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TO: Digvir Jayas  
President and Vice Chancellor

DATE: October 22, 2024

FROM: Lynn Kennedy  
Chair, Academic Quality Assurance Committee

RE: Religious Studies Program 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 Religious Studies Program at its September 24, 2024, meeting.

The Self Study Committee for this review was comprised of: Jim Linville, Jennifer Otto, and Atif Khalil.

The review produced 4 documents:

1. Self Study Report. Written by the Self Study Committee. Received February 8, 2024.
2. External Review Report. Written by Dr. Richard Ascough (Queens University) and Dr. Steven Engler (Mount Royal University) based on a site visit April 11 to 12, 2024. Received April 15, 2024.
3. Program Response. Written by the Self Study Committee. Received May 19, 2024.
4. Dean's Response. Written by Matt Letts, Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Science. Received August 21, 2024.

## Self Study Report

The Self Study Report asked for External Reviewer feedback on several areas:

- For many years, Religious Studies has struggled to offer a sufficient number of courses in the “Eastern” traditions. In Religious Studies’ 2014 AQA review, a sixth full time position with a specialty in East Asian religions was deemed desirable, if budgetarily difficult. We have recently requested a single hire in South Asian Religions. The absence of a South Asia specialist in the Department of History and Religion is also a pressing concern for the broader University community, especially given the increasing importance of the Canada-India relationship and the exponential growth of students from South Asian countries (or with South Asian heritage) who attend the University.
- Since the Fall 2021 semester, we have seen a downward trend in enrollment for RELS 1000, which has historically been a very well-subscribed course offered every semester. [W]e would be eager to hear suggestions for strengthening enrolment in that course.
- Although enrolment across our 2000 and 3000 level courses remains strong, few students choose to major in Religious Studies. One area of possible growth is with the Faculty of Education, which offers a minor in Religious Studies Education. As teachers encounter increasing religious diversity in their classrooms, increased knowledge about World Religions would seem to be a clear need for incoming teachers. Suggestions for ways that our program can serve the needs of Education students are therefore desired. Our colleagues in History have already established a strong relationship with the Faculty of Education that might provide a model for future engagement.

The body of the report noted several strengths of the Religious Studies Program:

- All courses at the University of Lethbridge are one-semester courses. That means that we cover both Eastern and Western Religions in our introductory course, allowing for about two weeks for each of the major traditions. Some years ago, two emeritus professors produced a textbook that would work in a one-semester course and still adequately cover the essentials of the major world religions. This book is being utilized and is viewed favorably by various departments in North America. In 2021, they produced an updated eBook textbook and primary source reader that has also been used for that course.
- Due to their critical thinking and cultural competencies, our graduates have found work in a number of different fields after graduation. Apart from those who have completed degrees in graduate studies, other graduates have entered such professions as university administration, law, the civil service, non-profit organizations and social services, research, and religious vocations.
- The Khan Islamic Studies Endowment: The Endowment was established a few years after 9/11 by Mushtaq and Catherine Khan to contribute to the advancement of the study of Islam at the University of Lethbridge and help forge better relations between the Muslim and broader local population. Initially, the Endowment was used to develop the University’s library collection on Islam virtually from scratch. In subsequent years, it was channeled to inviting scholars of Islam, primarily from Canadian and American universities, to address various aspects of the faith. Some of the lectures have been open for public attendance, others have been closed, only for those enrolled in the classes. This is to allow for students to have a comfortable space to intellectually engage the guests around whatever subject it is the speaker is addressing.
- All faculty in the program are highly engaged and motivated to provide not only a strong degree for Majors, but to offer a variety of classes for other students with primary interests elsewhere. This is

evidenced by our very high Faculty Credit Hours/Semester numbers, and the satisfaction students have expressed regarding their experiences in our classes. Despite our small numbers, we offer a wide range of different classes, and we are seeking ways to adapt our program to meet evolving student needs.

