

Two-Year Progress Report

English Language and Literature (BA, MA, PhD)

August 2020

Background

The Department of English Language and Literature submitted a self-study (Volume I, II, III) to the Associate Vice-President, Academic and the Associate Vice-President, Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs on October 24, 2017. On February 5-6, 2018, two arm's-length external reviewers, Dr. Martin Kreiswirth (Professor of English, McGill University) and Dr. Tania Smith (Associate Professor of Communication, Media and Film, University of Calgary), visited the Department for two days to review the quality of the BA, MA, and PhD programs:

- English Language and Literature (BA)
- English—Literature (BA)
- English—Literature and Rhetoric (BA)
- English—Rhetoric, Media and Professional Communication (BA)
- Technical Writing (minor)
- English (minor)
- Literary Studies (MA)
- Rhetoric and Communication Design (MA)
- Experimental Digital Media (MA)
- English (PhD)

In addition, there are bachelor specializations in the following: Technical Writing; Global Literatures; Digital Media Studies and an Intensive Specialization. A Creative Writing Specialization came onstream in Fall 2019.

The external reviewers issued a written report on February 26, 2018. The Final Assessment Report (FAR) summarizing the self-study report, the external reviewer's recommendations, and the Department's responses to the recommendations was approved by the University's Senate Undergraduate Council on December 10, 2019, and went to Senate for information at its January 2020 meeting.

This two-year progress report is a required part of the University's cyclical program review process. The report outlines what progress has been achieved to date with the implementation of recommendations from the last program review.

Progress on implementation plan

In this report, we describe each of the recommendations from the external review which resulted in action items listed in the Implementation Plan of the FAR.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Maintain the uniqueness of the Department

Status: ongoing

The reviewers wrote that “the humanities fields must innovate and adapt in order to assert their value and relevance to today’s culture and society. The English Department at Waterloo demonstrates strength on both its literature side and its rhetoric side and we see neither as more important than the other as a foundation for its future success. However, the challenge will be to continue to collaborate, maintain morale, support one another’s development (of programs, of research areas), and to permit each undergraduate and graduate plan to express sufficiently distinctive characteristics while sharing core values and resources.”

The English Department is committed to innovation and adaptation, which inform the actions it has taken in response to the reviewers’ targeted recommendations. A recent program addition—a new required methods course for the growing number of graduate students who pursue studies in Rhetoric and Communication Design—provides a general example of initiatives the Department has taken in order to maintain its uniqueness and program strengths. The new requirement will offer students in this area a much-needed introduction to the mixed and interdisciplinary research methodologies that are crucial in this field. At the undergraduate level, the Department will shortly propose a new undergraduate major plan in creative and professional writing.

Recommendation 2: service teaching initiatives

The reviewers wrote that “the increasing number of service courses taught by English (as seen in the current Math Initiative and upcoming undergraduate communications outcomes initiative [or UCOI]) needs to be closely monitored to ensure that there remain enough resources to maintain the department’s core responsibilities to English studies.” They suggested “that the Department and University have discussions with the lecturers regarding such issues as ‘definite term’ versus ‘continuing’ lecturers, course loads over several years, TA assignments, and other relevant issues.”

Status: ongoing

In 2019-20, English instructors taught 67 sections of communications courses reserved for Mathematics and Computing, Science, and Engineering students. English faculty also taught several sections of Arts First courses, the UCOI course in the Faculty of Arts. In 2020-21, faculty

will begin to deliver a required communications course (ENGL 109) to Nanotechnology students in addition to the communications course sections it delivered in other faculties during the previous academic year. The Department continues to monitor the resources required for UCOI course delivery. In addition, in 2020-21 it will teach at least double the number of ENGL 109 sections for Mathematics and Computing, owing to the sudden sharp increase in the Mathematics incoming cohort scheduled to arrive in Fall 2020. English Language and Literature regularly engages in conversations with stakeholders and university administration about how best to support the initiative through such potential mechanisms as centralized funding and administrative support.

In 2019-20, lecturers taught 31 of the 67 sections of communications courses taught in the Faculties of Mathematics, Science, and Engineering. The Chair and the Department Tenure and Promotion Committee have followed up with the Dean and Provost on the matter of contract term length for the Department's Definite-Term Lecturers. The Chair has met with lecturers both one-on-one and as a group to provide answers to questions concerning reappointment, teaching loads, and conversion to continuing lecturer status. Further meetings have been scheduled for Spring and Fall 2020.

The expectation for future years is that these regular meetings will continue.

Recommendation 3: program communication

3.1 Make detailed course outlines more readily available publicly online.

Status: in progress

Beginning in Fall 2020, syllabi for all courses (including sections of large, multi-section courses) taught in a given semester will be uploaded to the English Language and Literature website.

3.2 Encourage instructors to collaborate on "master syllabi" for core required courses

Status: in progress

A sub-committee has been struck to examine the syllabi for ENGL 251 Criticism, a course required in all major plans that students have anecdotally identified as the most varied across the different sections taught each year. The sub-committee will draft a master syllabus to guide individual instructors of ENGL 251. The Department plans to strike a second sub-committee to examine syllabi for the other two core courses required in all major plans, ENGL 200A British Literature I and 200B British Literature II.

