**REPORT OF THE ACADEMIC PLANNING COMMITTEE**

**TO THE REGULAR June 2019 SENATE**

**QUALITY ASSURANCE - CYCLICAL PROGRAM REVIEW OF LAURENTIAN UNIVERSITY’S**

**B.A. in ENGLISH**

**FINAL ASSESSMENT REPORT & IMPLEMENTATION PLAN, APRIL 2019**

In accordance with the Laurentian University’s Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP)**,** the Final Assessment Report has been prepared to provide a synthesis of the external evaluation and Laurentian’s response and action plan. This report identifies the significant strengths of the program, opportunities for program improvement and enhancement, and sets out and prioritizes the recommendations that have been selected for implementation.

The report includes an Implementation Plan that identifies who will be responsible for approving the recommendations set out in the Final Assessment Report; who will be responsible for providing any resources made necessary by those recommendations; any changes in organization, policy or governance that will be necessary to meet the recommendations; who will be responsible for acting on those recommendations; and timelines for acting on and monitoring the implementation of those recommendations.

**SUMMARY OF THE CYCLICAL PROGRAM REVIEW OF THE B.A. in ENGLISH**

The English Department’s 4yr BA program is structured according to three main degree options (Specialization, Major, and Minor) in two distinct but overlapping streams of Literature (ELIT) and Rhetoric and Media Studies (ERMS). It also offers a 3yr BA degree in ELIT that allows students to achieve a more basic degree in English studies. It instituted the three-degree options of Specialization, Major, and Minor degrees in 2012 to match Laurentian’s new typology of degrees and ensure that its program structure allowed students to pursue the full range of “mix and match” degree options at Laurentian.

On March 2, 2018, the program submitted its self-study to the Office of Vice-President Academic and Provost of Laurentian University, and it was organized in three parts.

Part 1 of the self-study followed the IQAP requirements so that after an Introduction giving an overview of the program, it described the program using the following headings: The Faculty; Physical Resources including Library Resources; Students; Program Regulations and Courses; Planning and Conclusion.

The self-study also contained 15 Appendices

Appendix 1: Degree Level Expectations

Appendix 2: Syllabus Template

Appendix 3: JN Desmarais Library Report

Appendix 4: Film Production Equipment

Appendix 5: Current Space Usage

Appendix 6: English Graduates 2013-2017 Educational and Employment Status (detailed

information)

Appendix 7: BA Degree Regulations and Requirements

Appendix 8: Course Outlines

i. 2014-15

ii. 2015-16

iii. 2016-17

Appendix 9: English Degree Options – Program Requirements

i. English Degree Options – Program Diagrams

ii. English Degree Options – Advising Forms

Appendix 10: Course Lists and Descriptions

i. All ENGL courses

ii. All Group courses

iii. All ERMS courses

iv. Other Courses (ENGL electives & approved electives from other

Departments)

v. Course descriptions

Appendix 11: All Courses Offered with Enrolments 2014-2018

Appendix 12: English Department Special Event Posters

Appendix 13: English Department Awards and Bursaries

Appendix 14: Student Course Evaluations

Appendix 15: Student Survey

i. Main Strengths and Suggestions for Improvement (Summary and

Discussion)

ii. Current Majors – All Responses

iii. Current Elective / Minor Students – All Responses

iv. Former Students – All Responses

And, as per IQAP guidelines, Part 2 of the self-study contained the curriculum vitae of the full-time faculty in the program and Part 3 contained a list of Proposed Consultants.

On November 21-22, 2018, after reviewing the self-study, the Review Team conducted a site visit. The external was Dr. Sally Chivers, a Full Professor in the Departments of English and Gender & Women's Studies at Trent University. Dr. Chivers has been the chair of the Department of Canadian Studies and acting director of the English Public Texts graduate program. Current chair of the Modern Language Association’s Age Studies Forum Executive Committee, Dr. Chivers’ teaching focuses on illness and literature, feminism and disability, aging, care and culture, as well as gender and popular culture. Shortly before her visit she was appointed to a three-year term as the Executive Director of Trent’s Centre for Aging and Society.

