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TO: Mike Mahon
President and Vice Chancellor

DATE: June 30, 2015

FROM: Robert A. Boudreau
Chair, Academic Quality Assurance Committee

RE: Department of History, Academic Quality Assurance Review

In accordance with the U of L *Academic Quality Assurance Policy and Process*, the Academic Quality Assurance Committee approved the review of the Department of History at its June 19, 2015 meeting.

The Self Study Committee for this review was comprised of Heidi MacDonald (coordinator), Chris Burton, Chris Epplett, David Hay, and Lynn Kennedy. The review produced four documents:¹

1. *Academic Quality Assurance Review, 2014-2015 - Department of History, University of Lethbridge, December 1, 2014* (received December 10, 2014) – Self Study Report, developed by the Department of History Self Study Committee.
2. *External Review Report for the Department of History, University of Lethbridge* (received March 27, 2015) – External Review Report by Beverly Lemire (UAlberta) and Penny Bryden (UVictoria) based on their site visit of February 26 -27, 2015.
3. *Department Response - History External Review* (received May 11, 2015) – response of the Self Study Committee to the external review.
4. *Dean's Response to Quality Assurance Review of the Department of History* (received June 12, 2015) – response to the review, written by Chris Cooper, Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Science.

¹ All documents are available upon request.

Self Study

Strengths of the Department of History noted in the Self Study Report include:

- The Department has a strong reputation for teaching quality, commitment to liberal education, and the involvement of its faculty in U of L administration.
- Since 1999, all retiring faculty have been replaced and the Department has received two and a half new teaching positions.
- Enrolments have remained steady for the last decade.
- Students in History courses are drawn from across the whole university.
- There is a healthy number of History majors, ranging from 156 to 196 over the past decade. For number of majors the Department of History ranks sixth among the 33 Departments and programs in the Faculty of Arts and Science.
- A drop-off in the number of History majors has been offset by a well-subscribed History minor.
- The Department successfully collaborates with academic units across campus.
- The Department actively collaborates with community groups and institutions, including the Lethbridge Historical Society, the Galt Museum and Archives, and the local Czech and Slovak society.
- There is a great demand for History courses from Education students and from those students fulfilling the liberal education requirement.
- Graduates have found employment in many fields, including journalism, law, civil service, theology, and diplomacy.
- Class sizes are relatively small, ranging from maximum 20 students at fourth-year level courses to 90 at the first-year level.
- History 1200: World History is being introduced in the curriculum. This shows the Department's commitment to cultural diversity in the curriculum.
- Department faculty members have won many awards for their teaching.
- The Department is committed to assigning and rigorously evaluating written work.
- Students have a high level of satisfaction with the quality of teaching in the Department and with their educational experience.
- Some undergraduate courses have offered the chance for students to be involved in their professor's research.

The report noted the following weaknesses and challenges:

- Offering a breadth of undergraduate courses is a challenge given the small size of the Department.
- The number of courses offered annually has not changed significantly for the last 15 years.
- Post-secondary funding is volatile and often targeted at areas to which the History Department does not contribute directly.
- There has been a decline in the number of History majors in the last several years.

- The library collection is weak outside of faculty members' areas of teaching strength.
- The Departmental web site is out of date and incomplete.
- There is a narrow range of foreign languages taught at the U of L.
- The Department struggles to staff its internal tutoring program during times of very high demand in the semester.
- The Department's use of research essays and exam essays for student evaluation requires more resources in grading.
- Most of the Department's faculty will be retiring in 15-20 years, leading to challenges in succession planning.

One of the issues discussed in the body of the report was graduate studies. The Department has approached the expansion of the M.A. program with caution, given the lack of resources and of language training at the U of L. History has recently begun to admit larger numbers of graduate students, due to collaboration with the interdisciplinary Social Sciences graduate program.

The report included four areas where the Self Study Committee sought the advice of the External Reviewers:

- M.A. program – Can the Department of History grow its M.A. program in a way that respects both faculty who want to do so and those who are more hesitant?
- Enrolment – How can the Department maintain its enrolments, when enrolments in the humanities are dropping in the province and across the country? Is the recent 20% decrease in History majors a concern? Is it a concern that 80% of students in History courses are non-majors? How can the Department improve its retention rates?
- Curriculum – Is the Department making the right choice to maintain breadth of curriculum rather than depth?
- Communication – How can the Department better communicate with students outside of classes?

External Review

The External Review Report noted several Departmental strengths:

- The Department is a key provider of liberal education.
- Student evaluations of History courses are outstanding.
- All members of the Department are committed to their shared goals.
- The Department produces a vibrant learning environment.
- This is one of the most successful teaching Departments at the U of L. Survey data confirms students' high levels of satisfaction with teaching in History. Faculty pride themselves on producing engaging curricular materials, providing timely advising, and offering opportunities for independent and applied study.
- Student numbers are stable. History majors have declined in number, while History minors have increased.
- Independent Studies and Applied Studies courses are popular, valued, and give students the chance to study an area of interest in an academic or community context.

