

History Program Review

Faculty of Humanities, College of Arts

Program and Unit Review: History

Dean's Summary Report

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In May 2012 the Program Review Committee conducted a site visit as part of a Program Review of the History Department. Members of the Program Review Committee included members from other Canadian Universities and one internal member from another department.

Overview

The overall number of structural and systemic weaknesses were identified.

One recommendation was that the department conduct a curriculum mapping and innovation project aimed at revitalizing a largely traditional set of courses and delivery options. The department

Recommendation 1: reduce the number of courses offered with a view to creating a collection of more general courses that faculty can rotate into their teaching load.

Action: the department will engage in a curriculum mapping exercise; faculty will evaluate courses, note areas of overlap, revise courses and reduce course offerings, which will allow more than one person to teach upper level courses.

Recommendation 2: develop thematic courses to allow for the integration of geographic areas.

Action: thematic courses will be developed at the third year.

Recommendation 3: focus on fewer areas and become known for these, and/or come up with more innovatict

Action: courses will be advertised at least 1-2 years ahead of scheduling.

Recommendation 10:

Recommendation 2: encourage a greater sense of community among History students.

Action: the department has launched a series of student friendly initiatives to promote a greater sense of community amongst students.

Recommendation 3: provide more opportunities for students to take part in governance.

Action: the President of the students' History Association will attend department meetings.

Recommendation 4: provide a place for History students to gather and work together.

Action: the Dean has advocated for a seminar room for History students at Campus Planning.

Recommendation 5: ensure that faculty members are aware of funding available to hire student researchers and that students are alerted to research assistant opportunities.

Action: better information will be provided about opportunities for research and RA positions.

Recommendation 6: incorporate more hands-on research and networking opportunities as part of all course work.

Action: students will be alerted to volunteer and paid opportunities within the community; this is part of coursework in HIST 401.

Recommendation 7: encourage students to present research at undergraduate research conferences.

Action: students will be encouraged to present research at department and institutional functions such as the History Department's Roundtable Series and the Micro-Lecture Series.

Recommendation 8: highlight the value and many uses of a History degree through a range of communication strategies.

Action: this has been addressed on the web and in marketing brochures.

Recommendation 9: ensure students benefit from a more formal structure of advice from History faculty and the Advising and Career centres regarding post graduation opportunities and job possibilities.

Action: see #8 and # 12; print materials on the co-op program are now available for students and co-op sessions will be planned for students.

Recommendation 10: make greater use of social media and for recruitment purposes.

Action: the Head and Assistant have been using social media to communicate with students, posting news stories, job opportunities, games etc.

Recommendation 11: support the creation of a student History society.

Action: a strong student association has been formed for the coming year.

Recommendation 12: create embedded faculty advisors in the department.

Action: a faculty member will be designated as a liaison person to work with Arts Advice; the department will establish a committee to explore options for student advising including the idea of rotating faculty volunteers.

Recommendation 13: begin to cross list courses; this will help provide the foundation for a multidisciplinary program in Indigenous Studies and help with recruitment.

Action: the department will consider cross-listing HIST 103 when the new Indigenous Studies Degree is launched and will look at opportunities for service courses for this degree.

Recommendation 14: find out from Aboriginal students why they are not enrolling in History courses and consider methods to attract Aboriginal students; hold office hours/events in the Aboriginal Resource Centre; consider the creation of Special Topics/Issues courses of interest to Aboriginal students.

Action: the department will create greater links between Aboriginal students and the History Department and will survey Aboriginal students' responses to their History classes.

Recommendation 15: organize a department Diversity Committee to promote understanding of the various forms that diversity can take, to promote diversity and to ensure integration of diversity across the curriculum.

Action: the department did not see a need to pay particular attention to issues of diversity, feeling these were well addressed within course syllabi even if not explicitly mentioned in course outlines; however, the department will highlight these on the web page, pointing out to students the courses that cover these issues.

Recommendation 16: ensure that students and faculty members are aware of the student award opportunities available both internally and externally to the University.

Action: the website has been updated to highlight all current awards and how to apply for them.

C. Enrollment/Recruitment/Completion Rates

Graduating students are satisfied with their experience at UFV and the majority indicated that they would choose UFV again if the opportunity presented itself. The completion rate for History majors is reasonable as is the completion rate for courses.

Recommendation 2: do more to encourage departments to consider History courses as mandatory in their programs.

Action: the department is actively involved in the BA Review and is promoting Historical Consciousness as a breadth requirement in the BA.

Recommendation 3: ensure students declare their major earlier.

Action: students are now required to declare their major earlier.

Recommendation 4: make all courses the same number of credits to help rationalize the program.