The following weaknesses and challenges were mentioned in the body of the report:

- One of the challenges faced by the field of Religious Studies is that it is often confused by the general public with Theology or Divinity, and degrees in Religious Studies are often presumed to lead directly into careers in ordained ministry. The Religious Studies degree, by contrast, is a Social Sciences and Humanities degree that teaches both tradition-specific and comparative knowledge of the world's religious traditions and religion as a broader phenomenon, as well as transferable skills in written communication, critical thinking, and research methodologies. We frequently hear from students that they have a keen interest in the subject matter and methodologies that constitute the Religious Studies program and would be otherwise interested in making Religious Studies their major, but they fear that potential employers will not grasp the difference between their program of study and theological training.
- Improving the gateway courses into Religious Studies remains important, especially since so many initially enroll in RELS courses out of interest. The declining enrolment in RELS 1000 needs to be addressed, but the strength of RELS 2001 is offsetting this to a degree. At present, we lack the teaching resources to break RELS 1000 into several smaller sections but could experiment with alternative forms of delivery (e.g., online delivery one semester per year).
- The lack of instruction in foreign and ancient languages remains a weakness of our program as it puts our graduates at a disadvantage in admission for graduate programs.
- Above all, the viability of our program requires support for teaching in Eastern Religions in the form of at least one new tenure-track hire. By nature of our small size, we are also keenly aware that conditions of fiscal restraint at the university level leaves our program vulnerable. The merger with the History department has alleviated some of the department-level service burden on our faculty members, but our small numbers make it difficult to cover study leaves or to support our members taking on other roles within the university that are compensated with course releases (e.g., Teaching Fellow, Research Chair). It is our hope that better financial conditions in the province of Alberta will result in more fulsome funding in upcoming years.

Recommendations taken from the body of the report:

- While any increase in the number of Majors would be welcome, we feel it would be more productive to focus on making the minor in Art and Sciences more visible and attractive. Similar efforts should be directed toward the General Humanities degree. Since personal interest is a significant factor in students choosing Religious Studies courses, the relevance of RS to understanding the world needs to be stressed in marketing the program.
- With two recent retirements, the Department of Sociology no longer regularly teaches Sociology of Religion, and so developing courses in this area may also prove useful. Building bridges to other academic units (e.g., Education, which offers a minor in RELS) should also be pursued.

## External Review Report

The External Review Report contained seven (7) recommendations for improving the Religious Studies Program:

1. **Revise the current curriculum.** Members teaching in the Religious Studies Program should collectively rethink and revitalize the RELS curriculum. This could begin with a consideration of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) of the program as it now stands, as well as if and how it is serving the current student body. We strongly suggest that the Program's current emphasis on world religions be addressed in terms of new perspectives and methodologies in Religious Studies (which is generally moving away from such emphases). This may entail changing or replacing some of the current course offerings. There are a few ancillary recommendations that should be addressed whether or not the Program moves away from the "world religions" approach.
2. **Establish clear and measurable program learning outcomes.** In conjunction with recommendation 1, a set of four to six learning outcomes for the program should be established. These learning outcomes should be aligned with the program goals, achievable by students across a range of courses, and appropriately measured through various course assessments.
3. **Evaluate the pedagogical effectiveness of the RELS 1000 course.** This course serves a number of functions, including recruitment into the program, but how it fits into the curriculum and the pedagogy used should be reassessed. We suggest a half-day retreat that would establish clear learning outcomes and assessment strategies for this course.
4. **Articulate how the Religious Studies Program fits into the larger department of which it is now a part and into the University more broadly.** The recent merging of the Program with History creates opportunities for some exciting synergies but also requires consideration of the nature and role of Religious Studies at the university. Is the program primarily a service department that is addressing key student interests at the undergraduate level (particularly with respect to Liberal Education, General Humanities, and Education), or is it more concerned with creating majors, particularly ones that will go on to graduate studies? The latter seems to be an emphasis (named as a current program outcome), yet the lack of a strong graduate program in Religious Studies at the university, as well as the decline in positions in Religious Studies for recent PhD graduates would suggest that a different focus is the best use of resources (i.e., servicing undergraduates). This also may help address the lack of language courses, particularly ancient languages, in the program.
5. **Create a new faculty position.** The current faculty complement stands at 4 full-time tenured members, which is less than optimal for the program. The current members make a strong case for a position in South Asian Religions, which would also fit well with the Asian Studies Program housed at the University. Hiring someone who could contribute to History courses (and courses cross-listed with that discipline) would be valuable, given the recent merger. Recommendation 1 (above) could potentially open up discussion beyond a south Asianist, but that should not take away from the need to increase the faculty complement in the program. A potential hire in the area of religion in south Asia would have value regardless of whether or not the program continues to frame its offerings – in the RELS 1000 course and the layout of courses of higher levels – in terms of the increasingly out-dated "world religions" paradigm.
6. **Create a workload document** for Religious Studies faculty members within the larger Department. This document could outline how each member from the Program would be assigned to committees requiring representation from Religious Studies and/or departmental committees that may have a member from Religious Studies: as a general example, not necessarily reflecting actual service