- The Department teaches a wide range of topics.
- Department faculty who are cross-appointed with other academic units bring added depth to thematic courses.
- Faculty members have collegial and professional relationships.
- Student satisfaction with the undergraduate and graduate program is high.
- Students feel that the faculty are accessible and approachable.
- Graduates of the undergraduate program report high levels of employment.
- The University Archives offer extraordinary resources for students and faculty.
- Faculty are committed to research and scholarly activities.

Weaknesses and challenges contained in the External Review Report included:

- The Department struggles at times to offer sufficient course offerings.
- The extensive writing skills the Department demands of its students places a burden on the faculty to help students develop these skills and to assess them.
- Faculty workload is a continuing concern.
- There has been an increase in grading responsibilities.
- The graduate program is stretched for resources and has a small cohort.
- There is a lack of information on non-academic employment for graduates.
- Administrative support is shared across Departments. Duties and level of support are unclear. Faculty perceive a decline in the level of administrative support they receive.
- The demographic profile of the faculty complement is a concern for succession planning.
- There has been a decline in the number of History majors.
- Office space for graduate students is stretched to its limit.
- Outside the Department there is a lack of support for obtaining research grants. This is a missed opportunity to develop the U of L's research profile beyond the sciences. Some specific concerns are: too little information, advice, and support from the Office of Research Services (ORS); granting opportunities are publicized too late; and ORS staff have little knowledge of SSHRC-based disciplines.

Several recommendations for improvement were contained in the body of the report:

- Make an effort to balance the uneven distribution of teaching loads.
- Develop more cross-listed courses to make a wider range of History courses more widely available and to promote the relationship between history and other disciplines.
- Consider adding an additional faculty member in indigenous history.
- Provide graduate students with assistance in grant writing and provide them with more information about job opportunities.

- Using cross-disciplinary collaboration, continue with modest increases to the number of graduate students. Potential connections include with Native American Studies, Religious Studies, Asian Studies, and Political Science.
- Find a way to recognize and reward the contribution made by teaching independent or applied studies courses.
- Place a limit on the number of students a faculty member can supervise annually in independent or applied studies courses.
- Track the post-graduate activities of History graduates of the M.A. to determine program effectiveness.
- Find more office space for graduate students.
- Shift the Library acquisitions process to a mixed model that allows both individual purchase of relevant items and larger Departmental purchases.
- Within the History Department, provide students with advice on course selection and career possibilities. Do this through an advisor, or consider adding this duty to the Department Chair's responsibilities.
- Use the funding for marking assistance, which is available from the Dean's office.
- Clarify the role of the administrative assistant. Consider including in the administrative assistant's responsibilities the maintenance of the Department's website and of the Department's general online presence.
- Encourage the ORS to: develop familiarity with SSHRC funding models and with other funding possibilities for the humanities; become familiar with the challenges of research in the humanities; and design a research opportunity mentoring program for younger faculty members.
- Senior administration should work to ensure timely and adequate support from ORS for humanities and social sciences granting applicants. This could include workshops, mentorship programs, and the organized advanced reading of grants.
- University Advancement should regularly publicize successes and achievements in the Department of History.

Program Response

In their response, the Self Study Committee addressed the recommendations from the External Review Report:

Recommendations:	Response:
<i>Develop more cross-listed courses to make a wider range of history courses more widely available and to promote the relationship between history and other disciplines.</i>	The Department will examine each potential cross-listed course. The cross-listing of History of Christianity with the Department of Religious Studies would be easy and beneficial.
<i>Consider adding an additional faculty member in indigenous history.</i>	The Department will consider this during the next faculty member hiring, but the Native American Studies Department already addresses indigenous history. The Department feels that the priority for hiring is expanding the scope of expertise into a new geographical area of history.
<i>Make an effort to balance the uneven distribution of teaching loads. Find a way to recognize and reward the contribution made by teaching independent or applied studies courses.</i>	Actually, all faculty participate in independent and applied studies courses and those who do are compensated for this through the awarding of merit. Several faculty members are fine with taking on more than two independent and applied studies students a semester.
<i>Within the History Department, provide students with advice on course selection and career possibilities. Do this through an advisor, or consider adding this duty to the Department Chair's responsibilities.</i>	The History Department has a Departmental Advisor, who has given career advice to many students. Providing guidance on course selection is the responsibility of the Academic Advising Office. A more formal advising process would be better provided by administrative people in the School of Graduate Studies or the Faculty of Arts and Science.
<i>Find more office space for graduate students.</i>	Agreed.
<i>Offer more information about job opportunities for people with graduate degrees in History.</i>	Agreed. The Department will strive to provide graduate students with more professional development opportunities.
<i>Clarify the role of the administrative assistant. Consider including in the administrative assistant's responsibilities the maintenance of the Department's website and of the Department's general online presence.</i>	Agreed.
<i>Use the funding for marking assistance, which is available from the Dean's office.</i>	Agreed.
<i>Shift the Library acquisitions process to a mixed model that allows both individual purchase of relevant items and larger Departmental purchases.</i>	The Department prefers the control and flexibility of the current Library acquisitions model.

