TO: Mike Mahon   **DATE:**   October 27, 2015
President and Vice Chancellor

FROM: Ian MacLachlan
Chair, Academic Quality Assurance Committee

RE: Department of Philosophy, Academic Quality Assurance Review

In accordance with the U of L *Academic Quality Assurance Policy and Process*, the Academic Quality Assurance Committee has acknowledged the completion of the review of the Department of Philosophy at its October 22, 2015 meeting.

The Program Review Committee for this review comprised Bryson Brown (Program Review Coordinator), Ardis Anderson, and Victor Rodych. The review produced four documents:[1]

1. *Academic Quality Assurance Review: Department of Philosophy Self-Study Report, November 2014* (received November 28, 2014) – Self Study Report, developed by the Department of Philosophy Self Study Committee.

2. *External Review Team Report on the Philosophy Programs at the University of Lethbridge* (received May 21, 2015) – External Review Report by Christine McKinnon (Trent University) and Eldon Soifer (University of Regina) based on their site visit of April 27-28, 2015.

3. *Response to External Review Team Report* (received July 31, 2015) – response of the Self Study Committee to the external review.

4. *Dean's Response to the Philosophy Quality Assurance Review* (received October 13, 2015), written by Craig Cooper (Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Science).

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[1] All documents are available upon request.

Self Study Report

The Self Study Report noted the following strengths of the Department of Philosophy:

- The department is committed to students, both Majors and non-Majors.

- The large number of Philosophy Minors shows students are interested in the discipline.

- There is a strong scholarship record of faculty receiving external research funding, giving presentations at academic conferences, publishing in high-quality journals, and serving on national research committees and in international philosophical organizations.

- Philosophy Majors are more connected to one another since the development of a philosophy club, and of a peer assistance group that offers advice and support to philosophy students.

- The curriculum has been restructured to serve the needs of non-Majors and provide core courses on central topics in philosophy.

- Some of the best Philosophy students have been successful in graduate programs in Canada and the U.S.

- Philosophy is central to the U of L's liberal education tradition and contributes to the broad themes of the Faculty of Arts and Science Academic Plan (student experience, leadership in learning, and community of learners).

Weaknesses and challenges mentioned in the report included:

- Faculty teach a range of courses outside their research interests, which makes their teaching responsibilities more demanding and less aligned with their research.

- From 2011 to 2012, two faculty members left the department without replacement, and another faculty member may be lost in 2015.

- Occasionally core courses have to be postponed due to staffing concerns.

- There are significant gaps in course offerings, with no regular courses on 19th century philosophy, continental philosophy, or philosophical or non-classical logic.

- Opportunities to develop new courses are being neglected.

- Budget constraints have made it impossible to cover the teaching responsibilities of faculty on leave, which means that access to study leave has become more difficult.

- Since 1991 the department has lost funding for external speakers, and the regularity of department talks and other events has declined.

- The M.A. program creates substantial workload pressures.

- There are now fewer sections of Logic 1000.

In the report, the Self Study Committee asked for External Reviewers' advice on several issues:

- Present and future staffing needs.

- Curriculum structure and content.

- Consistency of course requirements across different courses at different levels.

- Should course enrolment caps be lowered or raised?

- Workload sharing in the department.

- Differences in workload between the Department of Philosophy and other departments, and how these differences should be addressed.

- Opportunities and risks related to associations with other programs in the Faculty of Arts and Science.

- Are the requirements for the M.A. Philosophy program appropriate? Should the department consider an alternative M.A. program that produces publishable research papers rather than a thesis?

- Related to student advising, the effectiveness of the peer support program, current involvement of faculty members in advising, and how best to guide new graduate students through their M.A. studies.

- Collegiality and departmental cohesion, and how to improve it.

- The value of external speakers, and suggestions of building a stronger intellectual community in the department.

External Review Report

In their report, the External Reviewers noted that the Department of Philosophy is very effective in playing a central role in liberal education, in offering a solid program in philosophy, and in supporting its M.A. program.

Several departmental strengths were mentioned in the body of the report:

- Philosophy as a discipline is well suited to contribute to the U of L's founding principles of liberal education.

- The department provides a supportive learning environment for its students.

- Several faculty members are involved in local and provincial outreach activities.

- Most faculty members contribute to the profession through publishing research, editing professional journals, and attending conferences.

- The Philosophy Help Centre is a valuable resource.

- The revitalized Philosophy Club gives excellent opportunities for students to meet other students and engage with philosophy.

- The recently introduced Minor in Philosophy and the Concentration in Legal Reasoning are attractive to students.

- The percentage of undergraduate courses taught by permanent, full-time faculty is extremely high.

- The department provides an environment that fosters and encourages high-quality scholarship.

The report noted several challenges and weaknesses:

- Three tenured faculty members have retired or resigned in the past five years. This presents challenges for delivering Philosophy programs.