In addition to Dr. Chivers, the team consisted of two Laurentian professors, Dr. Janice Liedl (History) from within the Faculty of Arts and Dr. Nicole Yantzi (School of the Environment) from the Faculty of Science, Engineering and Architecture. Finally, there were two students in the program, Emma Larose and Scott Istvandi.

The site visit included the English Department office and meeting rooms on the seventh floor of the Parker Building, some classrooms (en route to library), and the library board room. Time did not permit the scheduled tour of all facilities, but reviewers were satisfied that they were able to assess them as adequate.

Stakeholders consulted included senior members of the university administration: i. V.P. Academic and Provost: Dr. Serge Demers, ii. A.V.P. Teaching and Learning: Dr. Shelley Watson, iii. Interim Dean of Faculty of Arts: Dr. Joël Dickinson, and iv. Vice Dean Arts: Dr. Sara Burke. The team also consulted: v. Members of the English Department: Dr. Susan Glover (Chair), Dr. Hoi Cheu, Dr. Ernst Gerhardt, Dr. Sylvia Hunt, Master Lecturer, Mr. Gregory Scofield, and Dr. Philippa Spoel, vi. Alumni: Zahra Golafshani, BA, American Film Institute, Los Angeles, Dane Sauvé, Graduate Studies, Dept of English, University of Toronto and Elizabeth Urso, BA, LLB, College of Medical Radiation Technologists of Ontario. In addition, the reviewers met with 7 undergraduate students as well as Desmond Maley, the librarian responsible for liaison with the English Department.

In their report dated January 31, 2019, the reviewers noted that

*The English Department is commendable in every regard. This is without doubt a very creative and progressive Department under beyond exigent circumstances. There are no concerns about its quality, dedication, creativity, and stature. Quite the opposite. They have continued to develop and innovate under considerable strain.*

More specifically the reviewers observed:

* The English Department has worked tirelessly, creatively and cooperatively with the changing mission and priorities of Laurentian University. Particularly prominent and commendable is the work the Department has done to support Laurentian’s move to a tricultural mandate. This Department is the foundation for Laurentian to be able to continue to claim “an outstanding university experience in English.”
* English Department faculty members embody Laurentian’s stated values in that they:
* consistently host an impressive array of cultural events involving notable Canadian and indigenous writers as well as theatrical productions
* are notably committed to student success
* continually adapt and develop innovative ways to teach and enhance learning
* undertake curiosity-driven research
* uphold excellent relationships within their Department as well as with the broader university.
* The program requirements and learning outcomes are clear, appropriate and in alignment with the institution’s statement of Undergraduate Degree Level Expectations.
* Admission requirements appropriately aligned with the learning outcomes established for completion of the program.
* The curriculum is as diverse and exciting as it is possible to be under the circumstances faced by this Department. *The Department is widely known for its distinctive ability to offer two streams: English Literature and Rhetoric & Media Studies*. The recent arrival of two new tenure track faculty members promises to take the curriculum in important new directions. Those directions can further distinguish Laurentian as a leader in Indigenous literatures and creative writing, both of which are not only essential to contemporary learning but also highly effective recruitment incentives.
* The English program at Laurentian is highly innovative. For example, it is distinct in the way that it offers two streams while interweaving them effectively, so that each student can understand what students in the other specialization or major are learning about and why. The mixture of rhetoric with literature overall is highly innovative in the best sense of the term, i.e. inventive and path-building.
* A notably high number of enticing events that are deeply connected to the curriculum are a distinct Laurentian advantage. These events bring the community into the program (and the university) and vice versa.
* The interview with the students emphasized for the review team how effective the teaching structure is. Students noted scheduling, assignments, reading content and load with an enviable critical reflection that they have clearly effectively learned as part of their degree. The standards are very high and the results are notable.
* The means of assessment (particularly in the students’ final year of the program) are appropriate and effective to demonstrate achievement of the program learning objectives and the institutions (or program’s) own degree level expectations.
* Faculty are thrilled with access to new teaching spaces with technologies that allow for better pedagogical methods, including such simple elements as being able to move around while teaching as well as have students move desks into variable formations.
* The Provost commended the Department for operating well as a unit and for having excellent mechanisms for helping those students who get off track. The Department has developed tools such as program advising forms that are easy for students to understand
* A key indicator of success is that though student attrition would be expected (partly due to the closing of the Barrie campus), *this Department has increased enrolment*.
* The evaluations across all courses, which are taught by diverse faculty, are quite high.
* The English program has done a remarkable job supporting its students to graduation and beyond, cultivating skills and abilities that graduates identify as key to their ongoing success.
* The Department plays a large role in advising their own students, relieving the university of considerable work and greatly enhancing the program.
* Curricular review has been notably creative and effective in stemming harm from depletion of human resources.