Recommendations:	Response:
<i>Encourage the Office of Research Services to: develop familiarity with SSHRC funding models and with other funding possibilities for the humanities; become familiar with the challenges of research in the humanities; and design a research opportunity mentoring program for younger faculty members.</i>	Agreed.
<i>University Advancement should regularly publicize successes and achievements in the Department of History.</i>	Agreed.
<i>Track the post-graduate activities of History graduates of the M.A. to determine program effectiveness.</i>	Agreed.

Dean's Response

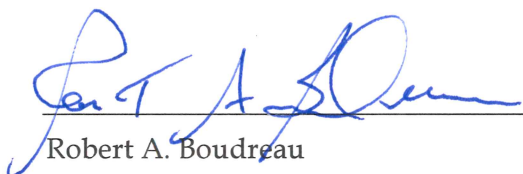
In the Dean's Response, Craig Cooper (Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Science) noted that History is a key provider of liberal education at the U of L, and went on to address the recommendations from the External Review Report:

Recommendations:	Response:
<i>Develop more cross-listed courses to make a wider range of history courses more widely available and to promote the relationship between history and other disciplines.</i>	Cross-listing of courses has only recently re-introduced into the Faculty of Arts and Science. It will take time before the departments are prepared to embrace cross-listing, but this will have many benefits and is an appropriate direction for the Department of History.
<i>Consider adding an additional faculty member in indigenous history.</i>	When resources become available, the Department should consider hiring a Latin American historian who specializes in indigenous history.
<i>Make an effort to balance the uneven distribution of teaching loads. Find a way to recognize and reward the contribution made by teaching independent or applied studies courses.</i>	Over several years, the faculty participation in independent and applied studies balances out across fields and faculty members. Those who offer these courses are already appropriately recognized and rewarded through the process related to the Professional Activities Report.
<i>Within the History department, provide students with advice on course selection and career possibilities. Do this through an advisor, or consider adding this duty to the department Chair's responsibilities. Offer more information about job opportunities for people with graduate degrees in History.</i>	The Department already has an advisor, who gives career advice to students. Advising on course election, particularly at the graduate level, is best suited to be given at the Departmental level. The Department should provide more information about job opportunities for History graduate students, consider providing more professional development opportunities, and direct graduate students to the School of Graduate Studies' THRIVE program.

Recommendations:	Response:
<i>Using cross-disciplinary collaboration, continue with modest increases to the number of graduate students. Potential connections include with Native American Studies, Religious Studies, Asian Studies, and Political Science.</i> <i>Track the post-graduate activities of History graduates of the M.A. to determine program effectiveness.</i> <i>Find more office space for graduate students.</i>	Expansion of the graduate program using connections with other departments is supported by the Dean. The tracking of post-graduate activity of M.A. History graduates is supported by the Dean. Space constraints make finding more graduate student office space impossible. When University Hall is renovated, meeting areas for graduate students will be considered.
<i>Clarify the role of the administrative assistant. Consider including in the administrative assistant's responsibilities the maintenance of the department's website and of the department's general online presence.</i>	The administrative assistant can be trained in website maintenance and social media. The Dean's office is reviewing the job descriptions of administrative assistants to see if there is capacity for them to take on additional duties.
<i>Shift the Library acquisitions process to a mixed model that allows both individual purchase of relevant items and larger departmental purchases.</i>	The Department will occasionally pool resources for communal acquisitions.
<i>Encourage the Office of Research Services to: develop familiarity with SSHRC funding models and with other funding possibilities for the humanities; become familiar with the challenges of research in the humanities; and design a research opportunity mentoring program for younger faculty members.</i>	Workshops offered by Research Services have been poorly attended. Individual mentoring may be more effective; the Dean will approach the VP Research to discuss this. Faculty in the History department can submit grant applications earlier and ask Research Services who can vet a proposal and offer mentorship.
<i>University Advancement should regularly publicize successes and achievements in the Department of History.</i>	Agreed, but the Department also has a responsibility to bring noteworthy achievements to the attention of the Dean's office.

The Academic Quality Assurance Committee is satisfied that the Department of History 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,


Robert A. Boudreau

Chair, Academic Quality Assurance Committee

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