

# Final Assessment Report

## Anthropology (BA, Minor), Public Issues Anthropology (MA)

### June 2021

#### Executive Summary

External reviewers found that the Anthropology (BA, Minor) and Public Issues Anthropology (MA) delivered by the Department of Anthropology were in good standing.

“Our overall assessment is that it is a very good program that has the potential to be better. We were very impressed by the full-time and sessional faculty members we met, and based on our conversations with them, we feel that they are ready and willing to make the most of the opportunities for improvement we are recommending.”

A total of 3 recommendations were provided by the reviewers, regarding governance, structure, curriculum, and support. In response, the program created a plan outlining the specific actions proposed to address each recommendation as well as a timeline for implementation. The next cyclical review for this program is scheduled for 2026-2027.

#### Student Complement (All Years)

	Anthropology				Public Issues Anthropology
	General	Honours	Co-op	Minor	MA
Fall 2020	3	26	8	23	20
Fall 2019	6	24	9	19	18
Fall 2018	9	26	6	16	12

\*based on Active Students Extract retrieved from Quest December 21, 2020.

#### Background

In accordance with the University of Waterloo’s Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP), this final assessment report provides a synthesis of the external evaluation and the internal response of the Anthropology (BA, Minor) and Public Issues Anthropology (MA) delivered by the Department of Anthropology. A self-study (Volume I, II, III) was submitted to the Associate Vice-President, Academic and Associate Vice-President, Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs on October 18, 2019. The self-study (Volume I) presented the program descriptions and learning

outcomes, an analytical assessment of the programs, including the data collected from a student survey, along with the standard data package prepared by the Office of Institutional Analysis & Planning (IAP). The CVs for each faculty member with a key role in the delivery of the program(s) were included in Volume II of the self-study.

From Volume III, two arm's-length external reviewers were selected by the Associate Vice-President, Academic and Associate Vice-President, Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs: Dr. Rob Hoppa, Professor of Anthropology, University of Manitoba, and Dr. Andrew Walsh, Associate Professor of Sociocultural Anthropology, Western University.

Reviewers appraised the self-study documentation and conducted a site visit to the University on February 10-11, 2020. An internal reviewer from the University of Waterloo, Dr. Peter van Beek, Professor of Computer Science, was selected to accompany the external reviewers. The visit included interviews with the Vice-President, Academic & Provost; Associate Vice-President, Academic and Associate Vice-President, Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs; Dean of the Faculty of Arts; Arts Associate Deans of Undergraduate Programs, Graduate Studies, and Research, respectively; Chair and Associate Chairs of the Department of Anthropology, as well as faculty members, staff and current undergraduate and graduate students. The Review Team also had an opportunity to tour the facilities and meet with representatives from the Library.

Following the site visit, the external reviewers submitted a report on their findings, with recommendations. In response, the program responded to each recommendation and outlined a plan for implementation of the recommendations. Finally, the Dean responded to the external reviewers' recommendations, and endorsed the plans outlined by the program.

This final assessment report is based on information extracted, in many cases verbatim, from the self-study, the external reviewers' report, the program response and the Dean's response.

### **Program Characteristics**

**Anthropology (BA, Minor):** Upon completing a bachelor's degree, a student will be cognizant of the diversity of the human condition around the world, historically and today, and will be able to utilize the techniques of research design and field methods used in socio-cultural anthropology, archaeological anthropology, and biological anthropology. All degrees in Anthropology require a core set of three second-year courses in Socio-cultural, Archaeological and Biological Anthropology, three sub-fields of Anthropology.

- **Three-year General BA:** requirements include 30 courses, of which 10 are in Anthropology, plus six courses at the 300-level or above, with at least one 400-level course; a minimum overall average of 60% and a minimum major average of 65%.
- **Four-year General BA:** requirements include 40 courses, of which 16 are in Anthropology, plus ten courses at the 300-level or above, with at least two 400-level courses; a minimum

overall average of 60% and a minimum major average of 65%.

- **Honours BA:** requirements include 40 courses, of which 16 are in Anthropology, plus ten courses at the 300-level or above, with at least two 400-level courses; a minimum overall average of 60% and a minimum major average of 70%.
- **Minor:** requirements include eight courses in Anthropology with a minimum Anthropology average of 65%.

**Public Issues Anthropology (MA):** Students who complete the Public Issues Anthropology Master's program should also be able to utilize anthropological knowledge in ways that are relevant to issues of demonstrated interest to society.