Action: the suggestion of making all courses the same number of credits to help rationalize the program is an issue that will have to be addressed at the faculty level as it has budget implications; this recommendation was also made by the English Review Committee.

Recommendation 5: conduct an audit of when specific courses are offered.

Action: the Head completed a 5 year audit and is assured that there is sufficient variation in the department's timetabling.

Recommendation 6: examine the sustainability of upper level offerings given that the enrollment drop is largest at the 3rd year level and that fill rates at the 400 level are less than 50% overall.

Action:

Action: see B2 above.

Recommendation 11:

Action: see above; the university is currently experiencing a serious shortage of space; there are no additional spaces that can be dedicated to part-time faculty; full-time faculty members do not use their offices at all times so the department is encouraged to make arrangements to maximize use of office space.

Recommendation 6: UFV, being a teaching focused institution, needs to conduct regular and thorough peer teaching evaluations; this process would be more effective if student evaluations could be viewed by the Head and/or the part-time hiring committee; the Review Committee was taken aback that this was not already the case as this is the norm at post-secondary institutions.

Action: the Dean is in agreement with the Committee's recommendation; this issue is one to be negotiated with the FSA.

Recommendation 7: begin work on a hiring plan as it appears that there may be a lack of part-time faculty to replace faculty members on sabbaticals.

Action: the department has developed a hiring plan.

E. Resources

The Review Committee was impressed with the library and writing resources available on campus.

Recommendation 1: consider whether the growing reliance on e-books is sustainable.

Action: the department has made these recommendations to the Library Advisory Committee.

Recommendation 2: consider library skills workshops as mandatory.

Action: mandatory inclusion would lead to repetition; the department will consider setting up voluntary sessions for History students.

Recommendation 3: provide a dedicated space for sessionals.

Action: See D5 above.

Recommendation 4: provide a large private office for the Head and a more welcoming office for department Assistant.

Action: signage has been provided to designate the office of Head and Assistant.

F. Alignment with University and Community Needs/Plans

The strong emphasis on teaching in the History Department is in keeping with the first goal of the Strategic Plan, which is to provide the best undergraduate education in Canada. Department work with the community fits well with the second goal of the Strategic Plan which is to be a leader of social, cultural, economic and environmentally-responsible development in the Fraser Valley. The History Department has created strong partnerships with a variety of external stakeholders including the Stó:l community and various local groups. Courses in BC History, Stó:l , Mennonite, Sikh, etc. address this goal of the plan.

The Review Committee applauded these partnerships and encouraged the department to find ways to interact even more with external stakeholders and community groups. The department engaged well with the review process, in keeping with goal #3 of the Strategic Plan, which references being accountable in achieving our goals.

Recommendation 1: give serious thought and discussion to updating some of the curriculum/pedagogies if the UFV History Department plans to be the best undergraduate department in Canada.

Action: the Head will attend PD events and will engage the department in a full review and updating of the curriculum and pedagogies.

Recommendation 2: seek out additional partnership opportunities (internal and external).

Action: the department already partners with: Mennonite Studies; Peace Studies; Indigenous Studies; Early Modern Studies; in addition, department members work with local archives and historical societies already.

Recommendation 3: provide more research or experiential learning opportunities for students.

Action: the department has been proactive in addressing these concerns, increasing its co-op options and inclusion of skills-based learning outcomes.

Recommendation 4: improve evaluation of teaching, especially for new/part time faculty.

Action: see D6 above.

Recommendation 5: introduce peer evaluation of teaching.

Action: see D6 above.

Recommendation 6: encourage faculty members to get involved in service external to the University and in the profession.

Action: the department is very active in service as outlined in Program Self-Study; this is also highlighted in the members' CVs.

Recommendation 7: ensure a department member attends the yearly Chair meeting at the Canadian Historical Association

Recommendation 9: enhance the external recognition of the History Department at UFV.

Action: enhancing external recognition is ongoing; the Head attends Articulation meetings annually and maintains contact with other department heads; the department has established relationships with Mount Royal and Grant MacEwan and talks are underway for a joint meeting between the teaching intensive institutions in BC and those in Alberta; department members do apply for external funding and collaborate with faculty at other institutions (including the University of Edinburgh, the University of Waterloo, the University of Chicago).

G. Program/Department Administration

The outgoing Department Head received positive reviews by full and part-time faculty and students. The department has a strong working relationship with the Dean and other administrators. The level of support staff is adequate. The department is characterized by a strong commitment to collegiality.

Recommendation 1: consider the creation of formal faculty coordinator positions.

Action: the department will create a program and a curriculum committee as well as point-persons for areas of concern such as practica (p)2.2(ar)11(t)-(fu)2.3(II)j.2(a)3-3(ic)slum c