HISTORY

Review Process

This was the second undergraduate review of the Department of History, the first one having been conducted in 2003. The self-study for this review was completed July 23, 2008; the site visit was conducted October 17 and 18, 2010; the review team report was received November 22, 2010; and the responses from the Department and the Dean were submitted February 4, 2011.

The self-study was prepared by faculty and staff members. Much of the self-study was based on an intensive planning session at which faculty and staff members discussed curriculum and long-range issues. The session was guided by a facilitator from the University of Waterloo’s (UW’s) Centre for Teaching Excellence

Characteristics of the Program

Historical Overview

Prior to 1964, the Department of History, Sociology, Political Science and Economics was part of the same Department within the Faculty of Arts. In the fall of 1964, the Department of History began offering its courses to its own undergraduates. By the beginning of the 1965-66 academic year, History had 10 full-time faculty members and offered 48 different courses. Also in 1965-66 the Department started offering graduate courses towards its MA degree. Thereafter the Department grew rapidly, with the number of full-time faculty members doubling by 1979-80 when more than 140 undergraduate courses were offered.

Since 1980, when the Department had 23 full-time faculty members, there has been a steady decrease in the number of faculty members and course offerings. As a result of the losses of faculty positions, the Department concentrated on North American and European History and integrated its PhD program in 1994 and its MA program in 2001 into the Tri-University Graduate Program in History with the University of Guelph (UG) and Wilfrid Laurier University (WLU).

The review team for the first review of the Department of History in 2003 made eight recommendations: hire in non-Western fields; explore the possibility of using graduate students in undergraduate teaching; make it more evident that UW students may enrol in WLU History courses without penalty; seek to attract more upper-year Arts students to its 300-level courses; place a more consistent emphasis on instruction on methodology; introduce a Teaching Assistant (TA) orientation program; work with the Faculty of Arts to create a faculty position to reinforce UW’s strength in health, technology and environment; use its resources to offer more diverse and less geographically-based courses.

The Department has addressed most of these recommendations. Two are still present; taking courses at WLU and reinforcing UW’s strength in health, technology and environment. Although students seem to be aware that they can take courses at WLU that can count towards their degree, there seems to be some reluctance to take courses from another university. The Department will focus on a faculty position related to health, technology and environment, once it hires individuals in under-resourced geographical areas such as Asia and the Islamic world.
Since the last review in 2003, eight faculty members have been hired and the Department has doubled its intake of MA students from six to 20 and increased its PhD intake from two to five.

Today, the Department is roughly half the size it was 30 years ago. It has experienced virtually no growth in the teaching complement in the past seven years. Although the Department received approval in 2009 to advertize for two additional positions, budgetary constraints prevented the Department from doing so.

**Program Objectives**

The Department has six guiding principles that make more explicit the Department’s defining features and strengths. They are:

- cultivating a deeper and lasting awareness of History for students
- strengthening critical thought and analysis
- developing research and writing abilities
- creating the ability to communicate effectively
- maintaining a high quality classroom experience
- Committing to teaching excellence.

**Distinctiveness/Benchmarking**

The Department has an outstanding track record in scholarship, one that would place it among the very best in the country and in N. America. The reviewers indicate that the Department has maintained a high level of professional achievement.

**Academic Plans Offered**

The Department of History offers the following plans:
- Three-Year General BA in History
- Four-Year General BA in History
- Honours BA in History
- Honours BA in History (Arts and Business Co-op and Regular)
- Joint Honours BA in History and X discipline
- Joint Honours BA in History/Political Science with a Specialization in International Relations and Global Governance
- History Minor

