

**REPORT OF THE ACADEMIC PLANNING COMMITTEE  
TO THE REGULAR November 2016 SENATE**

**FOR INFORMATION**

**QUALITY ASSURANCE - CYCLICAL PROGRAM REVIEW OF LAURENTIAN UNIVERSITY'S  
MA in HISTORY  
FINAL ASSESSMENT REPORT & IMPLEMENTATION PLAN  
November 2016**

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 MA PROGRAM IN HISTORY**

Founded in the spring of 1972, Laurentian's MA in History is the oldest MA program still in existence at the university. It was also the university's first graduate program to be offered in both French and English and students normally take all their coursework in their preferred language.

There are two degree options, each comprising twenty-four credits. The first is the MA research essay option where students prepare a 50-60-page essay and take eighteen credits of in-class courses. The second is the MA thesis option where students write a 100-120-page thesis and take twelve credits of courses. Qualified faculty from Laurentian's affiliated campus at Hearst and the university's satellite campus in Barrie are eligible to participate in the master's program, usually as members of supervisory committees, but only those from the Barrie campus have been active in this regard.

On 20 March 2015, the program submitted its self-study to the Office of Vice-President Academic and Provost of Laurentian University.

Volume I of the self-study presented an overview of the program and then reviewed the program's self-perception of the faculty, physical and financial resources, students, and program outcomes. It concluded with an overall assessment of the program's strengths and weaknesses. Volume II included the Curricula Vitae of the faculty associated with the program, with those on campus appearing first followed by those still associated with the program available either as emeriti or as former faculty members working full-time at another university. Volume III proposed several individuals whom the university could consider hiring as external reviewers.

On 27 and 28 January 2016, after reviewing the self-study, the Review Team conducted a site visit. The two externals were Dr. Jane Errington, a professor emerita from the Royal Military College who currently teaches at Queen's University and Dr. Ian Germani, a professor of history at the University of Regina. In addition, the team consisted of two Laurentian professors, Dr. Alain Beaulieu from within the faculty of Arts and Dr. Patrice Milewski from the Faculty of Education. Finally, the team included two students in the program, Alicia Boston and Jacques-Andre Blouin.

During the visit, the external reviewers met with the Vice-President Academic and Provost, as well as with the Deans of Arts and of Graduate Studies. The entire review team met with the faculty of the History Department as a group, as well as individually with the Department Head, the Graduate Coordinators (both past and present), and faculty involved in delivering both the Master's (English) and the Maîtrise (French). Using telephone and Skype, the review team also interviewed one faculty member who teaches and supervises MA students in Barrie. In addition to meeting with faculty, the team met with three graduates of the MA program (two who studied in English, one in French) as well as with seven current students in the program (five studying in English, two in French). Former students were particularly helpful in providing insights into how well the program prepares its graduates for further study at the doctoral level or for other careers and occupations. Additionally, the review team met with the librarian supporting the program.

The facilities that were seen were the Department's offices, most notably the office space allocated for the use of Graduate Students, as well as the University Library. The review team was unable to visit the University Archives, which were closed because of illness / staff shortage. These visits provided the team with an opportunity to assess the space available for Graduate Students in History to carry out their duties as GTAs, which include meeting with and mentoring Undergraduates, as well as the library resources and facilities necessary for their research.

On January 5, 2016 the reviewers submitted their report. In it they commented that "the MA in history/histoire at Laurentian is a very successful program. MA students in history/histoire join a rich and accomplished scholarly community and they gain a host of skills that prepares them well for the future." In addition, they noted that:

- The objectives of the program are consistent with the institution's mission and academic plans are aligned with the university's overall goals.
- The program requirements and learning outcomes are clear and in alignment with the university's statement of graduate degree level expectations.
- Admission requirements (at least—78% or B+) are appropriate and "ensure that students entering the program have the necessary level of critical thinking, organizational and communication skills to engage effectively with the program and to achieve its objectives."
- The MA program in History has two innovative features that make it distinctive. First, in terms of its content, it is the only Graduate program in History at a Canadian University which identifies Northern Ontario as one of its principal fields of study. It is therefore well placed to attract students from throughout—and potentially beyond—the region. Secondly, the Department has integrated its one-hour weekly colloquium as an essential component of its graduate program. All students are expected to attend the colloquium and to make at least one formal presentation to it in the course of their residency. Participation in the colloquium involves students in the intellectual life of the Department; it also enhances their skills at presenting and debating ideas in a professional setting.

