ENGLISH

Review Process

This was the second undergraduate review of the Department of English, the first one having been conducted in 2002. The self-study for this review was completed July 19, 2010; the site visit was conducted November 4 and 5, 2010; the review team’s report was received January 4, 2011; and the response from the Department was submitted April 12, 2011.

The self-study was reviewed by the Undergraduate Studies Committee of the Department. Student involvement was arranged by the Centre for Teaching Excellence, which ran two focus groups commenting on aspects of the undergraduate program.

Both students’ and faculty members’ comments were incorporated into the final document.

Characteristics of the Program

Historical Overview

The Department of English Language and Literature at the University of Waterloo (UW) was established in June 1960 and accepted its first undergraduates in the fall of that year. The first graduate students of the MA or M Phil programs were admitted fall 1967. By 1972 the faculty complement numbered 21 members – eight full professors, nine associate professors, and four assistant professors. By 1978, this number had risen to 28 faculty members. Between 1972 and 1978 the Department started offering courses by Distance Education (DE) 1973 and in 1977 started a Co-op stream in English.

In 1986, the Department expanded its programs. It offered an MA in Language and Professional Writing and an Option at the undergraduate level in Rhetoric and Technical Writing which eventually became the degree, Honours English –Rhetoric and Professional Writing (RPW).

With the Special Early Retirement Program (SERP) in 1996, five faculty members took early retirement and another took regular retirement. Prior to 1996 the faculty complement of English had declined to 22 members. With SERP the faculty complement was reduced to 16.

In 2004 the Department of English introduced an undergraduate honours degree in Literature and Rhetoric and in 2008 expanded its programs and initiatives by offering two undergraduate specializations, an MA in Experimental Digital Media, and opened the Critical Media Lab (CML). [The CML is a research/creative unit that explores the impact of technology on society and the human condition. The research methods employed in the lab are unique in that they involve a feedback link between the arts and sciences.]

Since the last review in 2002, two faculty members moved “sideways” into the Faculty of Arts’ Digital Arts Communications program, one retired, and seven new faculty members joined the Department. In addition, there were four new hires at the University of St Jerome’s Department of English. These appointments strengthened the breadth and depth of the Department’s research and teaching. At the same time the balance in the Department between traditional literary studies and rhetoric and professional writing was maintained.
The review team concluded that the Department “is well-contextualized within a cutting-edge and ‘research-intensive’ university.”

At the time of the present review the faculty complement of the Department of English was 22 with two unfilled positions. In addition, there were eight faculty members of English at St Jerome’s University, one at Renison University College, and another at Conrad Grebel University College.

In 2008-09, the Office of the Dean of Arts led a major overhaul of the Arts budget process; as a direct result the operating budget of many Departments including English improved substantially in 2009-10. For this the Department was grateful. However, in 2010-11, the entire amount of these extra funds was clawed back by the Dean’s Office. This claw back is of great concern to faculty members in English since these funds are essential to the operation of a serious research-focused Department. In this already challenging environment, budget uncertainty is an added strain.

Program Objectives

The Department of English is committed to excellence in research and teaching in the historical study of Literature and Rhetoric. Although this mandate has been somewhat altered since the last review with emerging attention to research and teaching of digital media, and of literature written in English in a global context, the Department still aims to bring tradition and innovation together to give students the skills to be successful persons and citizens. The inculcation of these abilities is the Department’s academic mission, abilities which may be grouped into four areas to:

- combine textual analysis and theory;
- provide advanced literacies in print, visual and digital media;
- provide historical knowledge of Literature and Rhetoric;
- challenge students in the realm of digital media.

Distinctiveness/Benchmarking

The Department of English at UW is the only English Department in Canada that lists as fields of strength and focus the following combination of areas: digital media studies, rhetoric, genre theory, literary studies and discourse analysis. The review team state that “The department’s work in electacy, digital design, and gaming, combined with an emphasis on rhetorical theory, makes this one of the leading programs of its kind in North America.”

Academic Plans Offered

The Department offers the following undergraduate programs:
Three-Year General BA in English Language and Literature (also offered fully online)
Four-Year General BA in English Language and Literature
Honours BA - English Literature (single or joint, Regular or Co-op, Honours Arts or Honours Arts and Business)
Honours BA - English Literature and Rhetoric (single or joint, Regular or Co-op, Honours Arts or Honours Arts and Business)
Honours BA – Rhetoric and Professional Writing (single or joint, Regular or Co-op, Honours Arts or Honours Arts and Business)
Minor in English Language and Literature
Specialization in Digital Media Studies
Specialization in English Literature in a Global Context.

UW’s Department of English cooperates with St Jerome’s University, Renison University College and Conrad Grebel University College in the offering of English degree programs. In accordance with the “Equity Agreement”, UW’s English Department is responsible for approximately 78% of the undergraduate teaching activity of English, St Jerome’s University 17%, and Renison and Conrad Grebel University Colleges for 5%. While retaining independence in hiring and planning, the Federated University and the two Affiliated University Colleges are governed by the admissions and degree requirements, and academic policies of the Senate of UW. In practice, the four institutions consult and cooperate with each other in planning English course offerings and determining program changes.

The structure of the Department’s Honours degrees works against a single “capstone” or culminating course experience. The Department has chosen to offer students a cohort experience of their speciality in either second of third year through two separate courses: ENGL 292: Contemporary Issues in Language, Writing, and Rhetoric and ENGL 301H Honours Literary Study. Honours RPW, and Honours Literature and Rhetoric students must take ENGL 292, usually in their 2A term. Honours Literature and Honours Literature and Rhetoric students must take ENGL 301H, usually in their 3A term. After this cohort experience, students branch outwards into the various 300- and 400-level required courses, areas and electives.

The Department of English offers service teaching to other Faculties in three main areas:

Firstly, English offers ENGL 119: Communications in Mathematics and Computer Science specifically to students studying Mathematics and/or Computer Science. This course annually averages 363 students.