Amidst these encomiums, there were some concerns expressed about the program in the body of the report.

* Human resources in particular are scant. There is a deep uncertainty about how and whether this depletion will be addressed, which is understandably affecting morale. While reviewers recognize the difficult budgetary situation faced throughout the university system and that it would be preferable to have confirmation of departures before offering replacements, we also stress that English Department faculty cannot be expected to reinvent the degree yet again to support institutional needs until they have assurances about what their complement will be. Notably, faculty expressed that even hearing bad news concretely would be preferable to the current feeling of uncertainty.
* It must be recognized that when faculty members stretch to teach outside their fields, not only does that add to their workload but it also risks leaving uncovered the fields for which they are qualified [Recent] curricular revisions mean that faculty have consistently prepared new courses and taught beyond their fields. **The teaching load of 2.5 is high, and the suggested change to 2.0 (12 credits) is strongly recommended.**
* While students and alumni appreciate the fourth-year theory course, they feel it comes a little bit late for some of their needs. They clearly expressed that an earlier introduction to theory would be beneficial emphasizing that they feel it is extremely important for studying literature and authorship.
* The most common student criticism (though it was still not pervasive) is that they desire a greater variety of courses.
* Students questioned the continued existence of full year courses but also recognized they are essential for some areas of study.
* **Computers listed in the report are ancient by most standards.**
* **Library resources are sufficient to support teaching but not research.**
* The ELIT stream has larger enrolment in terms of the program and courses than the ERMS stream. **The Department should consider ways to increase the enrolment in the ERMS stream.**
* **The course evaluations for the first-year courses (1705, 1706, 1707) are missing from the self study.**
* **Information concerning the employment of alumni is incomplete**.

On March 1, 2019, the Department submitted its comments on the Report. The Department’s comments were followed by a set of comments from the Dean of Arts who nicely summarized the Reviewers’ recommendations, the Department’s reaction to those recommendations, and added her own reactions. Her report is synopsized below.

**SUMMARY OF THE REVIEW TEAM’S RECOMMENDATIONS (R) THE DEPARTMENT’S (D) RESPONSES AS WELL AS THOSE OF THE DEAN OF ARTS (DA)**

**1. Staffing**

**R1**. **Recognize, value, and support with resources—preferably tenure-track positions—the remarkable service (including but not only service teaching) Department members do for other units at Laurentian.**

**a. Faculty are needed in order to offer supervision for honours thesis. This option will not be viable for much longer**.

**b. Graduate programs (outside the scope of this review) are in a precarious position if faculty remain so stretched. Although these programs are interdisciplinary in nature it seems to the review team that the English Department faculty are responsible for the viability of the programs.**

c. **Departments that add ENGL courses as requirements or even recommendations for their programs ought to offer resources to ENGL**

D1. The Department supports this recommendation.

DA1. The English Department has had an average of about 850 course registrants over the past two years. They teach courses integral to not only the Faculty of Arts, but other faculties as well. The sharing of expertise across programs has become integral to the survival of many of our programs and it is greatly appreciated that the English Department members are team players. Currently we are getting resources when the Department contributes to programs outside of our Faculty.