- With limited resources, the department will find it difficult to run a quality Master's program.

- Students are not represented on the Departmental Committee.

- The department does not know the numbers and year-levels of students enrolled in the Minor in Philosophy or the Concentration in Legal Reasoning.

- The PHIL 1000 course has low-level enrolment limit for a popular first year course, to facilitate more writing and discussion.

- The requirements for Supervisory Committee membership for M.A. theses seem overly onerous.

The External Reviewers made 15 recommendations for improvement:

1. Consider having elected student representation on the Departmental Committee.

2. Review the 3000-level courses and identify those that are core to the curriculum. Introduce 4000-level placeholder courses in each of the four streams that undergraduate students have to satisfy.

3. Consider removing the following courses: PHIL 2000, PHIL 3000, PHIL 4000, LOGI 2500, LOGI 3500, and LOGI 4500.

4. Consider a 5000-level course as a requirement for all M.A. students and an option for very good undergraduates who are in their final year.

5. Consider changing the course code for Logic courses from LOGI to PHIL.

6. Review the curriculum of LOGI 2003 - Symbolic Logic to ensure it covers similar material to introductory symbolic logic courses at other Canadian universities.

7. Consider offering higher-level Logic courses under a 4000-level "Studies in Logic" course.

8. Think about ways to achieve the goals of the PHIL 1000 course while decreasing the resources this course requires.

9. Explore the cross-listing of courses with other departments.

10. Find ways to effectively promote the M.A. program to prospective students.

11. Review the requirements for membership of Supervisory Committees for M.A. theses, to check if these requirements are in line with those at similar-sized universities.

12. On the Department of Philosophy website, post the Spring term course offerings before the time that students register for Fall term courses.

13. Develop a realistic schedule for the courses that are only offered every two years, and post this schedule on the Department of Philosophy website.

14. Explore ways to sustainably fund a Department of Philosophy speaker series.

15. Work with Information Technology and/or Advancement to find a way to allow a Philosophy faculty member to easily update the departmental website.

Program Response

The Program Response emphasized the challenges the department faces with the loss of three senior faculty members since 2011 and that additional resources are needed to maintain the current programs in Philosophy.

The Program Response addressed the 15 recommendations from the External Review Report:

1. Consider having elected student representation on the Departmental Committee.	Agreed. The department will have to discuss the roles that student representatives will play and the process for selection. Confidentiality rules and the effect of student representation on candour of discussion are some items for discussion.
2. Review the 3000-level courses and identify those that are core to the curriculum. Introduce 4000-level placeholder courses in each of the four streams that undergraduate students have to satisfy.	Agreed. The department will consider having some current 2000 courses re-appear on rotation at the 4000 level. This would provide a wider range of courses that can be upgraded to 5000-level for the M.A. students.
3. Consider removing the following courses: PHIL 2000, PHIL 3000, PHIL 4000, LOGI 2500, LOGI 3500, and LOGI 4500.	The department needs a generic course number at each year level, since occasionally one-off courses are run at those levels. It is reasonable to consider removing the LOGI 2500/3500/4500 courses as few have been offered in the past several years.
4. Consider a 5000-level course as a requirement for all M.A. students and an option for very good undergraduates who are in their final year.	Agreed. The department will also consider a 5000-level logic course. However, small enrolments in such a course is a concern.
5. Consider changing the course code for Logic courses from LOGI to PHIL.	The department is split on supporting this recommendation and will discuss it further as it works on curriculum changes arising from the review.
6. Review the curriculum of LOGI 2003 - Symbolic Logic to ensure it covers similar material to introductory symbolic logic courses at other Canadian universities.	The department will complete a review to see how its logic courses compare with those at other philosophy departments across Canada. After this, the department will review the logic program to consider ways to improve it.
7. Consider offering higher-level Logic courses under a 4000-level "Studies in Logic" course.	The department would like to introduce a more advanced logic course, but may not have the teaching resources to do this. If the advanced logic course results from shifting the current 3003 course to the 4000-level then reduced enrolments are a concern.
8. Think about ways to achieve the goals of the PHIL 1000 course while decreasing the resources this course requires.	The department will discuss possible ways to address this recommendation. Possible responses include: more students per section; large, lecture-based courses with labs or tutorials; multiple-choice, computer-gradable exams; and dividing PHIL 1000 into courses with different focuses. Whatever direction it pursues, the department is concerned about losing the critical writing component of this course.