Secondly, through Renison University College and its English Language Institute, the Department offers ENGL 129R: Introduction to Written English, for students with English as a Second Language background. This course averages 78 students annually.

Thirdly, the Department offers one first-year course and a suite of second-year courses devoted largely to students not enrolled in English, and many not enrolled in the Faculty of Arts. These courses are entitled: Introduction to Academic Writing; Genres of Technical Communication; Genres of Business Communication; Arts Writing; and Legal Writing. Student numbers average annually 783 in the course: Introduction to Academic Writing. These numbers have fluctuated little since 2002. On the other hand, the course: Genres of Business Communication has grown from 200 students in 2002 to 1,007 students in 2009.

The review team considers the Department “a thriving unit with a well-envisioned mandate. One concern is that its high degree of connectivity to other Departments and programs, and the draws of multiple service commitments, may mean that this unit is carrying more weight than its faculty complement really allows, and that energy for its core functions is being dispersed.”

Students

The annual average high school application grade for students entering English in the 2A term, from 2002-03 to 2009-10 inclusive, was above 81%. Compared to six other Departments in the Faculty of Arts
the entry grades to the Faculty of Arts of students in English were the highest in 2002-03, 2003-04, and 2007-08 and second highest of the seven Departments in 2004-05 and 2009-10. For the 2009-10 2A cohort, i.e. those students who applied to UW in 2008-09, 62% of those students who chose to enter English in 2A had 85% or over in their entry average from high school. This compares very favourably with the Departments of Drama and Speech Communication, Political Science, and Economics which had averages of 32%, 30%, and 50% respectively for their students entering from high school with grades of 85% or over.

Fears about enrolment pressures occasioned by the double cohort were borne out by enrolment numbers from 2002 to 2006 when more than 500 students enrolled annually as English majors. These enrolments caused a severe strain on faculty resources. However enrolment of majors has eased to more traditional numbers from the 1990s, of approximately 360. A similar pattern of enrolment rising from September 2001 to 2004 and then beginning to fall back from 2005 to the present was seen in other Departments such as History, Philosophy, and Political Science. However, over the last five to six years English enrolment has declined more sharply than that of History, Philosophy, or Political Science.

Two reasons may account for this:

- English increased its admission requirements in 2003 to “two 100-level English Courses”. This was done to suppress enrolment. Once enrolment pressure eased, the Department returned to the original admission requirement of “at least one but preferable two 100-level ENGL courses”.
- At this time there was pressure from competing programs. Speech Communication and Legal Studies was growing at this time and siphoned off students who could have had an interest in English.

Entrance scholarships to the Department of English are few and of small dollar value. Upper-year scholarships, on the other hand, average about $1,000, and in 2009-10, 45 were offered.

From spring term 2004 to winter term 2010 inclusive, the Department of English annually offered, on average, 136 courses to 7,326 students. Normally 55 to 57 courses are offered in both the fall and winter terms while 24 courses are offered in the spring term. Many of the upper-year courses are capped at 30 students, and so can be run in seminar-, project- or discussion-style rather than only in lecture mode. The student numbers annually averaged 3,205 in the fall term, 2,969 in the winter term, and 1,152 in the spring term. Courses are offered in the spring to meet the needs of students in the co-op stream.

The number of undergraduate English students in co-op has fluctuated over the years from a high of 38 in winter term 2005 to lows of 18 and 19 in spring terms 2006 and 2010 respectively. On average over the last five years, there have been about 25 to 35 students in co-op in any one term.

Recent co-op placements have been with Ontario Heritage Trust; Research in Motion (RIM); Microsoft; Foreign Affairs; Open Text; AGFA Healthcare; and Deloitte Professional Services. Many of these positions have been as writers, e.g. technical writer, documentation coordinator, and product marketing writer. Because of the demand for English co-op students it is not surprising that they are employed at a faster rate than any other co-op student group.

Employers rank the co-op students while on their work terms. Over the period 2005 to 2010 employers ranked 25.5% of the English co-op students as “outstanding”, while 48.9% were ranked as “excellent”.
Over the same time period co-op students rated their positions, on a 10-point scale with 10 being the best. Eight or higher was given to their co-op positions by 82.3% of students.

The Department enriches the life of faculty members and students by bringing a variety of speakers on campus. This is accomplished through the Sponsored Lecture Series of the Department and by the St Jerome’s Reading Series. In addition, students get insight to editing and producing a magazine by being employed through UW’s *The New Quarterly*.

All English courses on the main campus are subject to formal evaluation by students at the conclusion of each term. St Jerome’s conducts its own 31 question course/instructor evaluation each term. These evaluations are confidential.

English students at UW, from 2003-04 to 2009-10 inclusive, evaluate their instructors slightly higher than students in the Faculty of Arts as a whole (4.27 compared to 4.25 on a 5-point scale where 5 is the highest) while they evaluate their courses slightly lower (3.92 compared to 4.01).

The percentage of students who graduate with an English degree who were registered in that degree at the beginning of their 2A and 2B terms has decreased from 80% in 2001 to 57% in 2009. On average, 73% of students graduate with an English degree after a total of four years at UW (three years in the program), while 78.5% graduate after five years (the time to complete a co-op degree). On average, 85.5% of students who enrol in an English program graduate with an Arts degree after five years.

Of the total BA degrees granted by UW each year approximately 10% are in English. While the number of graduates with a Three-Year General English degree has been decreasing, the number receiving a Four-Year General degree has been on the increase. The annual average number of students who graduated with an English degree over the period 2002 to 2009 inclusive was 160, with a high of 178 in 2004 to lows of 142 and 137 in 2009 and 2002 respectively. Of these graduates approximately 17% annually were on the Dean’s Honours list.

