Final Assessment Report of the Medieval Studies program (BA)
May 2013

Previous review and review process
This was the second formal review of the Medieval Studies (BA) program. The first review was in 2003 as part of the program review of the Department of Classical Studies. The program was also included in the Department’s two-year progress report issue in 2006. The Medieval Studies program is housed jointly within the Department of Classical Studies at the University of Waterloo (UW) and the History Department at the St Jerome’s University (SJU). Co-directors of the program are housed in each of the above departments.

The self-study was a group effort involving the program’s co-directors, students, faculty, staff, and alumni. The self-study was submitted July 4, 2011; the site visit occurred January 12-13, 2012; the review team’s report was received January 20, 2012; and the program’s response, Dean of Arts’ approval and Academic Dean of St. Jerome’s University’s approval were received May 1, 2013.

Characteristics of the Program

Historical Review
The Medieval Studies program, UW’s oldest interdisciplinary program and the oldest medieval Studies program in Canada, was established in 1967. Although the program is jointly administered, it is supported by many academic units spread over UW, SJU and Conrad Grebel University College (CGUC). Departments involved are Classical Studies, English, Fine Arts, French Studies, Germanic and Slavic Studies, History, Italian Studies, Music, Philosophy, Religious Studies, and Spanish and Latin American Studies. The review team considered Medieval Studies to be a “high quality niche program”.

Program Objectives
Medieval Studies looks at the ideas and events from the fall of the Roman Empire to the beginning of the modern era (i.e. between about 500 and 1,500 CE). This interdisciplinary field of study seeks to unite knowledge from different disciplines, explain new areas of study and revisit neglected topics. The reviewers were of the opinion that “while the necessarily complicated institutional framework can introduce headaches for the co-directors, instructors, and students, the benefits far outweigh the drawbacks”.
The undergraduate Medieval Studies program shares the following set of goals:

- to give students significant knowledge about the medieval world and its modern legacy
- to expose students to the history, languages, and cultures of medieval Europe
- to educate students in primary source research, analysis, and criticism
- to grapple with how modern societies construe and construct the distant past, filter knowledge of it, and draw meaning from it
- to enhance students’ written and oral communication skills
- to train independent researchers and problem solvers
- to foster in students open and inquisitive minds
- to nurture critical thinkers and engaged citizens

**Academic Plans Offered**

- Three-year General BA in Medieval Studies;
- Four-year General BA in Medieval Studies;
- Honours BA in Medieval Studies;
- Honours BA in Medieval Studies (Arts and Business, co-op and regular).

Relative to nine other Medieval Studies programs in Canada, UW has the fewest number of mandatory courses – MEDVL 105 and 206.

The program and courses align well with the OCAV UDLEs. Certain gaps that need strengthening were identified. These are: more focus on methodologies, application of knowledge, oral presentations, and group work.

**Students**

Medieval Studies, like most programs in the Faculty of Arts, is a second entry program. Over the period 2004/05 to 2011/11 inclusive, an annual average of four students entered the program. The high was 7 students in 2008/09 and the low was the next year with two students. The co-op Arts and Business program in Medieval Studies has historically attracted few students. However, the review team suggested that it be maintained for the small number of students who wish to pursue this degree and to work out on an *ad hoc* basis accommodation of their needs.

The entrance grades from high school for students enrolled in the Medieval Studies program is in the range of 80 to 85% for General students and 75 to 95% for Honours students. On average, Honours students account for two-thirds of those entering the program.

The annual average enrolment in Medieval Studies, from 2004/05 to 2010/11 inclusive, has been 43 students with a high of 49 in 2006/07 to a low of 31 in 2004/05.
Students take most of their courses in other departments, mostly in Classical Studies, History, and English with average annual enrolments of Medieval Studies students of 187, 138, and 62 respectively. Nine other departments attract annual enrolments in total of 158 Medieval Studies students. It would appear that the great majority of contributing departments to Medieval Studies are only peripherally involved in the training of Medieval Studies students.

Medieval Studies courses, MEDVL 105, 205, 260, and 304, had class limits of 104, 60, 40, and 35, respectively, for the academic year 2010/11.

To sustain and enhance student engagement and quality, the program encourages students to explore opportunities for a study abroad. In addition, each year several students attend the Congress on Medieval Studies, hosted by Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo.

Most students graduate from the program within five years. From 2003 to 2010 inclusive, 24 students graduated with a degree in Medieval Studies - 62.5% with an Honours designation. Only one student has graduated from the Arts and Business program in Medieval Studies in the last seven years. The per cent of students on the Dean’s Honours List varies from year to year. In 2006 it was zero while in 2004, 2005, and 2010 it was 50%.