**Students**

Between 2002 and 2010, 47% of History majors had university entrance averages from high school between 75% and 84%, while 29% of majors had high school averages above 85%. In recent years, the Department is attracting a larger proportion of students with higher high school grades. In 2008-09 for instance, 38% of the cohort of 61 students had averages above 85%. Because of the higher entrance grades in recent years more students are receiving entrance scholarships. Since 2005-06, at least five students each year, who later declared History as their major, have received university entrance scholarships and other awards. In addition, upper-year History majors have won scholarships and awards from over 67 different sources.
The number of History majors has changed over the reporting period - from 247 in fall 2003 to a high during the double cohort of 373 in fall 2005 then decreasing steadily to 263 in fall 2008. During this period the number of Honours to General level majors has remained relatively constant with Honours students representing approximately 56.5% of the total. Although there is some concern in the Department regarding the decline in majors over the past few years, a comparison with other Arts Departments places the situation in perspective. Compared to the pre-double cohort era, the number of majors in History in 2009 had increased by 3% while the number of majors in Sociology, English, Philosophy and Political Science had decreased 39%, 31%, 27% and 21% respectively.

The number of students taking History courses has followed the same trend as the number of History majors over the period 2003 to 2009, from 2,128 in fall 2003, to a peak of 2,307 in fall 2005, then decreasing to 1,685 in fall 2009. Of the 17 Departments in the Faculty of Arts, History has the fourth largest teaching enrolment. The average annual enrolments in History courses over the period 2003-09 were as follows: 1,252 in 100-level courses; 2,699 for 200-level courses; 600 for 300-level courses; and 195 for 400-level courses. Approximately 83% of the Department of History’s teaching occurs in 100- to 200-level courses. In addition, 66% to 79% of these enrolments were from non-History majors.

Arts and Business Co-op is currently the only program through which History majors can participate in co-op. Over the period, 2003 and 2009, approximately 10% (25 students) were enrolled in the co-op stream each year. The Department’s students would have more interest in the co-op option if the Department housed the option itself.

UW offers full-time students the opportunity to study abroad for credit at over 80 partner Universities. Many History students have participated in international student exchanges at the University of Ulster (Coleraine) in N. Ireland and a few have gone to Mannheim University in Germany.

Student evaluations of History courses, over the period winter term 2003 to fall term 2009 inclusive, rank the course instructor at 4.39, on a five-point scale where 5 is the highest grade. This is comparable to the average of 4.31 for the Faculty of Arts as a whole. On the other hand, History courses are evaluated higher (4.18) than the average for the Faculty as a whole which is 4.06.

The reviewers found that “Courses appear to be rigorous and engaging; teachers appear to be committed, accessible, and helpful; and students appear to be uniformly satisfied with and appreciative of their instructors and the material they teach.”

Seventy-eight per cent of the cohorts between 2001-02 and 2005-06 had graduated with a History degree within four years after their 2A term. Over the same period the time to complete the degree had also increased. In mid-decade almost half of the majors graduated two years after entering their 2A term. This trend has changed for several reasons. More students are taking the Four-Year General and Honours degree; co-op takes five years to complete; and with more transfer students entering History from other Faculties they will need extra time to complete their degrees.

Although History graduates find careers in many areas, the most popular is teaching. Of 1,236 students, who graduated with a History degree at UW since the late 1970s, 32% entered the teaching profession.
Faculty

At the time of this review the Department had 15 faculty members (14 full-time equivalents [FTEs]) and eight from the Federated University and Affiliated University Colleges (FUAC) (7.2 FTEs). There are four full professors at UW and three at the FUAC; six associate professors at UW and two at the FUAC; and five assistant professors at UW and three at the FUAC. In addition, two faculty members from the Department of Classical Studies are adjunct professors who assist with the teaching of ancient history. Two faculty members on the main campus reach normal retirement age within the next three years but neither one has indicated that he/she intends to retire.

The normal teaching load of a faculty member is five courses per academic year, but this became four starting fall 2010.

The average annual research output, over the period 2002-10, for the Department of History was 6.5 books; 9.5 book chapters; 9.8 refereed journal articles; and 28.4 conference publications.

The following is a sample of titles of single authored books:

- The Firm: The Inside Story of the Stasi
- A Global History of Indigenous Peoples: Struggle and Survival
- Imperial Citizenship: Empire and the Question of Who Belongs
- The 1980s: Social History of the United States
- Dancing Around the Elephant: Creating a Prosperous Canada in an Era of American Dominance, 1957-1973
- In Mixed Company: Taverns and Public Life in Upper Canada
- The Soviet Counter-Insurgency in the western Borderlands
- Polish Orphans of Tengeru: The Dramatic Story of Their Long Journey to Canada 1941-49

Faculty members in the Department have received many honours and awards.