- The methods to assess student achievement “are appropriate for the degree level and for measuring the achievement of defines learning outcomes.”
- The Department makes excellent use of its faculty. All full-time faculty are involved in teaching the graduate program and the instruction of the Methods courses is either team-taught (in the French program) or revolves among several faculty (in the English program). It is not uncommon for other courses at this level to be team-taught. Where changes in personnel have left supervisory gaps—in United States history, for example—other faculty have stepped in, to the limits of their abilities, to cover these absences
- Students expressed a high degree of satisfaction with their courses. As a group they appear to have been well-prepared for their studies and highly motivated to succeed. Rates of completion and graduation are high.
- All courses are taught by full-time permanent faculty each of whom is an accomplished and active scholar. Many on the faculty are recognized nationally and internationally for their work and they successfully compete for research funding and contracts. All have a splendid relationship with their students

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

- The student handbook is misleading. For example, what is not made clear in the handbook is that students in the Major Essay (one year) stream, normally take 6 credit hours of their course work in HIST 5090 Independent Studies, with their thesis supervisor.
- Students in the English program have no choice in the four seminar courses for which they register.
- The relatively small number of faculty teaching in French makes it impractical to offer the Major Essay (one year) program in that language. That the majority of students in the English program are currently in the one-year program and all the students in the French program are in the two-year program is a disparity between the two programs which is not apparent from reading the French and English handbooks, which are identical.
- In the library, the current budget for maintaining the necessary monograph collections in the principal areas of study covered by the program is insufficient to ensure that those collections are reasonably complete and up-to-date.
- The limited staff and opening hours, as well as the temporary closure, of the University Archives is also a concern, given the value of its collections to students conducting historical research.
- The reduction of available microfilm readers in the library (currently only two are available), as well as the restrictions on lending microfilm, constrain students’ ability to do research.

On March 3, 2016 the History Department sent along its reaction to the review to both Dean Dawes and Dean Lesbarreres, and on May 10, 2016, their joint reaction was received by the Office of the Provost. It forms the basis of what follows

**SUMMARY OF THE REVIEW TEAM’S RECOMMENDATIONS (R) THE DEPARTMENT’S (U) RESPONSES AS WELL AS THOSE OF THE DEAN OF ARTS (D) AND THE DEAN OF THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES (GS)**

**R1. Maintain and strengthen the francophone complement of the faculty and the resources available for the program in histoire.**

**U1.** The Department recognizes that this is its most pressing issue, and it would like to highlight the importance of this matter, just as the reviewers have done. This is undeniably the program's number one priority, and it will continue to take every opportunity to impress this point upon LU's administration.

**D1.** A Research Chair in the History of French Ontario has been appointed for July 1, 2016. Dr. Arnaud Bessière was appointed on July 1, 2014. Strengthening the faculty complement in this program has been a priority.

**GS1.** The MA History/Maîtrise en histoire is commended for their motivation and dedication to maintain the Francophone side. While they have only regained 80% of their historical faculty complement, I am confident that Francophone students have been and will continue to be well served both in their courses offering and in the supervisory capacity. Some bilingual faculty are also an asset for this program.

