

# MA / MSc Program Review Summary

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**REVIEW INITIATED:** September 2004

**REVIEW CONCLUDED:** February 2006

**PREVIOUS REVIEW(S):** 1996

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<b>Program Review Committee</b>	• Andrew Hakin • Abdie Kazemipur • Hadi Kharaghani, Chair • Goldie Morgentaler • Richard Mrazek • Karran Thorpe	(Chemistry and Biochemistry) (Sociology) (Mathematics and Computer Science) (English) (Faculty of Education) (Faculty of Health Sciences)
<b>External Review Team</b>	• Peter Tremaine • Raymond F. Currie	(Dean of Physical and Engineering Science, University of Guelph) (Dean of Arts Emeritus, University of Manitoba)

## MA/MSc PROGRAM OVERVIEW

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### Overview of Program:

- The University established a graduate program at the Masters level for Arts and Science in 1992.
- There is no provincial funding for more than 80% of students enrolled in the MA/MSc program (2005/06).
- The MA/MSc program is based on a mentorship model in which students and faculty work in close partnership. Program developed out of a mandate to support individual faculty research, rather than graduate education *per se*. However, the mentorship model does serve students by helping them to develop into scholars in a climate of intellectual freedom, rigor, integrity, and mutual respect.

### Enrolment in Graduate Programs:

- Between 1992 and 2004 a total of 201 students were registered in Graduate Programs offered by the University of Lethbridge (MSc: 154; MA: 47).
- In 2005/06, the MA/MSc program had approximately 135 students (Fall 2005 Full-time Enrolment).
- MSc programs experienced significant growth between 2002 (around 10 students) and 2004 (44 students).

### Average GPA of Admitted Students:

- Between 1992 and 2005, the average entrance GPA for all admitted students was relatively stable around 3.50. This is significantly higher than the minimum entrance requirement GPA of 3.0.

### Program Completion:

- Approximately 80% of students graduate from their Master's Program. This is slightly better than the national average, with median values between 70% and 75% (varies by discipline).
- However, only 35-39% of students in MA/MSc programs complete their program within the recommended 2-year time period. The majority of students have graduated within 3 years.
- The median value of completion time from MA/MSc programs is between 7 – 7.5 semesters. National rates vary between 5.5 and 8 semesters, depending on the discipline.

## HIGHLIGHTS OF QUESTIONNAIRES

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The Program Review Committee conducted questionnaires of three groups:

- Graduates of the MA/MSc Program at the University of Lethbridge;
- Students who are presently enrolled in graduate programs at the University of Lethbridge; and
- Faculty supervisors of graduate students at the University of Lethbridge.

While results varied between groups, there were a few key themes:

- Overall satisfaction with quality of supervision and program;
- Lack of graduate course offerings;
- Lack of sense of community between student colleagues and the lack of facilities for graduate students;
- Adequacy of library resources;
- Complaints about the application for admission forms; and
- Concerns regarding the manner in which the supervision of graduate students is incorporated into faculty duties (Faculty survey).

## HIGHLIGHTS OF EXTERNAL REVIEW

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The External Review Report makes the following general comments regarding the MA/MSc Program:

- "...a high degree of success in [the mentorship/tutorial model], in terms of student satisfaction and faculty participation..."
- "Challenges remain in the social sciences and humanities, which...are less suitable for the mentorship approach to post-graduate scholarship."
- "Our perceptions of the curriculum and learning environment for students are, for the most part, very positive."

### **Identified Strengths and Successes:**

- Regular collegial involvement of most faculty members in a department with each graduate student. Faculty interaction is especially notable in the science laboratories. Accessibility to faculty members is one of the strongest assets of the U of L.
- Practice of inviting external examiners to campus for a face-to-face oral defence of MA/MSc theses.
- The independent study courses are a highly valued learning experience, particularly in the experimental sciences.
- Structure of programs along with student-faculty interactions promotes free enquiry and the appropriate balance between pure and applied research.
- A good mix of students from a variety of ethnic backgrounds, including First Nations.
- The University uses its limited resources very effectively. The Provost and Deans have shown real leadership and imagination in creating a strong graduate program with few resources and a modest mandate for graduate studies.
- Overall sense that the library has an appropriate level of moral and financial support, along with good leadership to achieve complex goals.
- The administrative structures appear to be functioning well and to be appropriate for the size of the current program.

### **Identified Weaknesses and Committee Concerns:**

- Lack of formal graduate courses. The need for more "core" lecture courses is two-fold: first, as enrolment grows it will jeopardize the small student/faculty ratio and the hands-on involvement necessary for the success of the current model; second, more formal course offerings would increase opportunities for student interaction to help lessen the sense of personal isolation identified in some of the student surveys.
- Recruitment is done by individual faculty members. This fosters the situation by which local students are disproportionately represented. As well, the "achievement of excellence through the recruitment of outstanding students requires a national and international profile for the University that is greater than the sum of its parts."

- Lack of creative use of the University's state of the art digital transmission technology for graduate courses/education.
- The perception that students in MA programs are underfunded as well as the problematic nature of finding funding for students in the Arts.
- Shortage of space for graduate students: first, the need for student office space; second, the need for a common area to counter the isolation of students with a stimulating experience of a cohort.
- Concern that no single individual was willing to express an option or vision for what graduate studies at Lethbridge might become recognizing the eventuality that increases in graduate student enrolments will require the University to move beyond the mentorship model.
- Department chairs do not appear to be involved in the graduate program administration in any formal way.