The Department currently has a Canada Research Chair, Tier 1, and four holders of Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) standard research grants. Other grants over the last few years have been held from the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) and the Asia Pacific Foundation. From 2004 to 2010, grants totalling $725,337 have been held by eight of the 15 faculty members on the main campus.

Members in the Department have won the Donner Prize for Best Work on Canadian Public Policy; UW’s Distinguished Teacher Award; the Fred Landon Award, Ontario Historical Society; Choice Outstanding Book of the Year; and an Honourable Mention, John A. Macdonald Prize, Canadian Historical Association.

Faculty members have been Bora Laskin National Fellow in Human Rights research; Fellow, Institute for Jewish Civilization and the Holocaust, Northwestern University; and Scholar in Residence, Rockefeller Study Center, Bellagio, Italy to mention a few.
In addition, faculty members have been major contributors to their discipline by sitting on editorial boards and/or advisory boards of historical academic journals, acting as president and vice-president of historical societies, reviewing SSHRC, Canada Council and other granting agencies applications, and evaluating colleagues for promotion and tenure at various Canadian and American Universities.

**Concerns and Opportunities for Improvement**

The reviewers consider that the History Department has not yet answered important questions about its place in the Faculty of Arts and the University although it has been discussed for months and years. The Department the reviewers state “feels distinctly undervalued, under-resourced, and in some ways misunderstood by the university’s middle-level and higher administration.” In addition the reviewers observed “that the History Department did not have a defining vision of where it wanted to be in five years or what it wanted to be known for in Canada and the world.”

The reviewers made 22 recommendations listed below together with the department’s responses:

**Recommendation 1:** First-year courses ought to be reduced to no more than two entry-level courses per term.

**Recommendation 2:** Entry-level courses ought to be taught by the Department’s best tenured or tenure-track teachers, its stars, including senior members.

**Recommendation 3:** Entry-level course ought to entail tutorial groups of 15 students maximum, designed to provide students with historical methodology and expression.

**Recommendation 4:** Assign gifted fourth-year undergraduates to be Teaching Assistants in first-year courses.

**Recommendation 5:** The Department ought to create a position of head Teaching Assistant in each of these entry-level courses to serve as a liaison between other Teaching Assistants and the instructor.

**Recommendation 6:** The Department ought to consider team-taught courses in first year, to show case the diversity of teaching and research interests among faculty members.

**Recommendation 7:** All first-year History courses ought to count towards the History major, once they are greatly reduced in number.

*Response:* Seven of the 22 recommendations dealt with first year courses. The Department recognizes the need to revamp its first-year offerings, and has taken steps to do so. It is committed to reducing the number of first year courses offered, as the review team suggests, but options in this regard are somewhat limited by the fact that the Department forms a single teaching unit with the FUAC. Even if the Department reduced its first-year offerings to two courses, as the review team recommends, the total first-year offerings would still be higher because of the FUAC’s offerings. Nevertheless, the Department is in the process of reducing its first-year courses, and replacing some of its offerings with ones which will better showcase the Department's diversity. The Department was pleased to note that the review team supported the recently-introduced team-taught course “Ten Days that Shook the World” which will be offered at the 100-level.
The reviewers recommend using Teaching Assistants in first-year classes to run tutorials. The Planning Committee of the Department will look into this issue. It may be possible to implement this suggestion, but it depends entirely on the graduate intake in any given year.

**Recommendation 8:** Sessional instructors and FUAC faculty members ought to be better integrated into the life and governance of the Department.

**Recommendation 9:** Faculty members ought to be asked at least one calendar year in advance what they plan to teach in future academic years.

**Recommendation 10:** The Department ought to prepare a five-year staffing plan, identifying its staffing needs in the context of resources in the tri-university, the FUAC, related courses and disciplines, anticipated retirements, undergraduate program, graduate education, and research.

