

TO: Mike Mahon
President

DATE: November 29, 2011

FROM: Bob Boudreau
Chair, University Review Committee

RE: Department of Art Academic Quality Assurance Review

In accordance with the U of L *Academic Quality Assurance Policy and Process*, the University Review Committee approved the Department of Art review results at its October 6, 2011 meeting. The Art quality assurance review produced four documents:¹

- 1) *Department of Art, Faculty of Fine Arts, University of Lethbridge: Program Review Conducted 2006/2007 – Self Study Report* (April 5, 2007) – self-study report drafted by the Department of Art Program Review Committee.
- 2) *University of Lethbridge, Department of Art, Faculty of Fine Art – External Appraiser’s Report* (June 5, 2007) – prepared by external reviewers Ian Carr-Harris (Ontario College of Art and Design) and Janet Jones (York University).
- 3) *Department of Art, Faculty of Fine Arts, University of Lethbridge: Program Review Conducted 2006/2007 – Program Response* (May 5, 2008) – the response of the Department of Art Program Review Committee to the external review.
- 4) *Dean’s response to the external review report of the Department of Art, conducted in 2007* (June 7, 2011) – response to the review, written by Desmond Rochfort, Dean of Fine Arts. Desmond Rochfort presented the results of the review to the University Review Committee on October 6, 2011.

The self-study noted several key strengths for the Art Department, including: a “solid provincial and national reputation”; a unique-in-Canada major in Art History/Museum Studies that is growing in demand; and a Visiting Speakers program.

¹ All documents are available upon request.

The self-study included five specific areas of concern:

1. Art History/Museum Studies – Related to this Major, the Department requires advice on staffing, class size, course offerings, program breadth, use of digital technology, possible degree naming change, partnership options, and program delivery.
2. Space – Increased enrolments have resulted in the need for more studio space and an installation/critique room.
3. Technical support – The photo arts, media arts, and printmaking areas are in dire need of additional technical support.
4. Student exhibition space – The one art gallery on campus cannot serve all exhibition needs.
5. Visual Resource Centre Coordinator – As the Department moves from a slide library to a digital visual resource centre, a dedicated Visual Resource Centre Coordinator is required.

There were six future directions listed in the self-study:

1. Art History/Museum Studies – The B.F.A. (Art), Major in Art History/Museum Studies is a growth area, expanding from two to 12 students in the past two years.
2. Planning and Design – Funding of the approved B.A., Major in Rural and Urban Planning and Design would provide for additional faculty, support personnel, and facilities for the Department of Art.
3. Art studio – There are many areas for growth within the Art Studio major, including additional courses and more tenure-track faculty to teach all courses.
4. Graduating exhibitions – The Department needs infrastructure to allow for graduating exhibitions for all students.
5. Master of Fine Arts support – To effectively support the M.F.A. program (submitted for approval in 2005 and subsequently approved but not funded by government), the Department of Art requires more space for graduate student studios and increased commitments from faculty to teach and supervise graduate students.

The external review noted that the Art Studio major was “commensurate with leading art studio programs nationally” and that it provides “a strong undergraduate curriculum.” Regarding the Art History/Museum Studies major, the external review commented that it is “a vital program with excellent professors and course content.”

The reviewers made several suggestions to strengthen the program:

- Continue with the (then-current) curriculum review of the Art Studio major.
- Confirm the Art NOW visiting speaker program as core to the delivery of the Art Studio major.
- Begin reducing the dependence on Term Appointments as soon as possible.
- Implement the Technician position (which was frozen as of the time of the review).
- Investigate ways of increasing access to the art collection.

Overall, the external review noted the national reputation of the Department of Art, stating that the U of L “should regard the Department of Art as one of its major strengths.”

In its response, the Program Review Committee noted that many of the recommendations from the External Review Report have been implemented or are under discussion. The specific recommendations for curriculum changes are all being considered in the Department’s curriculum review process. Regarding Art NOW, the Department was in the process of making the courses that offer the visiting speaker program required for both Art Studio and Art History/Museum Studies majors. Funding for Art NOW was noted as a concern. The Program Review Committee recognized the importance of reducing the reliance on Term Appointments, stating that tenure track staffing recommendations are included in Department planning and curriculum development, but also noted the challenges of reduced funding. Another effect of funding challenges is that the Technician position noted in the external review is still frozen. And, finally, lobbying continues for a new, larger Art Gallery and storage facility, both of which will boost access to the U of L art collection.

The Dean’s Response to the review results, due to a process delay written three years following the Program Review Committee response, provided both commentary and follow up on the review’s recommendations:

- The overreliance on Term and Sessional appointments continues, due to financial constraints. There are some positive effects of this, mainly the addition of new ideas to the Department and greater flexibility in program delivery.
- The hiring freeze on technical support personnel has been lifted, and one technical support person has been hired.
- The lack of installation space may be addressed through Fine Arts space in the Penny Building.
- The Art Gallery is now under the authority of the Vice President (Academic), and discussions on the accessibility of the art collection need to take place between the Director of the Art Gallery and the VP Academic.
- An external review recommendation of a curriculum component on professional practice has been addressed in the Art department’s senior studio courses.
- An external review recommendation to increase program breadth has not been addressed due to fiscal constraints.
- Regarding references to a Master of Fine Arts program, the M.F.A. has been approved and is now running, but with a limited number of students due to a lack of government funding.
- An external review recommendation to consider a Master of Arts in Art History and Museum studies has not been addressed to date, due to fiscal constraints.
- The Department of Art is considering an external review recommendation to hire a Professor in First Nations and curatorial studies to teach in the Art History/Museum Studies major. This recommendation aligns with a program proposal for a B.F.A. (Native American Art), currently under development.
- Hiring a visual resource centre manager would create a duplication of roles with the Fine Arts Librarian and the Department’s slide library manager, and is fiscally unrealistic presently.

- The University Review Committee is satisfied that the Department of Art academic quality assurance review has followed the U of L's academic quality assurance process appropriately, and acknowledges the successful completion of the review.