## PROGRAM RECOMMENDATIONS & DEAN'S RESPONSE

	Program Review Committee	External Review	Dean's Response
<b>Revisit mission of the MA/MSc programs.</b>	<p>Establish a task force to review the mission statement of the MA/MSc programs.</p> <p>Need to revisit the mission statement of the programs and adjust it for present conditions, most notably the shift from admissions being based on the need of a faculty member rather than the needs of the program or students.</p>	<p>The University should follow through on a proactive visioning exercise to use the novel aspects of the MA/MSc program as the foundation for imaginative, equally innovative methods of delivering the new interdisciplinary PhD programs.</p>	<p>The document will be discussed by Dean's Council and other bodies of the University and this recommendation will be discussed at those forums.</p>
<b>Establish a Faculty of Graduate Studies/ Appoint a full-time Dean of Graduate Studies.</b>	<p>A Faculty of Graduate Studies should be established with the corresponding Dean position to provide the dedicated time necessary to ensure leadership as the program grows.</p>	<p>A full-time Dean of Graduate Studies should be appointed as soon as funding permits, reporting to the Provost.</p>	<p>The possibility of a full time graduate Dean is being considered, resources permitting.</p>
<b>Provide faculty compensation for supervision of graduate programs/training.</b>	<p>Professors should be adequately compensated for supervising all aspects of graduate student programs/training.</p>	<p>Recommend that Chairs and Deans pay attention to the changing role of faculty members, to ensure that new responsibilities are not simply added on where heavy responsibilities already exist.</p>	<p>Address the added teaching responsibility in some fashion.</p>
<b>Hold formal orientation sessions for new graduate students.</b>	<p>Formal orientation sessions should be held for all new graduate students at the beginning of their program.</p>	-	-
<b>Develop graduate level courses.</b>	<p>Graduate level courses should be developed as needed across MA and MSc programs using innovative ways of delivering courses to accommodate the differing numbers in specific areas of programs.</p>	<p>Concur with the Internal Review Committee.</p> <p>More formal graduate courses should be developed. These "core" courses should complement rather than replace the successful system of independent study courses and projects now in place.</p> <p>The Deans and Chairs should proactively explore options for</p>	<p>Proposal is in place to develop and deliver broad and cognate based courses for graduate students in the areas of research methodologies. Students also take courses from other western Canadian universities under the Western Deans' Agreement. The possibility of collaborating with U of C and U of A in offering courses should be explored (possibly using video</p>

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<b>Ensure appropriate base funding.</b>	Appropriate base funding must be sought to provide proper support for the present number of graduate students before growing beyond the present size of the MA/MSc programs.	Strongly support the University in its efforts to seek provincial government support for all graduate students, consistent with the funding formula provided to the Universities of Alberta and Calgary.	AUA strongly pursued the government to fund graduate programs in its Access funding priorities. Some funding for graduate students is likely.
<b>Coordinate recruitment and promotion activity.</b>	Appropriate recruitment and promotion initiatives, both national and international, should be established.  A reconsideration of the current international students' fee structure could be included in this strategy.	A recruitment officer for graduate studies should be appointed once funding becomes available.  The Dean of Graduate Studies and the appropriate Deans of other Faculties should work with department chairs to develop an aggressive recruiting strategy.	The current structure of attracting and retaining students is working well.  Recruitment efforts could be intensified initially with the department, with some funding to them.  Currently we partner with the Western Deans Association to recruit students. The possibility of strengthening our recruitment strategy will be seriously considered.
<b>Equitably define Graduate, Teaching, and Research Assistantships.</b>	Assistantships should be properly defined so there is continuity and equity across programs.	-	-
<b>Ensure adequate office space for graduate students.</b>	Additional office space should be sought for graduate students, especially for students who are currently housed in laboratories.	University should follow through on desire to create new offices and study space for graduate students.	Office, study, and lab space needs of graduate students were presented to the Budget Committee by the graduate Dean, in consultation with department chairs.  New buildings will provide adequate office and study space for graduate students.  The Library is looking into the feasibility of providing designated study space for graduate students.
<b>Create a graduate student "home".</b>	-	Recommend that space (perhaps in the Library) be considered for the creation of a supportive study/interaction/nourishment graduate student home, particularly, but not only, for students in the Arts.	-
<b>Make substantial changes to the application form for admission to the MA/MSc programs.</b>	Substantial changes should be made to the application for MA/MSc admission form to make it more	-	-

Program Review Committee	External Review	Dean's Response
convenient for students who may not reside in Lethbridge.		
<b><i>Continue use of External Examiners in thesis defence.</i></b> -	The practice of inviting external examiners to campus for a face-to-face oral defence of MA/MSc theses is vital to student experience and program development. It should be continued.	Continue with the practice and continue to provide \$700 in travel expenses per oral defence for each student in support of the practice and think about an honorarium as a token for the external examiners.
<b><i>Establish a special fund for grants to Arts students.</i></b> -	Recommend that the Dean of Graduate Studies establish a special fund that would allocate a limited number of \$7,000 grants to Arts students. These grants would be added to the base \$7,000 that students receive for TA work.  Attaching this fund to success by faculty members in SSHRC grants or inclusion in the "B" list may encourage more applications by faculty members to SSHRC and help keep good research initiatives alive.	A special fund may be created for all students so that they apply for their research activities during the summer term.
<b><i>Consider the evolution of the administration of the MA/MSc program.</i></b> -	Options should be explored for involving the chairs of departments in the administration of the graduate programs in an effective and appropriate manner.	Currently, chairs are involved in the process of admission and quality control. It might not be viable to completely decentralize given the small size of the program.