation #16**

that MARS develop and sponsor a community outreach program similar to the one successfully pioneered within the retirement community of greater Victoria by the University of Victoria, which has over twenty years sponsored a popular annual medieval conference each year.

**ARC Disposition of the Recommendation**

ARC considers the recommendation to develop community outreach to be worthy of consideration. The Committee believes that the Centre, in consultation with the Dean, is best-positioned to determine strategies to move forward on this issue.

**Implementation Plan (Third Priority)**

Responsible for approving: Centre

Responsible for resources: Centre

Responsible for implementation: Centre

Timeline: Dean of Humanities to report by end of academic year 2016/17

Actions Taken	Year Action Started	Year Action Completed
<b>Action #1</b> This recommendation would be part of an ongoing discussion at regular MARS meetings. Since this has budgetary considerations, an incremental strategy would need to be developed.	2014-15	2014-15
<b>Action #2</b> The MARS Committee agreed that Community Outreach is needed to help improve promotion of events and activities. As stated in REC. 5, MARS organized 3 very successful events in 2015-16. We intend to do more Community Outreach (an event in the Downtown Campus) and collaborate with other departments.	2015-16	2015-16
<b>Action #3</b> As indicated in Recommendation 5, MARS organized a symposium and an international conference; the latter intentionally held in the Marilyn Walker Downtown Campus to target Community Outreach.	2016-17	2016-17

#### Explanation of Actions Taken, Status and Results:

The MARS Program has been active in organizing lectures, symposia, conferences and events (see Recommendation 5) both on and off campus (currently organizing a trip to the ROM for the Viking exhibit). While our Community Outreach includes - where possible - the retirement community, it is not the sole target. Perhaps the Faculty of Humanities as a whole can devise strategies for specifically targeting the retirement community.

### C. Unit Summative Analysis and Evaluation

1. To what extent has the Unit achieved the improvements suggested by the reviewers?

*Our Unit has definitely achieved the improvements included in the recommendations suggested by the reviewers (some of which we had already undertaken).*

2. What overall impact has it had on the Unit's programs?

*Program Review offers the opportunity to examine the quality and delivery of a unit's program, from both internal and external perspectives. The Reviewers' recommendations provided objective insights on ways to improve our program, but also reinforced existing practices. Overall, MARS was happy to address and implement the recommendations, since they were quite consistent with our vision and desire to move forward (especially following the elimination of our single major option). As a relatively new program (10 years old), we have always looked at ways to improve and enhance our course offerings, curriculum, activities and direction, and this (our first) review has encouraged us to create a better and more active Centre and Program.*

3. Is the Unit adopting a process of continuous quality improvement for its programs?

*As stated above, MARS has always carried out a process of quality improvement. It must be noted that we do not have a full time appointment in MARS, and survive with only 3.5 full course stipends and the goodwill of superb, dedicated faculty from other Departments to offer overload or cross-listed courses. A bare-bones budget indeed. However, despite these limitations, we have always looked at ways to improve the quality and breadth of our program, as outlined in the Actions taken above. Our next challenge will be integrating digital technologies to enhance traditional areas of study, but this will require additional resources.*

4. How well do the programs now align with Brock University strategic priorities?

*Notwithstanding its limited resources, MARS aligns well with Brock's strategic priorities (which will soon be in the review process as well). Its expert and competent faculty, dedicated to excellence in teaching and research, delivers an outstanding program that contributes to a very positive and enriching student experience. MARS student experience is further enhanced by opportunities to engage in our many community events and activities (conferences, symposia, lectures, trips, film nights etc.) and especially our study abroad opportunities (Internationalization). Drawing on dedicated participating faculty from most Departments in the Faculty of Humanities (CLAS, ENGL, HIST, MLLC, MUSI etc.), and offering courses in History, Literature, Culture, Philosophy, Religion, Art, Architecture, Music and Women's Studies, the MARS program is inherently Interdisciplinary and Transcultural, and could very well be a model for small programs.*

5. How does this review and its results position the programs as the Unit moves into the next review cycle?

*The Centre for Medieval & Renaissance Studies is an excellent Program, one of the few truly Interdisciplinary and Transcultural programs in the university. We have an expert and dedicated teaching faculty, and student satisfaction is consistently high. We have always endeavored to improve our course offerings and overall program every year; therefore, we look forward to the next review with great interest and confidence.*

#### **D. ARC Final Summary**

In final summary of the 2013/14 cyclical academic review of the programs offered by the Centre for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, ARC has determined the following:

1. The Reviewers' Recommendations have been addressed satisfactorily.
2. The Unit has established a direction for next steps as it prepares for the next review cycle.
3. The Unit has achieved a broad-based, reflective and forward-looking self-assessment.