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TO: Digvir Jayas
President and Vice Chancellor

DATE: April 1, 2025

FROM: Lynn Kennedy
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 approved the review of the Department of Philosophy at its February 27, 2025, meeting.

The Self Study Committee for this review was comprised of: Michael Stingl and Susan Deilman (Program Review Coordinators), Bryson Brown, and Kent Peacock.

The review produced 4 documents:

1. Self Study Report. Written by the Self Study Committee. Received January 31, 2024.
2. External Review Report. Written by Dr. Kathleen Akins (Simon Fraser University) and Dr. Ken Waters (University of Calgary) based on a site visit June 24 to 25, 2024. Received November 28, 2024.
3. Program Response. Written by the Self Study Committee. Received December 20, 2024.
4. Dean's Response. Written by Matt Letts, Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Science. Received February 18, 2025.

Self Study Report

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

- How can or should our MA program be strengthened? Should we expect that we will mainly be attractive to our own students, and if so, should we proactively recruit them?
- As we rebuild our undergraduate program, are we headed in appropriate directions? Is there something we are leaving out that we can and should include?
- Are the areas of teaching and research we are building towards the best match with our own institutional context?
- Should we focus more on traditional philosophy courses or applied courses? Or do we have the mix just about right, moving forward?
- Can we do more to meet our other objectives and simultaneously do more to introduce more diversity into our program?

The report noted several strengths of the Department of Philosophy:

- Currently, our program is strong in some of the main areas of contemporary philosophy: philosophy of language, epistemology, logic, and history of philosophy, including analytic philosophy and Wittgenstein. The program is also strong in critical thinking and scientific literacy, offering courses on both critical thinking and formal logic as well as courses focused on the scientific world views of physics and of geology and evolution.
- We are strong in ethics, including applied topics in biomedical ethics and environmental philosophy. The department also has strengths in political philosophy and philosophy of law.

The report noted weaknesses and challenges experienced by the program:

- Given our limited course offerings due to course rotations, MA students have often needed Independent Studies at the 5000 level. This means we offer fewer undergraduate Independent Studies courses each term, already a drain on faculty resources given our standard faculty workloads of 40/40/20 (research, teaching, and service).
- We are noticeably weak in non-Western approaches to philosophy, and in diversity issues in general.
- The key threat the Department faces in the next two to five years is the retirement of three of its senior members by the summer of 2024, with two more foreseeably following in the coming years (so five altogether). They will take with them their research interests and their areas of teaching expertise. Consequently, although it is important to assess the quality of our current program, it is much more important to ask where our program needs to be and should be in five to seven years.

The Self Study report included the following recommendations:

- There are several key opportunities that will present themselves as the Department moves forward:
 - The opportunity to rebuild our program from the ground up as retiring faculty are replaced, in line with the priorities outlined here.
 - Further development of the PPL program, building mutually supportive connections

between the PPL program and the Jarislowsky chair.

- A similar development to the PPL program on the knowledge and reality side of philosophy. What counts as knowledge? What counts as scientific knowledge? How is knowledge related to issues like climate change? How is knowledge connected to issues like decreased political trust?
- A department like ours, in a faculty and university like ours, must have the following major concerns:
 - Sending majors to graduate school. We already have a good record in this regard, but it must be maintained. In order to do this, we need to offer courses in history of philosophy, values, reality, and logic. We need a good distribution of research areas and department of members with strong research reputations.
 - Sending students to law school, where, again, we have a good record.
 - Review of our course offerings relevant to law.
 - Development of a Law Minor (done) and development of a PPL program (done).
 - We need sufficient courses and a research presence in this area to succeed in these initiatives.
 - Some students will want to continue on to law school, some will want to work in policy areas in government, private industry, or not for profits.
 - Some of the prominent law and policy areas involve biotechnology, the environment, and mental and physical health.
 - Building capacity in philosophy of mind and neuroethics to connect with policy issues arising in both neuroscience and psychology.
 - Building capacity in ethical and policy issues in biochemistry, related to technological innovations affecting agriculture, human health, and environmental health.
 - Building capacity related to ethical and policy issues in healthcare and to health concerns more generally, including public health and the social determinants of health.
 - Building capacity related to ethical and policy issues in environmental science.
 - Building capacity related to the sciences more broadly conceived, focusing on scientific methodology and its link to the epistemological justification of scientific beliefs.
 - Building capacity related to the sciences more broadly conceived, focusing on scientific methodology and its link to the epistemological justification of scientific beliefs.
 - Building capacity in the general area of political argumentation, including the ethics of political argumentation and the role of science in political argumentation.
 - Embedding philosophical approaches to critical thinking into Liberal Education.