**R2.** **Offer certainty about the future staffing plans for this Department so that they can continue their creative, resourceful, impressive contribution to their students, to Laurentian, and to the profession.**

**a. Ideally this will involve replacing departed colleagues and having plans in place to replace those who are going to be leaving soon. But even if not, this Department deserves to know [if] no replacements are nigh. They need to know who will be on the ground so that they can make meaningful humane decisions about what their curriculum will be for the next 5 years. The dean indicated awareness that the Department will likely be down 3 full time faculty next year. The demand for certainty before committing even temporary resources threatens the quality of the program.**

**b. The ability to continue to meet the stated learning outcomes are threatened by the impending staffing situation. A broad knowledge of the scope of English literature substantive or complex knowledge of how literature relates to a broader world requires understanding of their applicability is also threatened under the current conditions.**

**D2**. The Department supports this recommendation.

**DA2.** I am fully supportive of replacing departing faculty.

**R3. Provide separate, additional administrative support for the HUMA MA so the ENGL admin can continue outstanding support for this important undergraduate program**

**D3.** The Department supports this recommendation.

**DA3.**  I do not support this recommendation.

**R4. Redesignate existing Master Lecturer position to tenured position.**

**a. While the self-study suggests a tenure-stream position, the review team feels a tenured position is merited, subject of course to the usual Laurentian process of tenure review.**

**D3**. The Department supports this recommendation.

**DA3.** The Department can request this during next year’s budget process.

**2. Curriculum**

**R4. Once staffing commitments are known, the Department needs to decide whether offering two streams of the degree remains viable. With the impending loss of faculty members, hard decisions will have to be made that will affect the outcomes of the degree.**

**a. One issue to consider is the rationalization of the “groups” in the ENGL stream**

b. **The Department is currently well known for excellence within these two streams, but there are other ways to harness their strengths into an equally renowned, unique English degree. The exact form of that degree depends on the resources mentioned in earlier recommendations**.

**D4.** The Department has reviewed possible restructuring of degree requirements, pending long-term faculty resourcing.

**DA4.** Given the budgetary restrictions I would support the Department to do curriculum planning based on the existing faculty compliment.

**R5. Explore the implementation of a second-year theory course.**

**a. Students referred to the need for theory to be part of their degree earlier than the current fourth year course. While there are theoretical elements of other courses, an introductory course at the second-year level that focuses on theory (not criticism) would be beneficial.**

**D5.** The Department currently offers ENGL2626 Critical Approaches as a second year offering; this could be revised to “Theoretical and Critical Approaches” or a new course “Theoretical Approaches” at the second year level could be created.

**DA5**. I support the Department’s informed opinion on this recommendation.

**R6:** **Re-examine first-year offerings.**

**a. There is a trade-off between the flexibility gained through recent changes and potentially inconsistent pathways through the program. Some students appreciate being able to take 2005 in their first year but others found that to be difficult and wished they had not been permitted to do so**.

**D6.** This recommendation is based on a misunderstanding of our programs. Students do not take ENGL2005 in their first year: it is a second-year course.

**DA6.** N/A

**R7.** **Initiate a first year Creative Writing course when resources are available to support that new offering.**

**D7.** The Department supports this recommendation. It has developed a new course, ENGL17XX Introduction to Creative Writing, which has been approved by the Faculty of Arts Council Feb 2019, will proceed to CELP for approval.

**DA7**. N/A.

**R8. Consider what non-ENGL courses could be added as credits toward an English degree in order to open up curricular opportunities, relieve some burden on current course offerings, and create opportunities to continue developing in new areas.**

**D8**. The Department supports this recommendation. It has identified 28 courses offered by 10 programs in the Faculty of Arts (ANCS, ANTR, COST, ENVI, INDG, ITAL, PHIL, RLST, SOCI, THEA) and is in the process of adding these to the list of our elective courses offered by other programs.

**DA8.** N/A

**R9. Ensure scheduling conflicts are eliminated and support integration with other Departments who rely so heavily on the work of this Department.**

**a. Students referenced avoidable scheduling conflicts that prevented them from taking desired and necessary courses. These need to be eliminated without requiring extra work from the English Department to make that possible.**

D9. The Department supports this recommendation. It requires Senior Administration / Other Departments and Programs to implement changes; the Department has been working with at least one other program to resolve this.