Students have a similar sense as faculty members of the attributes of the ideal graduate in English. They are: a person who is confident, innovative, empathetic, and open-minded. He/she is also a critical thinker who possesses strong analytical and research skills, is well-prepared to work collaboratively, and is a clear, effective communicator.

**Faculty**

At the time of writing the self-study the Department of English at UW had 22 faculty members; St Jerome’s University’s Department of English had a complement of eight; and Conrad Grebel University College and Renison University College had a complement of one each. Of these 32 faculty members, six were full professors (two at St Jerome’s University and one at Conrad Grebel University College); 20 were associate professors (three at St Jerome’s University and one at Renison University College); six were assistant professors (three at St Jerome’s University). Five of the assistant professors are untenured. The Department of English at UW also has two unfilled positions. In addition, the main campus hires regularly 13 sessional lecturers.
No faculty members in English at UW have announced their intention to retire within the next seven years. On the other hand, St Jerome’s English Department will have two retirements in 2011 and plans are already in place to make replacements in their areas of expertise.

The normal annual teaching load in English on the main campus is four courses, three undergraduate courses and one graduate course. The normal teaching load at St Jerome’s is five courses. Using data for the calendar year 2010, only 50% of the on-going courses offered in the Department are currently taught by full-time faculty members. The review team considers that “the reliance of (the Department) on stipendiary and graduate instructors is at an alarming level.”

Since 2002 the average publication output per year by faculty members in English is 1.9 single authored books; 2.5 edited books; 6.5 book chapters; 13.6 refereed journal articles; and 17.4 conference presentations. A sample of titles of single authored books follows;

- **Voice Interaction Design: Crafting the Conversational Interfaces**
- **The New North American Studies: Culture, Writing, and the Politics of RE/Cognition**
- **Environmental Renaissance: Emerson, Thoreau, and the Systems of Nature**
- **The Performance of Conviction: Plainness and Rhetoric in the Early English Renaissance**
- **E-Crit: Digital Media, Critical Theory and the Humanities**
- **William Blake and the Body**
- **Grief in Wartime: Private Pain, Public Discourse**
- **Chaucer on Love, Knowledge, and Sight**
- **The Postmodern University: Essays on the Deconstruction of the Humanities.**

The number of research awards to English faculty members has increased from eight in 2002-03 to 18 in 2009-10. The average dollar amount of awards has fluctuated over the years but it too is increasing. In 2009-10, the Department had 18 awards totalling $401,000.

Faculty members in English have received many professional awards, e.g. two have received UW’s Distinguished Teacher Award; the Society for the History of Authorship, Reading and Publishing Award for Distinguished Achievement; the Paul Mellon Centre for the Study of British Art Research Grant; Folger Shakespeare Library Short-Term Fellowship; Artist in Residence at Domaine des Artes, Vitteaux, France; best essay prize in journal *Narrative*; plenary speaker at the poetic Ecologies Conference at Université Libre de Bruxelles.

In addition, faculty members are heavily involved in their discipline. Many sit on editorial boards of academic journals ranging from *The Journal of Technical Writing and Communication, Cognition of Culture, Quarterly Journal of Speech,* to *Studies in Canadian Literature*; act as review editors; coordinate conferences; and act as evaluators for SSHRC and Canada Council.

**Reviewers’ Comments**

**Areas of Excellence**

The areas of excellence in the Department are (1) a very strong group of tenure/tenure-track faculty members, and (2) two excellent program streams (RPW, and Literature). To be more specific:
• The pre-eminent excellence of the Department is the faculty members, as judged by their collaborative efforts, their involvement in interdisciplinary and community projects, and their research and publication records.
• Faculty members have the opportunity to teach in their specialty subject areas, thus knitting together their research and pedagogic interests, and exposing students to new developments in scholarship and critical methods.
• Participation in the Department allows faculty members an unusual opportunity to work collaboratively, to get “outside the box” of their own disciplinary specialties, and to explore interdisciplinary research opportunities.
• RPW has developed from a modest program in technical communication into a program that explores writing and design in a number of real-world contexts, and is unique in Canada and perhaps in North America.
• The Literature program places faculty members and students at the interface of new developments in the discipline of English and in critical/literary theories, while at the same time providing the curricular depth that is usually encountered only in much larger Departments.

Areas of Opportunity

There are two areas of opportunity for the Department at this time: hiring and curriculum development.

• The dearth of academic jobs in English in recent years means there is a large and excellent pool of potential applicants for positions at UW, often already well-advanced on teaching and publication.
• Already maintaining strong curricular coverage, the Department is in a good position to expand into some new fields and to make arguments for new staffing accordingly.
• The Department has the opportunity to give somewhat stronger definition to its program streams (perhaps, in part, through simplification of the many “pathway” strands) and to continue to re-envision the mission of the Literature stream, in particular.
• With new appointments, the Department would have the opportunity to have a faculty complement that is more representative not only of the ethno-cultural make-up of the general population, but of the new “face” of the discipline.
• It would be timely for the Department to move forward aggressively on the two new program initiatives: Honours English-Specialization in Digital Media Studies and Honours English-Specialization in English Literature in a Global Context. If faculty lines were added in these fields, these new programs could be developed in much more depth.

Areas of Concern

The following areas of concern have been identified:

• The Department has only a handful of full professors, resulting in heavy responsibility necessarily falling on early-mid-career or even junior faculty members.
• The Department relies heavily (50% or more of on-campus courses taught) on sessional-stipendiary and graduate instructors, judging from this year’s figures.
• There is need to provide as much stability, continuity of employment, and fair compensation as possible for sessional-stipendiary instructors.
• Although RIM has provided generous support for the graduate program, the dependence of graduate funding on the donation from RIM would have an impact on the Department as a whole if this were discontinued.
• If the University requires Departments to undertake more aggressive fundraising, it is likely that funding would more easily be obtained for RPW initiatives, thus creating imbalance or even inequity within the Department.

• Although there are many courses on the books (155 in 2010-11), a number of them are not regularly taught.