**R2. Maintain the three declared fields for the MA. The Department has particular strengths in all three—Europe, Northern Ontario and North America. The last reviewers' recommendation to change North America to Canada is particularly inappropriate at this time, as it fails to take into account the Department's expertise in New France, British North America, or, with its most recent hire, aboriginal history, none of which could be considered "Canadian" areas.**

**U2.** The reviewers agreed with the Department's decision to retain the three fields for its program.

**D2.** No comment.

**GS2.** No comment.

**R3. We would recommend ... i) that the Department receive funding for additional faculty to teach l'histoire des autochtones. ii) that a future hire on the Anglophone side should be in the history of the United States.**

**U3.** The Department will continue to lobby for a francophone professor in l'histoire des autochtones. In addition, it will continue to push for a future Anglophone hire in the history of the US, although we feel that this need might be met in the future when our colleagues in Barrie return to our campus as part of LU's decision to close its campus there.

**D3.** Faculty transferring from Barrie will meet the department's needs in the Anglophone stream. Indigenous history [in French] remains a priority.

**GS3.** No comment.

**R4. Maintain the course relief for the graduate coordinator. Although the program is small, this position is crucial to maintain its success.**

- U4.** Agrees with the reviewers on this point and will continue to protect this course relief.
- D4.** A 3-credit course release for the graduate coordinator will continue to be provided.
- GS4.** While this is at the discretion of Dean of Arts, this relief is appreciated and allows for a seamless coordination of the program along with a good communication with Graduate Studies.
- R5.** **The faculty could enhance its orientation for new students to include greater discussion of the various responsibilities they will have with their GTA. Students are conscious that their responsibilities differ, depending on who they are working with/for, and at least one student was a little concerned about the discrepancies. The current system should be maintained, as it offers students a broader experience than is available at other universities. The graduate handbooks should be brought up to date with departmental practice, to indicate more clearly the significance of HIST5090 in the one-year program and to indicate that the one-year program in histoire may not be available, depending upon whether there are sufficient faculty to deliver the necessary courses.**
- U5.** The Department agrees to revise its orientation for incoming MA students to include a greater discussion of the various responsibilities they will have as GTAs. In addition, the Graduate Handbook will be brought up to date with departmental practice. It will indicate more clearly the significance of HIST5090 in the one-year program and indicate that the one-year program in histoire may not be available, depending upon whether there are sufficient faculty to deliver the necessary courses.
- D5.** No comment.
- GS5.** The Faculty of Graduate Studies offers a general orientation covering all aspects of the life of a graduate student (supervisor role, funding, GTAs, counseling...). Students from the program should be encouraged to attend.
- R6.** **Ensure that the central administration (particularly the Registrar's Office, Finance and the Graduate Office) have clearly established procedures to inform students about their status, tuition and other matters that concern them. Although students were unreservedly satisfied with the program, we were conscious that they were not always supported by the university. All students we talked to experienced difficulties with registration and the payment of fees at the beginning of the year. It was only because of support from the history office, and particularly the administrative assistant that issues were resolved. In addition, students were not aware of the support that they could receive from the [Faculty] of Graduate [Studies] with respect to their research.**
- U6.** First, the Department was surprised to read that its students expressed dissatisfaction with their communication with the Faculty of Graduate Studies [FGS]. The Department has consistently benefitted from its strong relationship with the Faculty of Graduate Studies, both in terms of the interest the latter has taken in our programs and the support it has shown for our professors and Masters students. We believe that this issue can be resolved simply by raising the FGS's profile among our students, and by providing them with the contact information they need.

On the other hand, there has been a history of challenges with the Registrar's office and/or Financial Services in the area of graduate studies, but significant progress has been made over the last few years in terms of ironing them out. The Department will continue to do its best to assist our students in dealing with resolving any administrative issues at LU.