**DA9.**  Extra efforts were taken this year during the timetabling procedures in order to avoid conflicts across programs which are often paired.

**R10. Allow sessional faculty to teach first year when and where appropriate.**

**a. This would allow tenured faculty to offer upper year courses in their area of expertise**.

**D10**. The Department supports this recommendation. The Department has been doing this for some time; recent cuts to sessional budgets necessitated tenured faculty teaching first-year courses.

**DA10:** While it is good to have faculty teach in their specific areas of expertise, we could also consider the importance of having dynamic and experienced instructors in first year in order to attract students to this field of study.

**ACAPLAN’S RESPONSE**

ACAPLAN noted that several recommendations made within the report were not made in the official list of 10; conversely several of the 10 official recommendations were not explicitly linked to earlier parts of the report. ACAPLAN will first flag those recommendations that will not be followed up, to be followed by recommendations that need following up—in both instances, regardless of their placement in the report.

**Recommendations Not Followed Up:**

###### 1. The teaching load of 2.5 is high, and the suggested change to 2.0 (12 credits) is strongly recommended.

Reason: This is a matter for Collective Bargaining.

**2. Redesignate the existing Master Lecturer position to tenured position.**

Reason: The Department can make this request through the budget process.

**3. Update staff computers.**

Reason: A good idea, but policy change has university-wide implications and does not belong in this report.

**4. Pay more attention to disability issues or accessibility needs.**

Reason: A good idea, although vague. As above, this is a policy change that has university-wide implications and does not belong in this report

5. **Provide separate, additional administrative support for the HUMA MA so the ENGL admin can continue outstanding support for this important undergraduate program.**

Reason: This recommendation is out of scope for this review and was addressed in the recent review of the Humanities MA. The idea does not reflect current budget realities.

**6**. **Re-examine first-year offerings**

Reason**:** This recommendation was based on a misunderstanding of English programs. Students do not take ENGL2005 in their first year: it is a second-year course.

**7. Initiate a first year Creative Writing course when resources are available to support that new offering.**

Reason: The Department has already acted on this recommendation.

**8. Consider what non-ENGL courses could be added as credits toward an English degree in order to open up curricular opportunities, relieve some burden on current course offerings, and create opportunities to continue developing in new areas.**

Reason: The Department has identified 28 courses offered by 10 programs in the Faculty of Arts (ANCS, ANTR, COST, ENVI, INDG, ITAL, PHIL, RLST, SOCI, THEA) and is in the process of adding these to the list of its elective courses offered by other programs.

**9.** **Allow sessional faculty to teach first year when and where appropriate.**

Reason: This is the practice now, although with cutbacks to the sessional budget some faculty are required to teach first year courses. This is not necessarily a bad thing since dynamic and experienced instructors are shown to attract students into the upper years of the program. For that reason, some programs, such as History, want their best teachers offering first year courses.

ACAPLAN notes with concern that hovering over much of the Review Report—and taking first place in the list of recommendations—is the question of staffing. In its response to the Review Report, the Department itself observed:

While praising the work of the current faculty complement, the report notes the need for “four replacement full-time faculty simply to maintain their two-stream degree” as one faculty member is currently on leave and two faculty members have resigned since the review was done. The fourth faculty member is expected to retire soon. This will especially gut the Department’s [literature] stream and leaves the university in an anomalous position regarding Canadian literature” (*that is, it will have no specialist in Canadian literature*).

According to the previous External Review report, the faculty complement in 2011 was 11.5 full time positions (plus 2 tenured professors in Barrie, one of whom transferred from Sudbury and was not replaced), a number that has dropped to 9 currently, and that *absent any new hires, the full-time faculty complement projected for 2019-20 is 5, with an additional retirement anticipated—more than halving the faculty complement over 7 years*.

We have been extremely well served by the sessional instructors available to us, but Sudbury lies outside the commuting reach of the GTA and resources are limited.