*Response:* The Department fully endorses this recommendation and will have such a plan in place in the near future.

**Recommendation 11:** The History Department ought to avail itself of LIF/PIF grants from the Centre for Teaching Excellence.

**Recommendation 12:** The Department should introduce separate undergraduate and graduate essay prizes. The Department needs to ramp up advancement campaigns to find donors for these (financially) small but (symbolically) important recognitions of achievement.

*Response:* This is an excellent idea which the Promotions Committee of the Department will take into consideration

**Recommendation 13:** The Department ought to initiate externally funded lecture series, internally funded guest speakers, brown bag lunch discussions, special events for Department alumni, and the possibility of teleconferencing with faculty members and graduate students around the world; all these strategies would enliven the physical space and intellectual atmosphere in the Department.

*Response:* The Department agrees in principle. If the Faculty of Arts continues to support the Department's lecture series, as it generously did in 2010-11, the Department will continue to host lectures by leading historians in the field.

**Recommendation 14:** The Department ought to establish more formal forms of governance, with graduate and undergraduate student representation on departmental meetings and committees such as curriculum planning and graduate affairs. The present History Society participates in none of these discussions.

*Response:* The Department has always included student representatives in its hiring deliberations, and will continue to do so. Whether students should attend all departmental meetings will be a decision of the Department as a whole.

**Recommendation 15:** The Department needs to institute some form of graduate-faculty Colloquium, with at least two meetings per term, in a format most conducive to student-faculty sociability and intellectual stimulation.

*Response:* Because of the time demands on both graduate students and faculty members, these types of initiatives often lose momentum, but the Department is very willing to undertake this initiative as a pilot project.
**Recommendation 16:** The Department ought to establish a staff/student “lounge/coffee room” where faculty and staff members and students could regularly gather to discuss ideas informally. At present the MacKinnon Room is not welcoming enough to serve this purpose; possibly it could be made so with a modest renovation.

**Recommendation 17:** The Department needs to recognize that the increased duties and responsibilities the Graduate and Undergraduate Assistants have taken on during their years of service for the Department. The Department needs to ensure that their grades are adjusted accordingly.

   *Response:* The Department is aware of increased demands on the administrative staff. The Chair is working with both administrative assistants to ensure that their job classification matches the assigned duties.

**Recommendation 18:** The Department needs to make more effort to take up opportunities offered by institutional funding and other sources for course internationalization and learning initiatives.

   *Response:* The Department wholly endorses the reviewers’ desire for increased internationalization. The Department now has two courses regularly offered in Europe, and will investigate ways to embed the international experience into the curriculum.

**Recommendation 19:** The Department to foster teaching and research partnerships with cognate Departments. In addition, every effort needs to be made to overcome faculty members’ disinclination to collaborate with the Departments and Faculties that dominate the University. History’s central role in the Society, Technology and Values Option should be self-evident; instead it is contentious.

   *Response:* This important recommendation will require the Department to survey its environment and determine appropriate responses. Accordingly, it will be discussed in the Planning Committee. Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning that the Department is very open to partnership. The department has recently introduced a History of Technology course, and participates actively in the Balsillie School of International Relations.

**Recommendation 20:** The Department ought to make a more compelling case for a new tenure-track faculty member.

   *Response:* The reviewers note that the Department is under-resourced and that the Dean and Provost should make more effort to support departmental proposals. The Department is confident that the committee structure now in place will produce a vision for the Department from which mutually beneficial proposals will arise.

**Recommendation 21:** The Department should strengthen its efforts to promote History within and outside the University, seeking new constituencies, including co-op employers. The critical thinking and other skills learned by History majors are valued by employers, but they have not been systematically or effectively marketed by the Department itself. The Department should develop bold proposals that will catch the imagination of non-Arts colleagues and prompt an enthusiastic “buy-in” by students, faculty members, staff members, and administrators.

**Recommendation 22:** The Dean and Provost should make more effort to encourage and support such proposals as mentioned in the last sentence of Recommendation 21.

   *Response:* Note the response to **Recommendation 20.**