External Review Report

The External Review Report contained nine (9) recommendations for improving the Department of Philosophy:

- Advertise for three-year limited-term appointment.
- Consider offering larger sections of Phil 1000.
- Consider reorganizing the undergraduate curriculum.
- Collaborate with other departments.
- Explore designing certificates or minor programs.
- Establish a robust position of Undergraduate Departmental Advisor.
- Document policies and procedures.
- Hire in the standard cycle of philosophy hiring.
- Develop and expand research and teaching connections with science departments.

The following, taken from the report, discuss the challenges noted:

- With a turnover of at least five faculty members over the next 2-3 years the department will likely see a shift in the department's philosophical interests and thus teaching competencies... [Upcoming] retirements will negatively affect the department's teaching capacities *for years to come* even if all of these faculty members were to be quickly replaced at the level of assistant professor.
- The Lethbridge Philosophy department has done remarkably well in attracting undergraduate students into the department, mostly students without any exposure to philosophy prior to attending university. Philosophy majors have held steady, between 30-38 students a year. In contrast, the department's minors have fluctuated from around 100 minors a year (10 years ago) to less than 25 minors in the past year. The department does not know exactly why this recent attrition in minors has occurred. But it seems imperative that the department investigate what has led to this marked reduction as well as whether other departments had a similar exodus from their minor programmes.

The following, taken from the report, note the opportunities discussed:

- There are lots of directions for philosophy departments to pursue. A department cannot do everything. As a department pursues new directions, it needs to make difficult decisions about which directions they will not pursue. The Philosophy Department at the University Lethbridge has had a concentration of excellent faculty in logic who have had a strong record advancing logic education and research at the University of Lethbridge and have placed undergraduates into excellent MA programs in the area of logic. But the Department is quickly losing faculty with expertise in advanced, formal logic. If the Logic Program continues, future hires will need to include faculty whose research interests include formal logic. And while that may seem an obvious choice to make given curricular needs, there is a cost to doing so: putting resources into the Logic Program will impinge upon the resources available for exploring new directions. This issue—of the future of the Logic Program, especially in light of recent and expected retirements—was not raised in the internal review document or in our discussions. Indeed, it was fairly late into the writing of this report that we realized that the Logic Program is staffed

entirely by Philosophy Department members—and hence represents a significant part of the department’s teaching commitments. We do not have a recommendation to make about the future of the Logic Program, only that the Department should explicitly decide which directions it will pursue and acknowledge which compromises they will need to make.

- We are confident that contributing more resources to the Department would be a cost-effective way of enhancing interdisciplinary research and student literacy across the University. The Department’s proposed program in Philosophy, Politics and Law provides an example of the kind of contributions the Philosophy Department could make. If the Department had additional resources, it could do even more to enhance research as well as undergraduate and graduate education throughout the University of Lethbridge. Philosophy can deepen reasoning in many disciplinary subjects and help students and researchers make fruitful connections among different subject areas.