demands of the department, “each RELS faculty member shall serve on at least 1.5 committees every year, with the 0.5 being distributed across a 2-year period”. The document could also articulate the duties for the RELS Area Coordinator and what, if any, compensation might be assigned to such a position (e.g., a course release to be taken for two-years of serving in this capacity, likely given during the year of professional activities reports (PAR)). Such a document would help the faculty members in being accountable for the expected service component of their position, ensure that the service work is distributed fairly and equally among all members, and guide the Department Chair in ensuring that the service tasks are assigned appropriately and assessed clearly in the members’ PAR. Such a workload document would also help ensure that service work does not fall disproportionately on new or junior members of the faculty.

7. **Allocate resources to the library**, particularly for access to the ATLA Religion Database. Although we recognize that resources are scarce, the library seems under-resourced, with faculty and students drawing heavily on inter-library loans for materials. The ATLA Religion Database is a key resource for faculty and students doing research in Religious Studies but is no longer part of the system due to budget cuts.

The following direct quotations taken from the report note challenges discussed in the body of the report:

- “The argument for keeping RELS 1000 is primarily one of high numbers, but the self-study report notes that declining enrollment since 2021 once again has raised the question of RELS 1000’s utility. We heard from faculty members and students that covering five major religions in 13 weeks is challenging. The need to cover a large amount of material in a single semester, including many non-English and technical concepts, risks emphasizing content over form, and rote-learning over an introduction to the types of methodological and conceptual discussions and approaches that are characteristic of Religious Studies.”

The following direct quotations taken from the report note the opportunities discussed in the body of the report:

- “Other approaches to introductory courses (for example thematic courses like religion and science, religion and violence, religion and the environment, religion and popular culture etc.) can also be comparative (introducing students to the perspectives of different religions on these topics) while being more effective as disciplinary, not just content, introductions (modelling religious-studies approaches to the material). Such courses could also potentially attract large numbers of students.”
- “The issue of learning outcomes is crucial. The self-study report lists three ‘intended learning outcomes of the Religious Studies program’: supporting liberal education; providing a concentrated study of religion; and preparing students for graduate work. A crucial aspect of all discussions about future directions of the program would be to engage in more nuanced discussions of learning outcomes at both course and program levels, in relation to university-wide academic plans. At the course level, providing students with explicit learning outcomes for every course is not only helpful for them; it fosters more incisive planning about relations between content, delivery and assessment. At the program level, further discussion of just what students should get out of RELS courses would be an integral part of re-examining assumptions about the nature of the program, in relation to recent developments in the discipline more broadly.”