• The curriculum does not include First-Nations/Aboriginal literatures.

• The Department is giving insufficient feedback about teaching performance to its sessional and graduate instructors, and needs to provide graduate assistant training at more regular intervals throughout the year.

• More continuing course counselling is needed to help students plan and track their program progress through complex program prerequisites, intermittent co-op placements, and a tri-semester cycle.

Areas of Need

The following are in need of attention in the near future:

• The Department needs to add to its faculty complement the two positions they have prioritized: Romanticism and Digital Media.

• The Department needs to be able to argue for the “Mission Critical” status of appointments in new areas, especially if it is aiming for standing among “top tier” Departments of English.

• The Department should develop ways to increase communication with its (often dispersed) undergraduate students, perhaps though a bulletin board or listserv.

• It is advisable for the Department to stream-line its “on the books” courses by removing or consolidating courses that are not taught on rotation in a timely manner.

• The Department should endeavour to develop a longer “window” of its course offerings, allowing students a greater opportunity to select courses of interest, and to plan for their degree completion requirements. This might take the form of a course-rotation schedule made available to students.

• Addition of a new clerical position would allow the Department to use the time and expertise of its office/administrative staff more effectively.

• The Department needs a larger operating budget.

• The Department has need for more space and better purposed space, especially in the area of graduate-student offices and in classrooms that lend themselves to seminar classes.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The review team concludes that the Department “is a strong, well-managed, collegial—in a word, high-functioning—department, that delivers a well-thought-out curriculum to students in all of its sub-programs, and maintains high academic standards.” However, the Department currently has a two-fold challenge:

1) the Department is stretched thin in terms of managing the demands of its highly-connected relationship to the rest of the University, and of its multiple student “user” groups;

2) the Department is experiencing a tight financial situation, that makes day-to-day operations more difficult than they should be, and prevents desirable curricular expansion.

The review team makes the following recommendations, many of which can be achieved without resource implications.
Recommendations for the University and the Faculty of Arts

The review team became aware of some structural issues faced by the Department, and respectfully offers three suggestions to university administrators:

Suggestion: The University of Waterloo could give a higher public profile to its excellent arts and humanities programs, especially on its website (the go-to source for students and parents). The Department of English Language and Literature is a strong enough program that it could well attract students from a wider geographic (and demographic) pool.

Response: The reviewers’ opinion that English is strong enough to attract undergraduate students from across Canada and beyond is a significant vote of confidence in its programs. With undergraduate strengths in rhetoric, professional writing, digital media and design, and global English literatures past and present, there is every reason to believe that what the reviewers recommend here would pay off handsomely for the University. This is especially so given that English at Waterloo directly engages with many of the applied, technological, and innovative characteristics of the University more generally.

Suggestion: The Faculty of Arts should encourage the development of some longer-range planning processes, within which units such as English can develop priorities, identify growth areas, and negotiate for new and replacement appointments.

Response: The University is in the process of systematically moving to multi-year planning. English would welcome this development since longer-range planning would reduce the level of budget uncertainty. Reduced budget uncertainty would simplify such things as advance arrangements for faculty research leaves, planning for major conferences and speakers, and the delivery of the undergraduate and graduate programs. It would also help rationalize program development and renewal, and smooth the assignment of faculty workloads.

Suggestion: The development of some procedures or programs for increasing the diversity of faculty members in the Faculty of Arts should be encouraged, perhaps through extra funds for “special opportunity” hires, and for appointments additional to the regular complement allotments, awarded to Departments with solid plans for curricular diversification.

Response: English supports any additional initiatives at Waterloo to further diversity. The Department already has an excellent record of attracting top-calibre women applicants for positions, as the overall faculty gender balance demonstrates. The Department has an increasingly diverse undergraduate and graduate student body. The new undergraduate specialization in English Literature in a Global Context, in particular, reflects recognition of diversity at the programmatic level.

Recommendations Requiring New Resources

The Department would be put onto a surer footing and would be able to achieve some of its priorities with the addition of a few faculty and staff positions (some of which are already being discussed or negotiated):

Recommendation: The Department should be allowed to proceed with the identified positions in Romanticism and in Digital Media, since both are key curricular areas for English, and since there is every chance of attracting excellent applicants in fields where exciting new scholarship is happening.
Further full-time positions are needed to allow the Department to undertake needed curricular expansion, and to achieve more acceptable levels of professorial course staffing.

Response: In the view of the English Department there are solid reasons for the University to consider these two recommendations seriously and as more than just reflexive on the part of the reviewers. The Department is managing significant growth in its graduate enrollments (particularly in the showcase PhD, which combines literary and rhetorical research), in the success rate of faculty grant applications, and in faculty research activity and impact. English has also unveiled three new programs in the last two years: the two new undergraduate specializations and the new MA degree. This growth, combined with the distinctiveness of all the undergraduate and graduate programs, new and old, means that English at Waterloo has a chance to become one of the top Departments in Canada and North America.

In terms of international standing and recruitment, of course, departmental size does matter. Given current staffing levels, the English Department does not have the depth it needs to compete with Canada’s top research tier. While the Department is able to deliver a number of high-quality, distinctive programs, excellence requires concentration and depth in a number of fields. This is particularly a problem for a Department that covers not only a wide range of literary periods and national and extra-national literatures, but rhetoric and digital media as well. For reputational as well as program growth reasons, then, new faculty hires are critical to the Department’s mission to be a top-five Department in Canada. A further reason to see the Department better resourced is that its distinctiveness expresses the applied, technological, and innovative characteristics of the University so well.