Program Response

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

<i>1. Advertise for three-year limited-term appointment.</i>	We disagree with this recommendation, in part because the decision to hire any position is not up to us. We also think it is preferable, for both parties, to hire into permanent rather than temporary positions whenever possible.
<i>2. Consider offering larger sections of Phil 1000.</i>	We acknowledge the need for increased teaching capacity, but are unsure, at this point, whether offering fewer, larger sections of PHIL 1000 is the most prudent method for achieving it. We will refer this issue to our departmental curriculum committee to determine how PHIL 1000 should fit into a new undergraduate curriculum (see response to Recommendation 3, below).
<i>3. Consider reorganizing the undergraduate curriculum.</i>	It is not entirely clear to us how the reviewers understand the difference between a short-term reorganization of the curriculum and a longer-term revision and restructuring of the curriculum. However, we have recently established a departmental curriculum committee which is doing the work of reorganizing, revising, and restructuring the undergraduate (and graduate) curriculum, and so we agree with the spirit of this recommendation.
<i>4. Collaborate with other departments.</i>	We agree with the spirit of this recommendation, and will suggest that, as part of its work, the new departmental curriculum committee undertake an environmental scan to determine whether there are courses in other academic units that would be suitable for this purpose.
<i>5. Explore designing certificates or minor programs.</i>	We agree with this recommendation, and in fact have been working toward similar ends for some time, though most of the programs that have been developed already (e.g., Minor in Philosophy of Law) are not noted in the Report. We will explore the feasibility of adding additional programs once the new (undergraduate) curriculum is settled.
<i>6. Establish a robust position of Undergraduate Departmental Advisor.</i>	We agree with the spirit of this recommendation and will explore whether having a single person fulfill this role is the best way to achieve these goals.
<i>7. Document policies and procedures.</i>	We agree with this recommendation.
<i>8. Hire in the standard cycle of philosophy hiring.</i>	We agree with this recommendation and hope that the University will support us in this.
<i>9. Develop and expand research and teaching connections with science departments.</i>	We agree with the spirit of this recommendation. We have emphasized our desire for collaboration across academic units in our most recent job postings and will continue to do so in future postings. Whether, to what extent, and with whom such collaboration occurs we feel is best left up to the faculty members involved.

Dean's Response

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

<i>1. Advertise for three-year limited-term appointment.</i>	<p>We agree with the committee response that new tenure-track and continuing positions are needed in the Department of Philosophy. The Department will have lost the services of five of its eight members since January 1, 2024, by June 30, 2025. During the same time, two members have joined the Department, one with Jarislowsky Chair duties reducing their teaching capacity for the Department, and we are currently advertising another position.</p> <p>We have announced a job advertisement to recruit one tenure-track Assistant Professor position in ethics. We have hired a Term Instructor to deliver courses. We have also requested central funds for additional hiring. Even with the new Assistant Professor expected to be hired this year, the Department will have quickly moved from long-term capacity to teach up to thirty-nine courses per year to only 18 (25 this year with the new Term Instructor) without the additional hiring. We agree with the external reviewers that a three-year limited term position could address any remaining deficiencies, but there are disadvantages of covering long-term deficiencies with three-year positions, including a smaller applicant pool, teaching and research preparation time commitment and repeated search needs.</p>
<i>2. Consider offering larger sections of Phil 1000.</i>	<p>We look forward to considering the recommendations of the Philosophy Department Curriculum Committee on how best to meet student needs. Larger 1000-level course would be more efficient and could help to manage existing program offerings and new curricular initiatives. This may be necessary. However, larger classes need to be appropriately managed and resourced to prevent negative impact on the student experience, as these courses are ideally writing and argumentation intensive. In the face of a smaller faculty complement, there is a need to consider that option vs. other options such as streamlining and cross-listing of courses. Space may also be a limitation to this recommendation if we move beyond one hundred students, as we have a small number of suitable large classroom spaces.</p>
<i>3. Consider reorganizing the undergraduate curriculum.</i>	<p>The Dean's Office agrees with this recommendation. We understand that an effort is underway right now to address Recommendation 3, and we look forward to the recommendations that are brought forth by the Philosophy Department Curriculum Committee. In addition to the need for more efficient delivery of the B.A. in Philosophy, given the reduced faculty complement and lack of sustainability initiatives during the 2022-23 budget discussions, there is the potential for enrolment growth through the new Philosophy of Law Minor, Philosophy, Politics & Law B.A. Program, the pathway to a law degree at Bond University (Philosophy is a natural choice for the B.A. portion) and soon courses forming part of multi-institutional programming related to the Jarislowsky Chair in Trust and Political Leadership.</p>
<i>4. Collaborate with other departments.</i>	<p>There is considerable potential for cross-listing of courses with other disciplines in the Humanities and Social Sciences, but the Department objected to this concept during the 2022-23 sustainability exercise because of concerns around capacity for core disciplinary delivery and around the Dean's Office's encouragement of Department mergers. The Department of Philosophy is engaging in transdisciplinary curriculum planning, including the Philosophy, Politics and Law Program to be launched after Ministry approval, and programming related to the Jarislowsky Chair in Trust and Political Leadership. There is also some transdisciplinary research group planning, with the establishment of the Critical Thinking and Citizen Engagement Lab. These academic and research programs present additional opportunity for,</p>