## Program Response

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

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1. <i>Revise the current curriculum.</i>	<p>Curriculum change has been a frequent topic of conversation since the last review in 2014, and the shortcomings of the World Religions paradigm were central among them. The measures taken post-2014 included developing RELS 2001, <i>Religion, Worldviews and Identity</i>, now taught every academic year as a second pathway into the discipline of Religious Studies alongside RELS 1000's traditional world religions focus. This change was made possible by removing low-enrolment courses in Hebrew Bible/Ancient Israel from the curriculum, and by switching the teaching of Judaism to once every two years, which had low enrolment in comparison with other 2xxx offerings. We have recently added three thematic courses at the 3000 level, and these could be offered with more regularity. Nevertheless, further changes in the curriculum are warranted. Some points:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>The four department members have a diversity of interests beyond the specific traditions in which they were trained and can develop courses in new directions. Serious concerns exist, however, about being stretched too far. Uncertainty remains over the possibility of a new hire who could contribute courses with a focus on South Asia.</li><li>Historically, a strength of RELS 1000 has been its high enrolment. However, in Spring 2024, enrolment in RELS 2001 rose, while that in 1000 fell to its lowest level in the 2000s. In fact, in 2024, 2001 had just under half the number of students as 1000 (104 completed 1000). In Fall 2023, when 2001 was not offered, a little under 120 students finished 1000. Some of the new thematic courses at the 3000 level attract 40–50 students. This leads to speculation that dropping the offering of 1000 in the semester 2001 is taught might not negatively affect overall enrolments in RELS courses.</li><li>The program members should evaluate enrolment and learning outcomes of all our courses to identify those that may not be serving student interest or program goals. This is especially important given our limited teaching resources and the mandatory frequency with which courses must be offered.</li></ol>
2. <i>Establish clear and measurable program learning outcomes.</i>	<p>We agree that the development of clear and measurable learning outcomes is a priority for our program. How rigid the document should be is an area of concern, however. There are numerous methodologies in Religious Studies. One member cautions that the Euro-American academy has different relations with each of the world's religious traditions, and the unique relation has determined the type of knowledge that has been produced about the tradition in question. In addition, we recognize the need to identify different sets of learning outcomes for different kinds of students we serve, i.e., what learning outcomes do we want for our majors versus students who take RELS as a stream within the General Humanities major versus students who take only one RELS course?</p>
3. <i>Evaluate the pedagogical effectiveness of the RELS 1000 course.</i>	<p>Besides the methodological issues of a World Religions paradigm, the sub-optimum assessment format of RELS 1000 is well recognized in the program as well as the information overload of covering all the material in a single semester course. We agree that the effectiveness of RELS 1000 must be re-examined, and that improvement is possible, but some members stress that there are advantages to retaining the current basic design of RELS 1000. For example, the format of being team taught with guest lecturers exposes students to the entire membership of the program. In some cases, there appears to be a correlation between an instructor's frequency of teaching 1000 and enrolment in their own 2000 level tradition-introduction courses. Team teaching, however, results in inconsistency in instructional style and assessment expectations between the two halves of the course. All options for improvement or replacement of RELS 1000 need to be explored. Some possibilities are having two separate 1xxx courses (e.g. "Abrahamic" and "Karmic" religions) is one such possibilities, or reducing the offering of 1000 to one semester per year, and adding an alternative introductory</p>