- D6.** No comment
- GS6.** While there might have been an unfortunate mixing of the different administrative services that students have to visit, we will continue to be proactive in informing the students of our existence and the role we play in their journey.
- R7.**
- i. Maintain library budgets and enhance library resources available to students. Among other things, this includes maintaining and if at all possible increasing the budget for the acquisition of history resources;**
  - ii. Open the Archives;**
  - iii. Make microfilm material more accessible and otherwise ensuring students have the tools they need to succeed;**
  - iv. Although students do have working space within the department, they have nowhere individual secure place [sic] for laptops, notes, etc. The library does have carrels that, we understand are very underused. We recommend that students be able to secure a carrel for a full term instead of the current situation of being able to book only for the day of the week.**
- U7.**
- i.** The Department recognizes that there are considerable budgetary constraints at Laurentian University at this time, but it will continue to work with the Library to do the most with the limited resources we have.
  - ii.** In terms of the Archives, this issue has already been partly addressed. The University Librarian, Brent Roe, has given the Department the name of a contact person at LU's Archives who will make the facility available to historians when needed. But at the same time, the Department would urge the administration to consider the negative impact of staff and budget cuts in the Archives on the delivery of graduate programs—especially in History.
  - iii.** In terms of microfilm readers, there are currently only two of them in the Library. The Department will recommend to the Library that there should be at least four microfilm readers available for students' use, and that these machines should be kept in good working order. The restriction on the lending of microfilm is probably a reference to the decision taken by Library and Archives Canada to discontinue this service, and we have no control over this matter.
  - iv.** The Department will follow up on this matter with the Library to investigate the precise terms that govern how students reserve study carrels
- D7.** The lack of access to the Archives remains a serious concern for research in the Humanities and in History in particular.
- GS7.** No comment.

### ACAPLAN'S RESPONSE

ACAPLAN endorses the recommendations of the Review Team but notes the following recommendations are redundant:

- R2. Maintain the three declared fields for the MA.** The Department has no plans to change.
- R3. A future hire on the Anglophone side should be in the history of the United States.** Although they do not hold specialized expertise, when faculty transfer from Barrie this need will have been met.
- R4. Maintain the course relief for the graduate coordinator. Although the program is small, this position is crucial to maintain its success.** The Dean of Arts, who assigns workload, has promised course relief for the graduate coordinator will occur on an ongoing basis.
- R7.ii Open the Archives.** The Archives were closed during the reviewers' visit. With the return of the archival assistant and the hiring of a second assistant (who has graduate qualifications in Archival Science), the Archives should be better able to support users on a go forward basis.

### LAURENTIAN QUALITY ASSURANCE IMPLEMENTATION PLAN FOR THE MA PROGRAM in HISTORY

| Recommendation                                                                                                                       | Proposed Follow-up                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Responsibility for Leading Follow-up | Timeline     |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------|
| <b>1. Maintain and strengthen the francophone complement of the faculty and the resources available for the program in histoire.</b> | Hire an additional faculty to teach l'histoire des autochtones.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Chair working with Dean of Arts      | Ongoing      |
| <b>2. The faculty must enhance its orientation for new students</b>                                                                  | <p>i. Revise orientation for incoming MA students to include a greater discussion of the various responsibilities they will have as GTAs.</p> <p>ii. Bring Graduate Handbook up to date with departmental practice to indicate more clearly the significance of HIST5090 in the one-year program and that the one-year program in histoire may</p> | Program Coordinator                  | January 2017 |

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|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------|
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | <p>not be available, depending upon whether there are sufficient faculty to deliver the necessary courses</p> <p>iii. Have students attend orientation day sponsored by the Faculty of Graduate Studies</p> |                            |                     |
| <p><b>3. Ensure that the central administration (particularly the Registrar's Office, Finance and the Graduate Office) have clearly established procedures to inform students about their status, tuition and other matters that concern them.</b></p>             | <p>Meet with administrators responsible for those area to establish protocols which can be communicated to students</p>                                                                                     | <p>Program Coordinator</p> | <p>January 2017</p> |
| <p><b>4. Improve library services to students, more specifically</b></p> <p><b>i. Increase the budget for the acquisition of history resources;</b></p> <p><b>ii. Add more microfilm readers;</b></p> <p><b>iii. Provide better access to library carrels.</b></p> | <p>Meet with University Librarian</p>                                                                                                                                                                       | <p>Program Coordinator</p> | <p>January 2017</p> |

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 MA program in History is approved to continue and it will be reviewed in the fall of 2023.