It is also worth noting a number of developments that are taking some English faculty members out of the classroom, perhaps on a permanent basis. English is currently providing a course a year to each of the new Arts professional MAs--Public Service and Digital Innovation--and English likely will be asked to deliver more, especially to the Master in Digital Innovation, and perhaps to the Stratford undergraduate degree as well. Added to this pressure is the routine involvement of English faculty members in cross-campus administrative posts and on the Faculty Association, which takes such individuals out of a significant number of undergraduate and graduate courses as well. For these two reasons alone, English is likely to be short the equivalent of at least six courses--nearly two full faculty positions--for the coming year alone. While all these extra-departmental activities have merit, they detract from the Department’s ability to achieve its own goals. Furthermore, changes in academic staff activity at Renison have meant that sessional instructors cover most of the teaching in English by that unit; this may become permanent and if so it means the loss of the equivalent of another regular faculty member to the shared programs.

In terms of specific, immediate program needs, a couple of other points are worth noting about the identified positions in Romanticism and in Digital Media. Currently there is no dedicated Romanticist on the main campus and the graduate program is thus hampered in this popular area, particularly in terms of capacity in graduate course offerings and for PhD supervision. (It is worth noting in this context that there has been no growth in the official English faculty complement since 2005, despite the Department’s success in meeting graduate growth targets in the years since then.) Furthermore, the new digital MA in English, Experimental Digital Media, currently has insufficient faculty support for the proper long-term mounting of the degree, particularly if English faculty members in this area are to continue to be involved in the Stratford initiative as well as the departmental undergraduate programs in RPW and Digital Media.
Studies. Both of these identified positions, the importance of which has been acknowledged by the Dean, will also provide welcome support to the undergraduate degree programs and the two undergraduate specializations.

**Recommendation:** It is suggested that the Faculty or the University make extra funds available to regularly “buy out” St. Jerome’s faculty members for English graduate teaching. This would alleviate some of the staffing pressure experienced by the rest of the Department and might help to forestall St. Jerome retention problems especially among new hires.

**Response:** Under its current mandate, St. Jerome’s is dedicated to undergraduate instruction primarily. Still, from the point of view of the main campus Department, which runs the graduate programs in English with the yearly courtesy of one graduate course from a member of the St. Jerome’s faculty as agreed by their Chair, this recommendation is appealing. The additional capacity in terms of graduate student numbers would be a boon to the main campus, helping the Department to manage planned growth in the MA in particular. It would more quickly and frequently “cycle” St. Jerome’s faculty members through the graduate program, providing additional opportunities for supervisory relationships to blossom. And it would allow main campus faculty members additional opportunities to offer graduate courses outside of traditional disciplinary areas. The Chair of English on the main campus will discuss this recommendation with his counterpart at St. Jerome’s and explore ways in which it might be implemented.

**Recommendation:** Having an online Co-ordinator position for English (already under discussion) would help to ensure the quality of distance courses, which are a large component of the Department’s teaching, and would provide both support and consistency in a situation where the majority of the teaching is done by sessional instructors.

**Response:** English currently delivers approximately 25% of all online instruction in the Faculty of Arts, and therefore roughly 18% of all such instruction across campus at Waterloo. It supports both a Three-Year and a Four-Year General degree in English fully online. And the online course on the Genres of Business Communication (ENGL 210F) runs three times a year, with current enrolments of roughly 500 each term.

Since the site visit of the undergraduate reviewers, English has been granted a three-year, limited-term appointment in order to hire an online Coordinator, which the Department is now advertising for. The successful candidate’s duties will include facilitating the creation of new online courses in English, teaching existing online courses, coordinating and supervising graduate teaching assistants in online courses, and the crafting of a more uniform and consistent online curriculum in English, particularly in terms of digital pedagogy. The successful applicant also will have opportunities to coordinate his or her activities with some of the digital initiatives in English, including the Critical Media Lab, the undergraduate specialization in Digital Media Studies, and the MA in English--Experimental Digital Media.

**Recommendation:** The addition of a half-time or full-time staff person at a clerical level would free the three current staff people to deal more effectively with the demands of the undergraduate and (growing) graduate programs. In particular, the undergraduate staff person could take on more of the burden of
course counselling and program completion monitoring, currently consuming the time of the Associate Chair Undergraduate.

Response: Over the last five years, staff administration and advising loads in English have risen significantly. There has been the tremendous ongoing growth in the size and complexity of the graduate programs in English. There has been a significant rise (more than trebling) in the number and amounts of faculty grants that must be administered in the Department, and this is slated to grow further. The Department’s web communication strategy for such matters as student recruitment, research communication, and alumni engagement makes heavy demands on non-specialist staff. And recent reviews of the staff job descriptions have led to major new responsibilities being assigned to all three staff positions. Looking ahead, there is little doubt that as the intensity of faculty research continues to grow there will be less and less scope to expect Associate Chairs and Chairs in English to conduct the routine advising and managerial responsibilities that they conducted in the past. The position of Chair is also evolving to entail greater focus on alumni engagement and fundraising. All-in-all, the need for a staff member with solid web skills, combined with an ability to take on routine clerical tasks, is clear, and the addition of such a position would also facilitate the implementation of other recommendations.

Recommendations to the Department Not Requiring New Resources: Curriculum

Although the review team cannot pretend to understand all of the complexities of the degree streams of the Department, even after some study, but does recommend that the Department revisit this plethora of programs-within-programs. Even if, as the reviewers understand, these are not (despite the nomenclature) actual “programs” but rather student option pathways, the cumulative number of prerequisite requirements must make it difficult to get the requisite courses into a regular-enough rotation. Therefore the following recommendations in regards to curriculum are made.

Recommendation: The Department should make some adjustments to requisites so that the “core” curriculum is less focused on British literature.

Response: This recommendation applies particularly to one program, the degree in English Literature. It may arise, in part at least, from a misunderstanding: the consultants believed that these students are required to take four courses in the area of “British and Commonwealth Literature since 1800”; however, the correct number is two courses from this area. The focus of the curriculum on British literature courses is thus somewhat less severe than the reviewers state, with a total of six courses (not eight) required in “British Literature before 1800” and “British and Commonwealth Literature since 1800” combined.