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	<p>course in the other semester (with either one as mandatory for the degree). Given the popularity of 2001, we might consider teaching it multiple times an academic year, i.e., once a semester, as there would be much greater opportunity for class participation and open discussions. Each alternative has its own advantages and disadvantages and these need to be identified and assessed in a systematic manner. As an experiment, a junior level one-off course will be taught in the Fall of 2025 to try out an alternative general interest path into Religious Studies. Based on the "Good Life" course scheduled at McMaster this coming Fall, "The Meaning of Life" will look at religious responses to existential questions.</p>
<p>4. <i>Articulate how the Religious Studies Program fits into the larger department of which it is now a part and into the University more broadly.</i></p>	<p>Developing into a stronger undergraduate program that contributes to the goals of the university's Liberal Education mandate, rather than the preparation of students for graduate studies, may be the way forward given the limited resources of our program, low number of majors, and the reality of the job market. Decisions about the future development of our curriculum and learning outcomes should align with the university's broader mandate as an institution dedicated to the values of Liberal Education. Determining how we go about this will require focused discussion among faculty members. As far as graduate studies are concerned, in the past, we have been highly selective about the students we take on, to ensure they align with our own research interests and the department's limited resources. One member of the program has supervised approximately half of our MA students over the past dozen years or so. No one in the Program is resistant to our merger with History, and we recognize the benefits the merger has brought about in streamlining administrative functions, but maintaining program autonomy, and Religious Studies' own unique blend of methods, pedagogies, and interests, needs to be prioritized.</p>
<p>5. <i>Create a new faculty position.</i></p>	<p>The members of the committee and the program wholeheartedly support this recommendation. While a scholar who could add to the History component of the department is attractive, it is a priority for the program that a new hire would have expertise to teach theory and method courses in Religious Studies in addition to having a specialization in South Asia.</p>
<p>6. <i>Create a workload document for Religious Studies faculty members within the larger Department.</i></p>	<p>The committee agrees that there is a need for a thorough and open discussion on service requirements within the department and program. The informal organization of workload allocation has given rise to the perception of inequitable distribution of tasks on the one hand, the passing-off of assigned work onto others, and a lack of awareness of how much work some of the tasks members take on entail. Clearly outlining duties and responsibilities while providing a forum for presenting the year-to-year involvement in activities that are beyond easily quantifiable committee work would go a long way to address misunderstandings and uncertainty in the program. This has tie-ins with the teaching workload as well. As noted above, one member has supervised a disproportionate number of graduate students. How recognition for supervising graduate students should be counted for the Teaching, Research, Service weightings on Professional Activities Reports has been a frequent issue in the Dean's Advisory Council and has not yet been resolved. Our situation should be made clearer to the Dean's office.</p>
<p>7. <i>Allocate resources to the library, particularly for access to the ATLA Religion Database.</i></p>	<p>The program members have always enjoyed excellent relations with our designated librarians, but we have been hampered by budget constraints. The Islam program is supported by the Khan endowment and has been the one area where improvement has been most noticeable. The library subscribed to ATLA but found it was not always as useful as we would have liked and years ago, at our librarian's suggestion, we let it drop. Whether additional funds will be allocated is beyond our control. It may be possible to direct some of the Interfaith Fund resources for specific purposes. It has been used for the purchase of videos and such resources in the past.</p>

## Dean's Response

The Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Science responded to the seven (7) recommendations from the External Review Report:

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1. *Revise the current curriculum.*

The Program Review team emphasized the significance of the External Reviewer recommendation to revise curriculum, which would take a great deal of time and care. They are willing to devote time to this, and the External Review provides a rationale for a retreat, which would lead to follow-up discussion regarding the SWOT analysis and optimal approaches to teaching Religious Studies. The Dean's Office supports the concept of a retreat (and follow-up discussions) to discuss Religious Studies curriculum.

With respect to weaknesses, they felt that there is a need for a faculty member in South Asian religions for sufficient breadth and a need to increase awareness of the Minor Program. This provides a good basis for the Department to begin its own SWOT analysis and decide upon staffing request priorities in a resource-limited environment.

In addition to the weaknesses identified above, the External Reviewers recommended against the present approach to categorizing religions of the world. It is not the role of the Dean to assess External Review recommendations on methodological approaches or themes to be taught within approved courses and associated descriptions. Members of the Program, who have the disciplinary expertise to define how students are provided background in the study of religion to understand the context of their world, will make these decisions, considering the external review recommendations and AQA direction at the retreat and afterward, but without any need to conform to recommended paradigm. The selection of specific religions to cover in an introductory course reflects both faculty expertise and desired student learning outcomes in Religious Studies at the University of Lethbridge under limiting resources, including time. Our Faculty Members take an inclusive approach the introductory teaching of religions of the world, while emphasizing perspectives in the study of religion, how religion is experienced, concepts such as consciousness and perception, as well as social, cultural and critical perspectives. With due consideration to the external review, ULethbridge Religious Studies Program Faculty Members are best positioned make the decisions on whether to maintain the world religions approach criticized by the external reviewers and whether to make changes to courses offered, course titles or content through the recommended retreat. This is important work, and I look forward to the outcomes of these discussions.