Skills imparted to students in Medieval Studies include: oral and written communication, research ability, critical thinking, analysis and problem solving, and the ability to apply these skills to new domains outside the discipline.

Today, individuals with a degree in Medieval Studies from UW are employed in the following fields: journalism, software development, human resources management, and library and information science.

**Faculty**

There are no positions solely dedicated to the Medieval Studies program. The Medieval Studies program is made possible by the collaboration of numerous colleagues actively involved in teaching classes related to the program -- six full professors, 19 associate professors and three assistant professors, spread over eight departments at UW, four departments at SJU and two departments at CGUC. All contributing faculty members are evaluated by their home departments.

The co-directors, between 2003 and 2011 inclusive, published 11 refereed articles or book chapters, six book reviews, 30 conference presentations and have garnered $85,500 from seven research grants including SSHRC and the Canada Foundation for Innovation. The average quality of teaching by the co-directors, 4 to 4.5 out of a possible 5, lies well above the average for either the Faculty of Arts or SJU. This observation is consonant with the nomination in 2010 of
one co-directors and the award to the other of UW’s Distinguished Teacher Award in 2011. Both co-directors have been involved in external reviews and are involved as elected officials in the Canadian Historical Association, the Canadian Society of Medievalists, and Societas Magica.

**Concerns and opportunities for improvement (program perspective)**

The self-study articulate several goals for the program:

- the hiring an historian of Science -- a need recognized by department heads and the Deans of Arts -- and hiring of an expert in the origins and spread of Islam
- further encouraging opportunities for experiential learning for the program’s undergraduates (e.g., Medieval Studies Congress, International Student Exchange Program, special guest lectures)
- facilitating the process of searching for availability of suitable program electives
- making HIST 402A and HIST 402B (Medieval Europe) capstone courses for obtaining the Honours degree, as well as other curricular changes
- acquiring a dedicated reading room in a new SJU facility and dedicated administrative support for the program.

**External reviewers’ recommendations and program response**

The review team wrote:

> “Both the University of Waterloo and St Jerome’s University, along with the Department of Classics, can be assured that their modest investments of time and resources are paying dividends in terms of high quality education, excellent learning outcomes, and student satisfaction. Our recommendations would only serve to strengthen what is already and strong program.”

A series of 12 recommendations were made.

**Recommendation 1:** That the list of courses available for the program be pruned to remove those courses that have not been offered for several years or no longer have sufficient medieval content.

**Program response:** This recommendation is entirely reasonable and was included on the “to-do” list in our own self-study report. The co-directors have already begun to act on it.

The recent move to create required introductory courses for the program with the MDVL designation is applauded. The reviewers encouraged the development of a similar senior course to bookend the learning experience for students and to reinforce *esprit de corps* among the cohort.
Following from the above, the reviewers recommended:

**Recommendation 2:** That a required capstone course at the 400-level be developed.

**Program response:** This recommendation is an excellent one that we had also mentioned in our own self-study report. We will propose making HIST 402A/B capstones.

The reviewers further suggested the more flexibility in the program may be introduced by the creation of MDVL special topic courses, in order to fill out lacunae in the program from year to year to take account of leaves, etc. Therefore they recommended:

**Recommendation 3:** That “Topics in Medieval Studies” at the various levels (MDVL 29X, MDVL 39X, and MDVL 49X) be created.

**Program response:** This recommendation is excellent and will allow the program co-directors greater flexibility in offering special topics courses to interested students. It will also give Medieval Studies majors greater flexibility in meeting program requirements.

The Medieval Studies program is minimally resourced in terms of human, physical, and financial resources. The review team recommended:

**Recommendation 4:** That both co-directors be given some course release, commensurate with the administrative work this program involves, e.g. the remission of a course every third year.

**Program response:** This recommendation cites what was already current practice at SJU for the co-director based there. On the UW side, the Dean of Arts in coordination with the co-director based in Classical Studies has agreed that a research account for the Medieval Studies program be established to the value of 1/3 of a course release per annum in lieu of actual reduced teaching loads. This recommendation has already been implemented.

The reviewers were of the opinion that the program would benefit immeasurably from the provision of sessional stipends to cover sabbatical leaves and to add richness and diversity to the curriculum. Therefore they recommended:

**Recommendation 5:** That Medieval Studies be provided with two or three sessional stipends annually for program courses.

