

Internal Academic Review Committee Report on the Review of the Department of English

Department of English

The Department of English is recognized nationally and internationally for the quality of its teaching, research and scholarship. It is home to energetic and committed faculty and staff who have demonstrated a sense of purpose and extraordinary efficiency, despite severe financial constraints. The Department attracts very good students who show commitment and devotion to their work.

The reports highlight the dilemma, faced not only by Queen's, but also by all departments in the English-speaking world, of finding the appropriate balance in the curriculum between literary history and contemporary literature. While the reviewers praise the Department for its research accomplishments, they also encourage the unit to create a more dynamic research environment. In particular, reviewers suggest expanding opportunities for graduate students to engage in research endeavours, such as participating in research groups and working as research assistants. Having reviewed the reports of both the consultants and the Internal Review team, the IARC makes the following recommendations.

Major Recommendations

1. CURRICULUM: The IARC commends English for its recent efforts to enhance and refine its undergraduate program by addressing the concerns identified by students, External Consultants and Review Team members. Specifically, the reports had recommended a review of the English "gateway" course to ensure a balanced presentation of contemporary and historic literature and an appraisal of the curriculum content of upper year seminar courses.

The IARC recommends that the Department of English continue its curriculum review process with the full participation of its students and faculty members.

RESEARCH CULTURE: The IARC congratulates the Department on its reputation for research excellence and acknowledges the independent nature of the pursuit of scholarship, which is normally associated with the field of English. Nonetheless, the IARC supports the recommendation of the reviewers that efforts be made to raise the visibility of the research culture within the Department and foster graduate student participation in the research programs of the unit.

Where warranted, the IARC recommends that the Department seek external funding to support research and to provide stipends and collaborative research opportunities for graduate students.

2. ADMINISTRATION: The External Consultants and the Review Team articulated the need for the Department to establish a system for sharing administrative responsibilities within the unit, cultivate leadership and strengthen the “service ethic” of the unit. The Reports suggest a review of duties associated with various departmental service roles and the development of succession plans to ensure smooth and predictable transitions.

The IARC recommends that the Department of English, with guidance from the Faculty of Arts and Science, take steps to establish and coordinate mechanisms that encourage faculty service to the Department.

Outcomes of the Review

Response submitted by the Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Science and the Head of the Department of English

Outcomes of the Internal Academic Review of the Department of English Joint Response from the Department of English and the Faculty of Arts and Science

Recommendation 1

Since receiving the recommendations of the internal and external IAR assessors, the Department of English has been actively engaged in addressing the concerns expressed about its “gateway” course, English 110. We have revised our *English 110 Guidelines* and we have created the new

administrative post of English 110 Coordinator, whose mandate will include coordinating resources and organizing and facilitating the teaching of writing skills. The Department is currently offering the maximum number of upper year seminar courses in Contemporary Literature for which we have faculty resour

**Report of the Internal Review Team for the
Department of English
Internal Academic Review**

Queen's University

By

Ms. Diane Bedrossian, Life Sciences undergraduate student

Dr. Frank Burke, Film Studies

Mr. Michael Helfield, Classics graduate student

Prof. Elizabeth Kauffmann, Nursing

Ms. Wendy Lloyd, Human Resources

Dr. Kevin Munhall, Psychology

Dr. Rena Upitis, Education (chair)

March 2004

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Introduction

Process

At the invitation of the Vice-Principal (Academic), the members listed on the front of this report agreed to take part in the Internal Academic Review of the Department of English. Accordingly, the Internal Academic Review Team (herein referred to as the Review Team) for the Department of English was formed in August 2003.

The Review Team began by examining the three volumes of the English Department Self-Study: namely, the Analysis (Volume I), Appendices (Volume II), and Curriculum Vitae (Volume III). The Review Team also examined and discussed the Senate documents and guidelines for conducting internal academic reviews at Queen's, and the Guidelines for External Consultants and Review Teams on Equity Issues. At our first meeting in September, we discussed procedural issues and conducted our first examination of the various documents. After taking some time to review the documents in detail, we met again in November. As a result of that meeting, the Review Team identified the issues that we felt would be most pertinent to the review.

The external consultants came to Queen's in early January 2004. At that time, several members of the Review Team attended the meetings of undergraduate and graduate students. In addition, the Review Team as a whole met with the external consultants. During that meeting, we were able to raise issues with the external consultants that we thought required clarification or discussion, as well as to hear the impressions of the external consultants. Several members of the Review Team also took part in a meeting with members of the Department of English in early February. After receiving the Report from the External Consultants in late February, along with some clarifying comments from the Head of the Department of English, the Review Team met once again to discuss the consultants' report and to discuss the elements that would be contained in the report of the Review Team.

Overall Findings

The Review Team wholeheartedly agrees with the view of the external consultants regarding the high quality of the English Department. The consultants recognized that the Queen's English Department is known both nationally and internationally for the quality of its students and the impact of the research and scholarship carried out in the Department. The report from the external consultants details reasons for their assessment, as well as noting several areas for improvement. Indeed, the Review Team felt that the report was a particularly strong one, and many of the points made in our own report simply reinforce the observations made by the external consultants. In addition, throughout the report, we comment on the Queen's context where possible.

In the first section of their report (*Quality Summary*), the consultants identified a number of key issues. In terms of the comparator universities, we agree with the consultants who identify the English departments at Alberta, Toronto, UBC, Western as more appropriate choices than those offered by the Department of English, despite differences in such factors as size and resources.

The Review Team also agrees that there is a heavy service burden on faculty members at mid-career level, and indeed, at the early-career level as well, as will become evident in a later section of the report.

listed in the report. It was clear in the Review Team's meeting with the Department that faculty acknowledge the contribution these people are making and hold it in high regard. Although the committee recognizes the scope and breadth of the responsibilities carried out by these staff members, the present configuration of job responsibilities makes it highly unlikely that a reevaluation of the three staff positions would result in any upgrades accompanied by higher levels of compensation. Instead, it is recommended that funding for another continuing or term support staff position be added to the base budget of the Department. This would help ease the workload of the current staff. Supplementary assistance may also be needed at peak times of academic administrative activity.

Teaching and the Undergraduate Curriculum

The Review Team feels that, for the most part, curriculum evaluation is best left in the hands of the external consultants, since both are English academics and none of the Review Team members currently is. We would, however, like to reiterate the comments made in the opening section regarding teaching. Even though there are issues that the Department is currently considering regarding the structure of the undergraduate curriculum, it is evident from the course outlines submitted in the Self-Study that the English faculty think deeply about pedagogy, and from the course evaluation information in the Self-Study that the

Graduate Programs and Research

The training of graduate students and the Department's research and scholarship are summarized in this single section because the Review Team feels strongly that key issues for both areas of the Department are linked.

The external consultants present a positive view of the productivity and quality of the Department's scholarship. The Queen's English Department has an international reputation for its research activities, and its publication rates are comparable to those of

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