- **MA in Public Issues Anthropology:** requirements include three core courses plus one elective, with a minimum average of 80%, as well as the preparation and defense of a research thesis.

## **Summary of Strengths, Challenges and Weaknesses based on Self-Study**

### **Undergraduate Program**

#### **Strengths**

- In this relatively small program, students get to know, and support, each other well, and students and faculty get to know each other well, too.
- There is an array of student awards and scholarships that help to support the education and professionalization of students.
- Important to a number of students are the opportunities provided by the University of Waterloo's Co-op programs, in particular, the Arts and Business Co-op. Beyond Co-op, students have many opportunities for experiential learning, including hands-on laboratory work in biological and archaeological anthropology, as well as in field schools and study abroad courses.
- In a recently conducted survey of current undergraduates and alumni, students were impressed by the breadth and variety of courses on offer in the Department and how these courses complemented those in other disciplines (e.g., Psychology and History).
- Students were also pleased with the helpful and passionate nature of their professors, and delighted with the opportunities for experiential education in the form of field schools, study abroad courses, and laboratory-based courses.

#### **Challenges**

- The main challenge of this undergraduate program is to attract and retain undergraduate students.
- A further challenge is the inability to offer all courses every year, or at least predictably, so that students can plan ahead better.

- It has been challenging to claim a place or voice for anthropology on campus, as we keep being surprised by a certain innocence of our interlocutors about what anthropology can contribute to various discourses and debates. This challenge is aggravated by new or proposed Minor and Major programs in the Faculty of Arts that resonate with core concerns of (socio-cultural) anthropology (Cultural Identities, in particular), but have involved Anthropology only marginally.
- One of the enduring challenges is space. There is no lounge and/or meeting room that would help making the Department a comfortable environment for students to interact among themselves and with faculty. Given additional osteological collections that will arrive in conjunction with the Jordan field school, the tight limits of storage space are an additional concern.
- In a recently conducted survey, undergraduates thought the Department should employ new media technologies (e.g., video essays and podcasts) to better engage with the public and further strengthen the program.
- In addition to the need for better communication and outreach, students also commented on the lack of resources available to support undergraduate education, particularly in regard to preparing students for careers outside academia.

### **Weaknesses**

- Anthropology lacks another faculty position in archaeology, a subfield that students have expressed much interest in, but in which offerings are limited because of the existing faculty complement.
- Curriculum revisions following the last program review removed a required 300-level course on the History of Anthropological Theory. This may weaken graduates' applications to other programs.
- Introductory courses (particularly ANTH 100, 201 and 202) are periodically taught by sessional instructors, but Anthropology is unable to tell students when these instructors will again teach courses again.
- The survey of current and former Undergraduates indicated that some students felt there were not enough courses on offer from term to term. Moreover, of those courses on offer, some felt the same topics were taught too frequently. It was also suggested that upper-year offerings did not properly build from concepts learned in earlier 'core courses' (i.e., ANTH 201, 202, and 204).

### **Graduate Program**

#### **Strengths**

- The small sizes of the MA student cohorts and the small size of the Department facilitate students' interactions among themselves and with all faculty members.
- The program is unique in its Public Issues focus and in that it incorporates theory, perspectives, approaches, and methods from sociocultural, biological, and

archaeological anthropology. There is one faculty member who is a linguistic anthropologist, thus giving the small program the full breadth of North American anthropology's four- fields.

- With three required courses and one elective, coursework is flexible to meet student interests. With a length of 16 months, the program is compact; students typically finish on time, the completion rate is high, and students are offered a competitive funding package.

### **Challenges**

- Application numbers have improved significantly, with an especially strong interest in biological and archaeological anthropology, but lesser interest in socio-cultural anthropology. This aggravates a shortage of office space for graduate students.
- With individual students' interests often being oriented toward a single subfield of anthropology, teaching adequately across the three subfields in required graduate courses has been a challenge as well.
- Providing adequate supervision when advisors are on sabbatical or other leave is an ongoing challenge for the MA program, especially given its relatively short duration.

### **Weaknesses**

- The January graduation date has posed employment challenges especially for archaeological anthropologists whose work may be weather-dependent. This is part of a broader concern regarding post-MA employment. In survey responses, many (~75%) students report a 3-6 month delay in finding employment, compared with only ~12% who have employment arranged prior to completion.
- The lack of funding for international students significantly limits the ability to attract international students.