That said, the current focus on the history of literature in English in this degree is part of its distinctiveness. Also a part of this distinctiveness is the building, where appropriate, of an international perspective into the study of literature from Chaucer and Austen to Rushdie and Kincaid; that is, from the medieval through to the contemporary periods of English literatures. Many programs at other universities in Canada, especially smaller ones, already have a present-day, twentieth-century, or Canadianist emphasis. Although a smaller Department, Waterloo shares its focus on the history of literature in English with many of the top research Departments in Canada and abroad. This focus also aligns the literature degree with the emphasis on the history of rhetoric that is a key component of the RPW program.
English continues to believe that students are well served by the Department’s twin historical foci in literature and rhetoric. For example, consider the many literary studies of the shift from manuscript to print culture over the course of the medieval and early modern periods. These studies provide a key reservoir of tools and perspectives for understanding the present-day media shift from print to digital. In addition, giving up on the historical emphasis in the literature degree would mean giving up on the idea that students learn not only from encountering the literatures of a variety of peoples but also from encountering the literatures of a variety of historical moments. The undergraduate committee will look into the feasibility of addressing this recommendation while continuing to give due regard to the distinctiveness of English at Waterloo.

**Recommendation:** The Department should attempt (as far as resources allow) to conduct a thorough curriculum revision that will permit them to create a course-rotation document and to offer a bigger “window” for future courses, so that students are aware two terms in advance of what specific courses will be offered.

**Response:** The issue of student access to certain courses, particularly in light of scheduling needs for Co-operative Education students in the Spring term and a relative dearth of faculty members in the RPW program areas (including digital areas), came up several times throughout the reviewers’ report, and the point is well taken.

Some measures can be taken immediately to address these scheduling concerns, and indeed some actions have already been taken in this regard. Most notably, beginning with the Fall 2011 term, English is now submitting a fully updated list of courses for the purposes of preregistration. The intent is to continue to do this every term from now on. (Formerly the offerings of the previous year were simply rolled over, making preregistration inaccurate, especially for upper-level students; as a result, many English students have not been bothering to preregister for their courses.) It may be noted that as multi-year planning is introduced, it will be easier to predict, well in advance, which course offerings need to be scheduled, and which ones will be.

English schedules undergraduate course offerings several terms ahead, and, although a small number of courses do change before the start of term for reasons such as faculty member medical or parental leaves, or sessional instructors taking up employment elsewhere, the Department’s undergraduate committee will discuss ways to communicate this information more effectively to students at least two terms in advance and will report to the Department on the matter this Fall.

Finally, the undergraduate committee is already looking into ways to “smooth” the curriculum across all programs, and it will report on its findings to the Department by this fall.

**Recommendation:** The Department should consider reducing the number of prerequisites in the fourth year (or expanding the range of choices), and lowering caps on fourth-year classes so students can have a “seminar” group course at that level.

The Department should also differentiate fourth-year offerings more effectively, allowing students to build on earlier knowledge or take an “advanced” or specialized course in a topic that might have been covered in an introductory way before.
Response: Most 400-level courses have only a 3A prerequisite. English does not currently differentiate a third from a fourth year in terms of course sequences, and indeed in all programs many relevant 300-level and 400-level courses can be taken any time starting in the 3A term. Still, the number of required 300- and 400-level courses from the relevant area groups in these programs is large and many of these courses are widely pitched.

The undergraduate committee will review the advisability of routinely offering upper-level courses that are more sharply focused, that follow up on other courses, and, in particular, that allow for a fourth-year seminar experience, and report its recommendations to the Department within a year.

Recommendation: The Department should contemplate ways to move more tenured and tenure-track faculty members into its upper-level courses.

Response: The concern of the reviewers in this recommendation, as expressed elsewhere in their report, is with the number of sessional instructors required in 300- and 400-level courses; they see this as impacting the quality of student education and the reputation of the Department’s programs.

It helps to differentiate between different degree streams in the use of sessional instructors. Sessional instructors are used only occasionally for upper-level literature courses, whereas their use is routine for the upper-level RPW courses. To give a sense of this, the Department notes that, for the main campus’s offerings, of the 14 sessional contracts needed in order to mount core upper-level on-campus courses in the scheduling year 2011-12, 11 are in RPW areas. The Department also notes that existing English faculty members at St. Jerome’s and Renison specialize primarily in literary fields and currently do not normally contribute to core RPW course offerings.

The solution offered above by the reviewers is to move main-campus faculty members out of the first- or second-year classroom; but this is more an apparent than a real solution. English on the main campus has a four-course teaching load: faculty members normally teach two-upper level, one lower-level, and one graduate course each year. There are eight RPW faculty members at present. Even if each one of these instructors could be removed from their first- and second-year teaching assignments, the Department would still not be able to cover off all 11 of the core upper-level RPW courses that are scheduled to be taught by sessionals. And given that some RPW faculty members are on leave (or have reduced course loads for administrative reasons), and given that not every RPW faculty member can cover every area of our upper-level RPW offerings, many fewer than eight lower-level courses would actually be available for redistribution.

In any case, even if the option of moving faculty members out of all lower-level courses could eliminate the need for sessionals in upper-level courses, the Department deems it essential to the English curriculum that regular faculty members routinely teach in the core required second-year courses, and it is also important that they occasionally teach first-year courses for pedagogical and student recruitment reasons, particularly in RPW areas.
Recommendations to the Department Not Requiring New Resources: Review and Communication

Recommendations: The Department should investigate the feasibility of instituting an annual assessment of the program through reading student- portfolios or through evaluating student papers from across the ELL curriculum.

The Department should consider offering a more regular cycle of course counselling, perhaps through group sessions at the end of each semester. Such sessions might also decrease the burden on staff and administrative staff of one-on-one counselling.

The Department should find ways to improve communication with students using a website or a student listserv.