9. Explore the cross-listing of courses with other departments.	Agreed. The department will consider suggestions for the cross-listing of courses it offers and of courses from other departments.
10. Find ways to effectively promote the M.A. program to prospective students.	Agreed. The department will first have to clarify how many M.A. students it can accommodate.
11. Review the requirements for membership of Supervisory Committees for M.A. theses, to check if these requirements are in line with those at similar-sized universities.	Agreed. The present requirement is for three members from the department plus an external.
12. On the Department of Philosophy website, post the Spring term course offerings before the time that students register for Fall term courses.	Agreed. But a warning would that the schedule could change would have to be included.
13. Develop a realistic schedule for the courses that are only offered every two years, and post this schedule on the Department of Philosophy website.	Agreed, with the proviso that the schedule is subject to change.
14. Explore ways to sustainably fund a Department of Philosophy speaker series.	Agreed. The department will meet with the Dean of Arts and Science to discuss how to develop and fund a speaker series.
15. Work with Information Technology and/or Advancement to find a way to allow a Philosophy faculty member to easily update the departmental website.	Agreed. The department's administrative assistant is willing to help maintain the website.

Dean's Response

In his response, the Dean of Arts and Science noted that the challenge for the Department of Philosophy is to balance three mandates: to support liberal education; to deliver a quality undergraduate philosophy program; and to run an M.A. program. The Dean's Response went on to address the 15 recommendations from the External Review Report:

1. Consider having elected student representation on the Departmental Committee.	According to the Faculty Handbook, Salary Tenure Promotions (STP) committees and Search Committees cannot have student representation. However, Search Committees can gather student input, and this should be encouraged within the Philosophy department. Student representatives should sit on departmental curriculum committees and attend departmental meetings.
2. Review the 3000-level courses and identify those that are core to the curriculum. Introduce 4000-level placeholder courses in each of the four streams that undergraduate students have to satisfy.	Agreed. The department should: • Determine the core 3000-level courses that are essential for a Philosophy major, essential for the Concentration in Legal Reasoning, attractive to non-majors, and able to be staffed reliably. • Cull or collapse some 3000-level courses. • Create 4000-level placeholder courses in: Studies in Value Theory; Studies in Logic; Studies in Metaphysics and Epistemology; and Studies in History of Philosophy. • Every year, offer at least two 4000-level courses. Set up and publicize the schedule for offering these courses.
3. Consider removing the following courses: PHIL 2000, PHIL 3000, PHIL 4000, LOGI 2500, LOGI 3500, and LOGI 4500.	The department should keep generic courses as they allow the testing out of new courses. The department should consider if the Logic 2500/3500/4500 courses, which have not been offered in recent years, should be kept or not.
4. Consider a 5000-level course as a requirement for all M.A. students and an option for very good undergraduates who are in their final year.	Before considering this, the department should complete curricular reform at the 3000 and 4000 levels and offer at least two 4000-level courses. Then, the department should carefully consider what kind of 5000-level course to offer. The Dean's office allows 5000-level courses to run with five graduate students. The department should consider allowing some undergraduate students to register.
5. Consider changing the course code for Logic courses from LOGI to PHIL.	The logic courses could also be cross-labelled, e.g. PHIL/LOGI.
6. Review the curriculum of LOGI 2003 - Symbolic Logic to ensure it covers similar material to introductory symbolic logic courses at other Canadian universities. 7. Consider offering higher-level Logic courses under a 4000-level "Studies in Logic" course.	The department should complete the suggested review of Logic courses. The number of Logic courses at the 3000 and 4000 level may need to be decreased.

8. Think about ways to achieve the goals of the PHIL 1000 course while decreasing the resources this course requires.	The department should review the writing elements of the course to ensure it is writing-intensive. In this review, consider the benchmarks that make a course "writing-intensive," such as types of assignments, assignment length, etc.
9. Explore the cross-listing of courses with other departments.	Agreed.
10. Find ways to effectively promote the M.A. program to prospective students.	Agreed. Also, the department could explore opportunities to work with the new undergraduate program in Philosophy at Mount Royal University, which may be a way to recruit students.
11. Review the requirements for membership of Supervisory Committees for M.A. theses, to check if these requirements are in line with those at similar-sized universities.	Agreed. The department should do this review in partnership with the School of Graduate Studies.
12. On the Department of Philosophy website, post the Spring term course offerings before the time that students register for Fall term courses.	Beginning in 2016-17, the Faculty of Arts and Science will be posting a complete Fall and Spring timetable together, which will allow students to register in Fall and Spring courses simultaneously.
13. Develop a realistic schedule for the courses that are only offered every two years, and post this schedule on the Department of Philosophy website.	Agreed.
14. Explore ways to sustainably fund a Department of Philosophy speaker series.	The department can work with the Dean of Arts and Science to discuss how to develop and fund a speaker series.
15. Work with Information Technology and/or Advancement to find a way to allow a Philosophy faculty member to easily update the departmental website.	Agreed. The department's administrative assistant can be trained by the Communications Officer.

The Academic Quality Assurance Committee is satisfied that the Department of Philosophy program academic quality assurance review has followed the U of L's academic quality assurance process appropriately, and acknowledges the successful completion of the review.

Sincerely,

Ian MacLachlan

Chair, Academic Quality Assurance Committee

Cc: Andrew Hakin, Provost and Vice President (Academic)