Furthermore, the Review notes “faculty deserve praise for having the foresight to recognize and value Indigenous knowledge and experience that accrues outside traditional academic pathways. This pairs well with the Indigenous speaker series hosted by the Department in that both expand students’ learning about Indigenous ways of knowing. New courses respect and explore multiple cultural practices that put this Department at the forefront nationally and internationally in this area . . .. *Since non-Indigenous faculty are not in a position to teach newly developed Indigenous courses, it’s imperative to replace the departed faculty members*—and to bridge any apparently short-term absences with full-time limited duration appointments. It is commendable and important to spread the responsibility for Indigenous knowledge among Departments but that requires sustained support beyond what is currently in place.” The Review concludes with a caveat that despite concern voiced about the program’s future, “commendably this has not yet been passed on to the students. Acting soon on our recommendations can prevent that from ever happening.” The Department calls on the institution we serve to support appropriately our commitment to our students, our colleagues, and our profession.

**ACAPLAN supports the maintenance of this high-quality program such as English whose *enrollments are increasing* and it questions the wisdom of pouring money into recruitment and retention if by so doing, the attractiveness of a successful program is diminished by not maintaining the staffing complement.**

**LAURENTIAN QUALITY ASSURANCE IMPLEMENTATION PLAN FOR THE ENGLISH B.A.**

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| **Recommendation** | **Proposed Follow-up** | **Responsibility for Leading Follow-up** | **Timeline** |
| **1. Replace departing faculty members** | i. Make case emphasizing impact on both English **and University programming** if this is not followed through  ii. Ensure at least one replacement is a specialist in Canadian literature and media studies, one in Indigenous cultural expression and possibly one in Digital Humanities | Dean and Academic VP, working with the Chair | Ongoing |
| 2. **Offer certainty about the future staffing plans for this Department so that they can continue their creative, resourceful, impressive contribution to their students, to Laurentian, and to the profession** | Confirm staffing situation with VP Academic | Dean and Academic VP, working with the Chair | September 2019 |
| **3. Review curriculum based on existing (9) faculty complement** | Confirm continuance of two streams as well as Indigenous course offerings taught by Indigenous faculty | Chair with Department | Start September 2019 |
| 4. **Explore the implementation of a second-year theory course.** | Revise ENGL2626 Critical Approaches as a second year offering to “Theoretical and Critical Approaches” or create a new course “Theoretical Approaches” | Chair with Department | Start September 2019 |
| 5. **Ensure scheduling conflicts are eliminated and support integration with other Departments who rely so heavily on the work of this Department** | i. Identify programs where these exist  ii. Reschedule to eliminate conflicts | Chair of English working with Dean of Arts and Registrar | June 2019 |
| **6. Consider ways of increasing enrollment in the ERMS stream** | Promote relationship between stream and future career opportunities in education, public relations, film etc. | Chair with Liaison and Marketing Departments | June 2019 and ongoing |
| **7. Explore opportunities for work-integrated learning** | Put students in touch with publishing houses, work on small-scale publishing ventures, involve them in a highly respected literary festival, or have them working in theatre, launching digital media hubs, and participating in Cinefest—that will develop further as that Laurentian builds its understanding of the need for experiential learning. These could be formalized into an internship course opportunity should sufficient staffing allow. | Chair with Department | September 2019 and ongoing |
| **8. Review course evaluations for the first-year courses (1705, 1706, 1707)** | Assess evaluations to ensure that courses are successful enough to motivate students to continue to study English after first year | Dean of Arts mandated to share any concerns with Chair | June 2019 and ongoing |
| **9. Improve tracking of alumni** | Use creative methods such as social media to maintain contact | Chair with Alumni Relations Department and IT | June 2019 and ongoing |
| **10. Maintain if not increase library’s budget allocation** | Resist attempts to further reduce book budget as well as cutting required online resources such as the *Oxford English Dictionary* | Vice-President Academic working with Budget Committee | April 2019 and ongoing |

The Dean of Arts shall be responsible for monitoring the implementation plan. The details of progress made shall be presented in the Dean’s Annual Report and filed with the Vice-President Academic and Provost. The executive summary and the monitoring reports will be posted on Laurentian University’s web site.

**CONCLUSION**

The BA in English program in is approved to continue and it will be reviewed in the fall of 2026.