Response: Currently the Associate Chair for Undergraduate Studies and the Undergraduate Coordinator and Advisor both dedicate significant energies and resources to the effective and timely counselling of students. The Department’s website already offers a great deal of information to students. And, in addition, the Department tracks the performance of undergraduate students every term by carefully monitoring students’ Academic Progression reports and personally contacting the students who need help of various sorts.

Taken together these three recommendations set out a proposal for a new way of tracking student performance, counselling students, and communicating with them as they move through their programs in English. The adoption of these recommendations would also impact faculty members in the Federated University and Affiliated University Colleges. To consider them, then, a task force will be constituted within the next two years, drawn from the undergraduate committee, with representation from St. Jerome’s and Renison as well as the main campus, with a mandate to report back to the undergraduate committee within eight months.

The Next Seven Years for English: 2011 to 2018

Over the next seven years English will continue to integrate the study of literature and rhetoric in ways that are unique in Canada and perhaps North America while putting additional emphasis on its graduate programs, on the number of grants that faculty members’ secure, and on the distinctiveness, relevance, and impact of faculty research, with the overall goal of becoming a top-five English department in Canada.

The contrast between English in 2003 and 2011 is instructive.

In 2003, English on the main campus was struggling to hire and retain faculty members in the wake of losing nearly one-third, and almost all the senior, members of the Department to the Special Early Retirement Program of the mid-90s. Now English is attracting and retaining top academics. Then English faced with dread the prospect of the double cohort and unmanageable numbers of undergraduate majors. Now the number of undergraduate majors is more in line with faculty numbers, with some room to grow as the Department does. Then English was just a decade into the offering of its PhD, and most students came to this small “boutique” degree from the region. Now outstanding students come to study
for their PhD in English at Waterloo from around the world, and roughly 12 new PhDs enter the program every year. Then English created its first courses in post-colonial literatures. Now the study of global English literatures is common throughout the programs, and this emphasis is recognized in a new undergraduate specialization in English Literature in a Global Context. Finally, in 2003, the impact of digital media on communication, industry, education, and the arts was just beginning to be felt. Now, in 2011, Waterloo English is leading the way in Canada in the study of digital media within the humanistic frame of the rhetorical and literary traditions, with the undergraduate specialization in Digital Media, the MA in English--Experimental Digital Media, the internationally renowned Critical Media Lab, and the cooperation of individual faculty members with the University’s new Stratford campus all part of the Department’s robust push into these areas.

In what follows the Department will list some important goals for the next seven years, and then describe three key continuing initiatives that stand out for particular attention: the continued internationalization of the Department’s students and programs, the strengthening of core rhetoric resources, and the push into digital media.

**Important Departmental Goals**

*English will continue to build up the quality and impact of the scholarship and research of its faculty members and PhD students.*

Faculty members will be encouraged to expand the variety of venues to which they submit work so as to place more scholarship with top journals and presses. The Department will seek to raise income from grants to faculty members to $500,000 per year and, where appropriate, these grants will in part be used in aid of graduate student research. The publication of monographs by faculty members will be encouraged. To support the intensification of faculty research, the Department will seek to have at least one Canada Research Chair and two endowed chairs in the areas of digital media, rhetoric, or global English literature by 2018. Local industry and interested alumni groups will be approached in connection with the endowment of a chair in digital media or rhetoric. Local and alumni community groups will be approached in connection with the endowment of a chair in global English literature.

*The Department will build on existing research collaborations and work to establish new ones--especially in areas of digital media and/or global literature--with academic colleagues outside of the English Department.*

These collaborations will link English with academic colleagues across campus (through the cross-appointment with English of faculty members in Engineering and Computer Science as well as in other Arts units, and through the Critical Media Lab), at other institutions nationally (such as the *Critical Studies in Improvisation/ Etudes critiques en improvisation* group at the University of Guelph and the University of Victoria’s Digital Humanities Institute), and internationally (such as the Laboratoire Paragraphe of the Département Hypermedia at Université de Paris 8, the W.E.B. Du Bois Institute for African and African American Research at Harvard University, the JFK Institute for North American Studies at the Free University of Berlin, and the Filosofski Fakultet at the University of Zagreb).

*Good relations between the main campus and colleagues “across the creek” will continue to be valued and cultivated.*
Ways will be found to continue the smooth overall coordination of the contributions of the main campus, St. Jerome’s, and Renison to the undergraduate and graduate programs and to continue the commitment of the main campus and the Federated University and Affiliated University Colleges to the quality of faculty research.

*English will successfully manage the growth of the Department’s graduate programs.*

The English PhD program has recently expanded three-fold and is set to be one of the largest in the country. Various initiatives will be taken to support students in the PhD program, including improvements to research space (particularly the addition of lab space for digital media research), to professionalization opportunities, and to career guidance. The Department’s Advisory Council will be brought in to help connect PhD graduates with a full range of career options, especially extra-academic ones. And new supports will be provided to help doctoral students to complete the PhD degree in a timely fashion, including the field exams. MA enrollments will continue to expand in step with the hiring of additional faculty members and any additional participation of St. Jerome’s faculty members. Provision of adequate and suitable graduate student space will also be a priority for the Department over the next seven years.

*English will sharpen the distinctiveness of the Department’s graduate programs.*

The English PhD at Waterloo uniquely prepares students for academic positions in both literary as well as rhetoric and composition fields. It will also increasingly be a degree that reflects the Department’s push into digital media. As for the MA degrees, once the new Experimental Digital Media degree has become well established, both it and the Rhetoric and Communication Design degree will be reviewed with an eye to assessing their health and sharpening their identities.

*By 2018, some graduates of the PhD program in English at Waterloo will secure tenure-track positions at the country’s top universities.*

There is every reason to expect that as the quality of PhD applicants to, and graduates from, the Department continues to grow, so will the academic job prospects of some of those graduates. It is a priority of the Department to facilitate the placement of the Department’s most promising graduates in the best institutions possible.