	and potential benefit from, cross-listing to enable growth maintenance of existing programs.
<i>5. Explore designing certificates or minor programs.</i>	The Faculty of Arts & Science has experienced a reduction in the overall size of its faculty complement in response to non-replacement of some positions that occurred as a result of reductions to our Provincial Operating Grant. We cannot continue to add programs without program deletion. With that being said, we are supportive of the strategic development of Philosophy-related programs, including the Minor in Philosophy of Law, the B.A. in Philosophy, Politics and Law, the pathway to a law degree at Bond University and forthcoming Jarislowsky Chair programming. We believe this is more than sufficient.
<i>6. Establish a robust position of Undergraduate Departmental Advisor.</i>	The Faculty of Arts & Science does not have sufficient funding to support Department-specific academic advisors. If the Department wishes to designate an individual to answer questions about the program within normal service expectations or as part of Chair duties, it is certainly free to do so.
<i>7. Document policies and procedures.</i>	We agree with the recommendation to document Department policies and procedures in alignment with Faculty and institutional policies, guidelines and procedures.
<i>8. Hire in the standard cycle of philosophy hiring.</i>	The nature of the Provincial budget is such that position availability does not always align with traditional seasonal hiring cycles. However, many Departments solve this problem by requesting to delay Search processes so that they do align, and we have always supported in consultation with the Office of the Provost. Term and sessional funding can often be arranged in the interim. Our data for the Department also run counter to the assumption that there is a seasonal cycle disfavoring spring advertisement, with large numbers of qualified applicants in response to recent job postings. This may be because potential faculty members now often apply out of postdoctoral positions year-round.
<i>9. Develop and expand research and teaching connections with science departments.</i>	The Department of Philosophy has long contributed research connections with science, including areas such as climate change, bioethics and Philosophy of Science. These are faculty-driven research initiatives that we enthusiastically support. While we have lost some of these connections to attrition in recent years, we are encouraged to see the Department show an active interest in such cross-disciplinary connections during search processes. We would like to see such connections promoted, but we do not wish to see a narrowing of searches to achieve this goal, as we prefer to see more open searches that attract a wide array of Philosophers who can promote fruitful connections aligned with their research expertise and our teaching programs. Faculty with connections with other Humanities and Social Sciences disciplines or who offer a classical Philosophy focus would also be valued.

Consulting the External Reviewer Recommendations, the Program Response, and Dean Letts, the Academic Quality Assurance Committee made the following three (3) recommendations for action which the Program must report on in 1 and 3 years:

1. The Department of Philosophy will complete a thorough curriculum review (in collaboration with the Faculty of Arts and Science Dean's Office and Advising where necessary), to ensure that the requirements for a major or minor in Philosophy reflect current resources and faculty strengths. Items to consider may include:
 - a. Offering larger sections of Phil 1000.
 - b. Collaborating with other departments and programs to cross list courses, including in both the sciences and humanities.

- c. How newly proposed transdisciplinary programs intersect with existing Philosophy offerings, ensuring that new offerings do not introduce duplication and instead enhance both philosophy and transdisciplinary program offerings.
 - d. Engage in collaborative discussions with Advising to ensure students fully understand their program options.
2. The Department of Philosophy will develop a plan that identifies the future direction of the department and potential staffing needs, while also cognizant of the limited potential for new hires.
3. The Department of Philosophy will create a document that outlines departmental policies and procedures, ensuring they are in alignment with Faculty and institutional policies, guidelines and procedures.

The Academic Quality Assurance Committee is satisfied that the Department of Philosophy 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 "L. 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)