### **Summary of Key Findings from the External Reviewers**

The reviewers' assessment is that this is a very good program that has the potential to be better. The reviewers were very impressed by the full-time and sessional faculty members with whom they met, and based on these conversations, they feel that faculty are ready and willing to make the most of the opportunities for improvement the reviewers are recommending.

The external reviewers found that the chief strengths of the program are to be found in the people who make it up. With the exception of several senior faculty members who are likely nearing retirement, most members of the Department are relatively junior. Most have active (and mostly funded) research projects on the go and are participating in all aspects of undergraduate and graduate programs. In addition, the program has been benefiting greatly

from the dedicated efforts of a number of sessional instructors, and, over the past year, from the work of a single staff-member with a great deal on her plate.

The major challenges currently facing the program relate to departmental governance and undergraduate enrolments. Accordingly, we are making two major recommendations that should serve to address these two major challenges.

### **Program Response to External Reviewers' Recommendations**

1. The Department should undertake a thorough review of its own governance processes with an eye to developing a departmental committee structure that will ensure that it can make the most of its complement of faculty members. As a starting point, the Department could look to other similarly sized departments for examples of what such a departmental committee structure might look like. At very least, the Department should have a curriculum/undergraduate committee that would be responsible for proposing changes to undergraduate programs, curriculum planning, and so on – changes and planning that, of course, should then be discussed and voted upon at by the whole Department. In addition to the Associate-Chair Undergraduate, this committee should include at least two other faculty members (not including the Chair), and possibly an Undergraduate student liaison who could attend at least some meetings. Another possibility would be to create a performance evaluation committee that would be responsible for institutionally mandated evaluations of faculty members' performance. And so on. As noted above, other similarly sized departments can provide examples. In all cases, committee memberships should change every few years, and efforts should be made to ensure that different faculty members move in and out of different committees over time.

### **Program Response**

The Anthropology Department welcomes and will undertake the recommended thorough review of its governance processes. This timing of this recommendation works out nicely, because until very recently a significant proportion of the regular faculty in the Department were probationary appointments. But as of July 2020, seven of the eight professors in the Department now have tenure and are now in a good position to devote the necessary time and energy to this exercise. Further, a new Chair will be taking on that role probably next summer, and it would be ideal to have these changes made in time for that transition. Anthropology will therefore undertake a review of current administrative positions (Chair; Associate Chair Undergraduate; Associate Chair Graduate) and formalize, to a greater extent than at present, the roles and authorities of the latter positions, as well as how they are assigned. This will allow the definition and population of a formal departmental committee structure appropriate to a department of this size, to replace current ad hoc committees. Anthropology will follow the reviewers' advice to develop policies to ensure that committee memberships change regularly.

With respect to the recommendation to "create a performance evaluation committee that would be responsible for institutionally mandated evaluations of faculty members' performance", this is seen as a small misunderstanding on the part of the external reviewers since, following the MOA, the Department has voted to use and has used a performance evaluation committee for the past five years. There is thus no need to create such a committee but Anthropology has every intention of continuing to use this procedure.

### **Dean's Response**

I concur; no additional response beyond encouraging the Department in its intention to bring greater formality to its governance processes.

2. The Department should undertake a thorough curriculum review with the assistance of a facilitator. In recent years, the Department has grown in ways and directions that could not have been anticipated at the time of the last curriculum review. Now that things have stabilized, and the Department has an enviable complement of high-achieving researchers and outstanding instructors on hand in full-time and limited-term/sessional positions, the time is right to meet again so as to discuss a number of issues and to propose and prioritize appropriate changes to curriculum and the curriculum planning process. In addition to being a forum for discussing issues raised in the self-study and in this report (concerning first-year courses, on-line courses, and the possibilities presented by co-op students, for example), efforts should be made to ensure that this curriculum review provides the Department's newest faculty members with the opportunity to raise issues of concern and to propose possible changes; having a facilitator run the review would be the best way of ensuring that this happens. This review should also be an occasion for the open discussion of faculty members' own understandings of what a degree in Anthropology from Waterloo offers, or could offer, undergraduate students. Achieving a common vision (however broad) on this last matter could go a long way to promoting the sort of cohesion and consistent messaging that will enable the department to achieve its own great potential while also contributing to Waterloo's larger mission.