The Dean's Office is impressed by the work carried out to deliver Religious Studies and Asian Studies programming effectively with a small complement of faculty members. An example of this, among several, was finding a way to add RELS 2001 and thematic courses at the 3000 level. As mentioned in the Program Response, however, it is important to consider the impacts of being stretched. We must consider the negative impacts of any reductions to ancient language offerings on graduate programs across disciplines when deciding whether to recommend that these senior courses be offered more regularly. This could be an issue discussed not only at the retreat, but also more broadly across the Humanities and Social Sciences.

With regard to the South Asianist request, this is part of the existing staffing plan, but with many pressures in the Department in other disciplinary areas, the Department will need to prioritize requests and plan a program that can be delivered with and without, pending budgetary availability. The Dean's Office looks forward to the priorities and decisions made by the Program members.

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2. *Establish clear and measurable program learning outcomes.*

The Dean's Office agrees with the need to evaluate enrolment and learning outcomes of all courses, to ensure student interest and program goals are being made effectively, while evaluating changes to the curriculum.

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<p>3. <i>Evaluate the pedagogical effectiveness of the RELS 1000 course.</i></p>	<p>The Dean's Office supports the retreat mission to examine how to effectively deliver junior courses in Religious Studies. As mentioned in response to Recommendation #1, the Dean's Office shall leave the methodological approaches to World Religions teaching to the disciplinary experts in the various religious traditions. There could be some advantages to the comprehensive team-taught approach currently offered, such as recruitment benefits of exposure to all professors, ensuring that all first-year students have achieved the same learning outcomes as they move on in their programs and providing a comprehensive overview to non-Majors. There could also be disadvantages, such as student need to adapt to teaching styles and more. It will be important to ensure that any changes would be cost-neutral, aside from any delayed academic staff replacement.</p> <p>With these considerations in mind, the Dean's Office is always in favour of innovative program development and creative pedagogies and would be delighted to see efforts to optimize the experience of Religious Studies students, in addition to the planned Good Life course next year. Regardless of whether major or small changes result as an outcome of these discussions, meeting to discuss pedagogical approaches and program strengths and weaknesses, and to refine learning outcomes and assessment strategies among peers, is a continual need to ensure positive learning outcomes to benefit our students.</p> <p>Whereas we promote efficiency, caution is advised in the reduction of the frequency of RELS 1000 classes. The Dean's Office would be pleased to help in assessing the potential need for and impacts of such a decision on Religious Studies students and among programs.</p>
<p>4. <i>Articulate how the Religious Studies Program fits into the larger department of which it is now a part and into the University more broadly.</i></p>	<p>The Dean's Office was pleased to see the merger of the Department of Religious Studies and the Department of History into the Department of History &amp; Religion. One of the benefits of this type of internal structural change is to promote efficiencies and interdisciplinary collaboration that can help us continue to fulfill and expand our mandate as a Comprehensive Academic and Research University, including intensive research and the production of master's and Ph.D. graduates across disciplines. We are grateful for these efforts and will strive to provide the academic staffing needed to achieve this under challenging circumstances, especially considering that new faculty at CARUs quite consistently seek opportunity for graduate supervision to train the next generation of scholars as part of their career goals. This is also of strategic institutional importance for the institution, as more competitors emerge in the higher education landscape with degree granting status at the undergraduate but not graduate level. For the aforementioned reasons, we do not recommend an exclusive or near-exclusive focus on undergraduates in Religious Studies, nor do we recommend cancelling or excessively reducing the frequency of ancient language offerings, as doing so presents a barrier to graduate study across SGS programs.</p>
<p>5. <i>Create a new faculty position.</i></p>	<p>A South Asianist with the ability to teach South Asian religions has been part of the Arts &amp; Science staffing plan for the Department of History &amp; Religion and it is understood that there is interest in such a position from both within the University of Lethbridge and externally. There are also, however, many other pressures in the Department and beyond at the present time. As mentioned under Recommendation #1, the Department of History &amp; Religion needs to weigh the needs for expertise in South Asian religions to replace several faculty positions in other disciplinary areas. The Dean's Office would consider a South Asian Religious Studies scholar to be a priority, but the Department must establish its priorities so that recommendations are submitted with a carefully considered rank order in this limiting budgetary environment.</p>
<p>6. <i>Create a workload document for Religious Studies faculty members within the larger Department.</i></p>	<p>Assignment of duties of Members must follow Article 21.02 of the University of Lethbridge Academic Staff Collective Agreement. Service duties are not normally assigned by the Dean and take a variety of forms, including internal service at the Department, Faculty or institutional level and a wide range of external service opportunities. There are no specific minimum requirements for the number of</p>