*English will continue to develop and redevelop its undergraduate programs.*

Over the next seven years, opportunities will be taken to consolidate its new undergraduate specializations, especially as new faculty members are hired, and to freshen its existing degrees. If English is able to move forward on its strategic goals over this period in terms of incremental hiring, then the Department will explore adding an RPW General degree to its programs (currently Rhetoric and Professional Writing is only available to honours students).

*8 Extended learning through online activities will continue to be a key feature of the Department’s delivery of undergraduate courses.*

Under the leadership of the new online Coordinator, English as a whole will work to refresh and expand the Department’s suite of online offerings. Ideally, over the next seven years all existing English online
courses will be revised. English will also explore new areas for online offerings, for example in digital media. English will continue to offer at least one degree wholly online, will explore the possibility of continuing to support a second, and will continue to be a major contributor to online activities across campus. English will also explore the possibility of offering its two undergraduate specializations online.

_The great success of Co-operative Education in English, both at the undergraduate and the graduate levels, will continue._

In an era of high student fees, co-op gives students a means to reduce their indebtedness while pursuing the course of study of their choice. The Department will continue to support and encourage the growth of English’s Co-operative Education program, and to nurture relations with high-calibre English co-op student employers such as AGFA Healthcare, Open Text, RIM, and Sybase.

*English will capitalize on the success of its 50th anniversary celebrations and engagement.*

English will launch a significant fundraising campaign with alumni and others in support of the two endowed chairs detailed above. Donations will also be sought in support of English graduate and undergraduate students, including from local employers, as with the RIM graduate scholarships. The Department’s Advisory Council will be brought in to help with this activity.

**Key Departmental Program Initiatives**

**Global Literary Studies**

English at Waterloo will continue to embrace historical literary studies as central to the humanistic study of communication. In the coming seven years, the Department hopes to add to its strengths in the historical periods of literature with an appointment in Romanticism with expertise in global English literature of that period, and in several other areas of global English literature, including at least two additional appointments, one in North American aboriginal literatures and the other in African-American/Canadian literatures. The Department also plans to take advantage of any replacement positions that arise due to retirements or other developments among literature faculty members to further consolidate concentration in English literature in a global context. This means two things: (1) as with the Romantics position, it means building, where appropriate, an international perspective into the study of the whole of English literary history from Chaucer to Rushdie and (2) hiring in areas of twentieth-century and contemporary global literatures. In the context of the planned “smoothing” of all undergraduate programs and the examination of the literature curriculum, the global theme will be further highlighted.

**Rhetoric and Professional Writing**

Rhetoric is taught at Waterloo as an applied, historical, and theoretical discipline. This tripartite curriculum is a strength and distinctive feature of the undergraduate and graduate programs, including the PhD. It is true that, for reasons adumbrated above, the existing faculty members in the RPw area are stretched, as a result the Department relies heavily on sessional staff for upper-level courses, which impacts the reputation of the Department in certain areas. Also important is the Department’s vision for rhetoric at UW, which is to see the theory of rhetoric grounded in the applied practice of rhetoric—that is, in professional writing, communication design, and digital media creation—as well as in the history of rhetoric, and to integrate all aspects of the study of rhetoric with the study of English literature. To
strengthen research into the history, theory, and practice of professional writing and effective persuasion, and to better sustain the integration of literary and rhetorical study across the programs, therefore, the Department will seek new positions in the following areas (excluding cognate digital areas--see below): 1 - professional writing, 2 - business communication, 3 - medieval rhetoric, 4 - early modern rhetoric, 5 - linguistics, 6 - discourse analysis, and 7 - intercultural rhetoric. Positions 1 and 2 will also connect with the applied dimensions of digital media studies in the Department; positions 3 and 4 with medieval and early modern literature; and position 7 with global literary studies. Positions 5 and 6 will further enrich the Department’s resources in the study of language as such. The overall goal is to add significant depth to these distinctive aspects of English at Waterloo.

**Digital Media**

English at Waterloo has, since Co-operative Education was adopted in the 1970s, been different from English Departments elsewhere--it is practical, technical, and applied as well as contemplative, historical, and theoretical--and nothing shows the engaged side of the Department more than its recent push into digital media. Actually, the push is not that recent: when business communication largely digitized over the course of the 1990s, UW rhetoric faculty members specializing in professional writing, communication design, and composition studies naturally followed. But the last few years have seen a maturing of these interests in the Department, in part because of new hires, and in part because of a decision to make these existing research areas more clearly a part of our core programs via the new Experimental Digital Media MA and the undergraduate specialization in Digital Media Studies. Over the next seven years the Department will continue the development of its focus on digital media and the humanities, from both applied and theoretical perspectives. Two new hires, at least, in addition to the planned hire in experimental digital media, will be made in support of the graduate as well as undergraduate offerings (more if English is called upon to make major contributions to the new Stratford degrees): one in social digital media and the other in digital humanities. A position in digital Shakespeare studies is also a possible consideration for one of these two positions, as it would add important strength to the integration of literary and digital areas, and could work very well in relation to the University’s initiatives in Stratford. Digital expertise will also be encouraged in applicants to other positions in literature and RPW fields. Participation in collaborative as well as individual grant projects in this area will be central to the Department’s research activity, working with partners across campus as well as across Canada and the world. Also central to this development will be proper resourcing, in terms of space, for the Department’s digital media research. If Arts gets a new building, English will hope to have new, purpose-built space, including (unheard of for most English departments) adequate space for a number of digital media research labs. And this leads into a key and pressing current need: proper support for the Critical Media Lab. Administratively connected to English but involving collaborators from across campus, from the local community, and from around the world, the Critical Media Lab provides infrastructural support for particular courses in RPW, for Digital Media Studies, and for Experimental Digital Media and PhD research. Right now it is costing far too much in terms of time and worry for the Department to maintain a physical space for the Critical Media Lab with the little resources that the University is currently able to devote to it.