### **Program Response**

The Anthropology Department also recognizes the value of this recommendation and will carry it out. For several reasons, it is concluded that the process can best be accomplished in phases, leading up to a final phase where the participation of a facilitator would be helpful. There was clear agreement within the Department about the value of facilitation, but also clear agreement that such facilitated discussions would need to happen in person, which of course will not be possible at least through the Winter 2021 term based on current University guidance regarding Covid-19, and then through the Spring term because some Department members will hopefully be away doing fieldwork. Anthropology therefore proposes to undertake some initial discussions at the sub disciplinary level (e.g., the archaeological

anthropologists would consult together, as would the biological anthropologists, as would the socio-cultural anthropologists) in the Winter 2021 term in order to get this process started. This initial work will be very useful and will help ensure the expeditious success of the facilitator-enabled curriculum review once it becomes feasible, presumably in Fall 2021 or as soon thereafter as possible. The goal in the facilitated process will be to update the undergraduate curriculum to match our understanding of “what a degree in Anthropology from Waterloo offers, or could offer” consistent with the ability of the small complement to offer each course frequently enough that most undergraduate students in the program would have the chance during their time at UW to take most of the Anthropology courses listed in the calendar should they choose to do so.

### **Dean’s Response**

I concur; no additional response beyond agreeing with the Department that most undergraduate students in the Anthropology program should have the chance to take most of the ANTH courses offered.

3. It is clear that a great deal is being expected of the one support staff member employed in the Department. While this staff member appears to be managing this heavy load admirably, she has no backup. Here, it bears noting the truism that keeping a small department running is in many ways no less work, and in some ways much more work, than keeping a large department running. Not knowing what might be possible in the way of relief, we aren’t sure what to recommend – other than that something should be done to alleviate part of the support staff member’s workload in order to ensure that the Department is able to retain this key contributor over the long term.

### **Program Response**

The Anthropology Department agrees with the reviewers’ assessment that the Administrative Manager is required to understand and perform on their own a very large range of tasks in order to support the department and both its undergraduate and Master’s program. Anthropology believes that this workload is not completely unprecedented among the small departments within the Faculty of Arts but would be happy to see the situation altered and will undertake to initiate a review of the position and will consult with the Dean of Arts Office concerning the workload of the Administrative Manager and whether there are options to better support this position.

### **Dean’s Response**

We are aware of the challenges that smaller Departments with a single staff member face. As we move forward with the Faculty’s strategic plan, I am hopeful that we will be able to make some organizational/structural modifications that will alleviate the burden on both faculty and staff in our smaller units.



**Implementation Plan**

	<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>Proposed Actions</b>	<b>Responsibility for Leading and Resourcing (if applicable) the Actions</b>	<b>Timeline for addressing Recommendations</b>
1.	The department should undertake a thorough review of its own governance processes with an eye to developing a departmental committee structure.	The Anthropology department will schedule Faculty meetings devoted to this topic.	Anthropology department Chair; Associate Chair Undergraduate; Associate Chair Graduate.	Fall term 2020; Winter term 2021.
2.	The Anthropology department will schedule Faculty meetings devoted to this topic	The department will begin to explore the issues at the subdisciplinary level, and will prepare for the facilitated review when it becomes feasible to do so.	Anthropology department Chair; Dean of Arts Office and/or CTE (for the facilitator).	Preliminary phase to begin in Winter term 2021, in anticipation of the facilitated process being possible as soon as Fall, 2021.
3.	Something should be done to alleviate part of the support staff member's workload in order to ensure that the department is able to retain this key contributor over the long term.	The department will consult with the Dean of Arts office concerning the workload of the Administrative Manager and whether there are options to better support this position.	Anthropology department Chair; Dean of Arts Office.	Fall term, 2020.

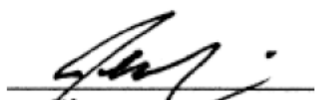
The Department Chair/Director, in consultation with the Dean of the Faculty shall be responsible for the Implementation Plan.

Date of next program review

2026-2027

Date

**Signatures of Approval**



24 Nov 2021

Chair/Director

Date

AFIW Administrative Dean/Head (*For AFIW programs only*)

Date



March 20, 2022

Faculty Dean

Date


**Note:** AFIW programs fall under the Faculty of ARTS; however, the Dean does not have fiscal control nor authority over staffing and administration of the program.



1 November 2021

Associate Vice-President, Academic  
(For undergraduate and augmented programs)

Date



26 September 2021

Associate Vice-President, Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs  
(For graduate and augmented programs)

Date