	committees in which individual faculty members must participate, though Members may feel free to discuss how such duties could be equitably distributed, as described. Participation in the supervision or supervisory committees of graduate students and / or independent and /or applied studies is not specifically assigned by the Dean, but has been a general expectation of Faculty Members since the number of courses to be taught per Member was reduced for this purpose in 2002. There is no expectation to supervise large numbers of graduate students. Faculty members may request adjustments to standard workload allocation for the purposes of PAR evaluation. The Dean will consider the recommendation related to compensation for Religious Studies coordination, with due consideration of the efficiencies resulting from the merger, but also to fairness across units in the context of the Fall 2022 DAC decision to reduce chair and coordinator compensation to address budgetary reduction needs to support faculty replacement.
7. <i>Allocate resources to the library, particularly for access to the ATLA Religion Database.</i>	The Dean's Office concurs with the program response and is willing to advocate for library resources on the Program's behalf with an appropriate rationale and justification.

While the External Reviewers' Report contained 7 (seven) recommendations for improving and/or maintaining the Department of Political Science, the area, Dean Letts, and the Academic Quality Assurance Committee felt that the recommendations were too narrow in focus and were better presented as broad goals to be met before the next review. The committee modified and consolidated the 7 (seven) recommendations into the following 4 (four) recommendations:

1. The Religious Studies program will hold a retreat to assess the state of the program in response to this review, and their collective vision moving forward. At this retreat they will establish a plan and deadlines for assessments of the program's curriculum, including:
  - a. a review of the structuring of the current curriculum around world religions and the east/west divide.
  - b. the pedagogical effectiveness of RELS 1000 course, how it fits as an introduction to the program.
  - c. establishing clear and measurable learning outcomes for the program and for individual courses.
  - d. developing thematic course offerings of appeal to non-majors.
  - e. working to ensure that proposed curriculum changes align with existing staffing capacity (either directly in the Department or through shared resourcing)
  - f. considering how the Religious Studies Program fits into the larger department of which it is now a part and into the University more broadly, and how it serves the needs of the current student body both undergraduate and graduate.
2. The Religious Studies program will work with the Department of History & Religion and the Faculty of Arts and Science Dean's Office to prioritize the hiring of faculty member that will allow the program to continue to offer its program as resources permit across the Faculty.
3. The Religious Studies Program will meet with the Chair of the Department of History & Religion and the Faculty of Arts and Science Dean's Office to discuss the responsibilities and compensation of the Religious Studies Coordinator, acknowledging that any adjustments may need to consider alignment with Faculty-wide criteria.
4. The Religious Studies program will work together with the Faculty of Art and Science Dean's Office to ensure the Library needs of the program are being met, within available resourcing.

The Academic Quality Assurance Committee is satisfied that the Religious Studies 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,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lynn Kennedy". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Dr. Lynn Kennedy  
Chair, Academic Quality Assurance Committee  
Associate Professor, Department of History and Religion

cc Michelle Helstein, PhD.  
Provost & Vice-President (Academic)