**Program response:** This recommendation is very desirable as it would give the co-directors some leverage with the host departments at whose mercy this interdisciplinary program operates. If the co-directors identify a need for a course to be taught, this recommendation
allows them to approach chairs in host departments to negotiate offering that course. At SJU, the dean has committed funding for two sessional stipends per budget year. This funding will be used for the first time in January 2013 to appoint a sessional instructor to teach two courses. At UW, the dean indicated that it may not be possible due to funding constraints.

Medieval Studies students have a shared space with the Classics students in the Classics reading room and lounge. There is no corresponding space at St. Jerome’s. The review team recommended:

**Recommendation 6:** That a space be assigned for the use of Medieval Studies students at St. Jerome’s University.

Program response: The Dean of SJU has indicated that, while space is limited, he will work with us to investigate whether a space might be located for Medieval Studies students.

The reviewers considered that the program is well supported by the Classical Studies Department. They consider that it would be helpful for some administrative support was also available from St. Jerome’s. The review team recommended:

**Recommendation 7:** That Medieval Studies be assigned administrative support at St. Jerome’s University.

Program response: The Dean of SJU has agreed to make limited dedicated administrative support available.

The review team was informed that the University’s database system could not generate lists of Medieval Studies students. The review team recommended:

**Recommendation 8:** That the student data management system be amended so that Medieval Studies students can be tracked.

Program response: This is an essential recommendation that requires coordination with the Undergraduate Office and the Registrar’s office. The Dean of Arts has assured the co-directors that it is possible and UW has begun the implementation of the modification in Fall of 2012.

The webpage for Medieval Studies is text-heavy, and may not be appealing to first-year students considering their options. The review team recommended:

**Recommendation 9:** That the broader expertise within the University in web design be tapped to work with the co-directors to redevelop the website.
Program response: This is another good recommendation that fits well with our desire to continue to raise the program’s profile. Discussions with Graphics Services and Arts Undergraduate Recruitment have begun in the Fall term of 2012.

The review team is of the opinion that Medieval Studies attracts a unique student body and that the program will succeed best as a focused specialist program, and thus the co-directors should avoid attempts to expend for the sake of expansion. However, a few program entrance scholarships could help increase enrolment. The review team recommended:

**Recommendation 10:** That efforts be made by the Faculty of Arts and St. Jerome’s to enhance scholarships and awards available to students in Medieval Studies through their respective Advancement Offices.

Program response: Donor gifts are the best way to maintain Medieval Studies student awards and prizes. Although we have benefitted from the generosity of emeritus faculty, we recognize that more efforts could be deployed to harness the 40+ years of alumni from the program (which has been in existence since 1967 – the oldest program of its kind in the country). Discussions with Advancement have begun in the Fall term of 2012.

The review team is of the opinion that an advisory committee for the program would enhance communication between core faculty members and Medieval Studies and would serve to raise the profile of the program across campus. Therefore the team recommended:

**Recommendation 11:** That a Medieval Studies Advisory Committee be formed, comprising members of relevant departments with a strong interest in Medieval Studies.

Program response: Discussions have already been initiated, and the first meeting of a Medieval Studies Advisory Committee has held its first coordinating meeting in the Fall term of 2012.

There are unique challenges for a program that relies on other departments to mount most of its curriculum. It is critical that there be consistent communication regarding course offerings and about curricular changes in contributing departments that affect the program. Medieval Studies has representation on the Faculty of Arts Undergraduate Affairs group; it would also, in the opinion of the review team, be helpful for the program to have representation on St. Jerome’s University Academic Committee. Therefore the review team recommended:

**Recommendation 12:** That the Medieval Studies program has a seat on the St. Jerome’s University Academic Committee.
Program response: The Dean of SJU is aware of this request and has promised to consider it as he assesses the Academic Committee’s role in relation to the newly-formed SJU Senate Committee.

In order to implement all of the recommendations, UW and SJU have committed the following:

1. SJU has allocated an annual operating budget of $19,450 to cover the annual lecture series, receptions, and student travel grants for conferences and study abroad opportunities, and two full sessional stipends. SJU, moreover, releases its co-director from teaching one course every three years, and pays him one-half a sessional stipend once in three years.

2. The Dean of Arts at UW has committed to giving an annual research stipend to the UW co-director of equivalent value to one course release every three years. Also, $1,000 will be allocated for students to participate on the annual trip to the Medieval Congress in Kalamazoo, MI and $500 for promotional materials for the program.

### Implementation strategy with timelines, responsibilities and resources required

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<tr>
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<th>Year</th>
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<td>2013-2014</td>
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