Instructors of large, multi-section courses in English (109, 191,192/ARTS 190, 193) already collaborate on their syllabi.

3.3 Promote experiential, applied and innovative pedagogy (especially those involving the use of communication technologies)

Status: ongoing

The reviewers wrote that “Faculty in English may be able to meet several challenging objectives at once by encouraging course-based learning methods and/or assessment types that are both 1) experiential and/or applied in nature and 2) require students to build proficiency in their use of communication technologies.”

In 2020/21 the Department will address this recommendation in three ways:

- a) An inventory of experiential learning activities in the classroom: Using the examples of experiential learning available from the Centre for Teaching Excellence web page on experiential learning (<https://uwaterloo.ca/centre-for-teaching-excellence/support/integrative-learning/experiential-learning>), instructors will send a list of experiential learning activities used in their classes to the Associate Chair, Undergraduate. The aim of this exercise will be to identify the variety of experiential learning activities operational in English classes and to share them more broadly with Department members;
- b) Better messaging to students: Anecdotal evidence from alumni who return to the Department to speak about the value of an English degree suggests that graduates of the English program recognize the experiential component of their learning only post-graduation and once they are working. The Department is looking at ways to point out more clearly to current students the experiential components that inform their coursework;
- c) Using the inventory of activities described in (a), encourage Department instructors to implement these activities more frequently and to identify their experiential-learning component to students.

Recommendation 4: Undergraduate Curriculum

4.1 Consider bolstering the role that 100-level courses play in developing students’ interest in and building a foundation for the three academic plans in English.

The reviewers ask: “Should certain 100-level courses be required as prerequisites for future courses in the field, and should certain 100-level courses be required or recommended in each of the three academic plans?” They assert that other university English degree “programs offer more advice, even online and in the calendar, about which first year courses to take if a student is interested in a future English degree.”

Status: in progress

The structure of Arts degrees at the University of Waterloo encourages students to take a broad, interdisciplinary range of courses in their first year of university. Students do not declare a major until their second year and instead enrol in a variety of subjects in order to complete their Arts Breadth requirements. Simultaneously, first-year students receive very robust advising about courses they can take to prepare for the majors they consider pursuing. The Faculty frequently polls departments about course recommendations for first-year students, which first-year advisors in the Faculty of Arts then share with the students. These advisors therefore provide incoming Arts students with guidance as to the courses they should take if they wish to declare an English major at the end of their first year.

Within the Department of English, we ask that students who hope to major in one of our three English major plans complete two 100-level courses in English in their first year. It is true that students could take two of a high number of distinct English courses in their first year in order to major in the field. However, if first-year students identify a particular English major plan such as Literature and Rhetoric or Rhetoric, Media, and Professional Communication as the plan they would like to follow, English Department advisors will encourage them to enroll in a 100-level course that provides a preliminary introduction to that subject area. For instance, a student who expresses an interest in the Rhetoric, Media, and Professional Communication major plan will be encouraged to enroll in the ENGL 101B Introduction to Rhetoric.

Since a significant number—approximately 30%—of Arts majors switch their majors during their undergraduate degrees, we have found that first-year courses do not necessarily play a role in preparing students for the specific degree major plan that they ultimately complete. A student in Rhetoric, Media, and Professional Communication may switch in second or third year to the Literature and Rhetoric major plan, or to the Literature plan. We have found that our students appreciate having flexibility in the major plans to be able to change their minds as they move into the midpoint of their programs.

In these departmental and Arts Faculty contexts, the English Department believes that offering a variety of English courses that showcase the strengths of the English undergraduate program in one of Literature, Rhetoric, Professional Writing, or Media serves to acquaint incoming students with the wide range of different specializations and foci available to them should they choose to major in English, without requiring them to take additional courses should they choose to switch their major.

4.2 Consider focusing the list of 100-level courses.

Status: in progress

The reviewers wrote that reducing the number of 100 level courses may, among other things, “build community among instructors who teach the same 100 level course and promote fruitful pedagogical conversations about how these courses inspire students to become English majors.”

Regarding the suggestion that instructors of the same 100-level course may build community via pedagogical conversations, the Department has found this to be true in its largest 100-level course, ENGL 109, which many instructors teach every term. Instructors share course outlines, teaching strategies, information about helpful resources, and pedagogical strategies.

Many 100-level courses serve students in programs other than English as electives or breadth requirements. These students’ interests in the subject are as diverse as the English offerings at the first-year level. That said, the Associate Chair, Undergraduate and the Undergraduate Committee are taking steps to prune the course listings to reflect courses that are taught regularly.

As to whether mounting fewer 100-level courses would facilitate more conversations about how courses inspire students to become English majors, this may be the case and is a question under discussion in the Undergraduate Committee.

4.3 Consider balancing literature and rhetoric course offerings at the 200 level in order to more fully represent the English Department’s range of academic plans and course offerings at the 300 level and beyond.

Status: in progress

The Department has introduced two new 200-level courses, ENGL 242 Literature, Rhetoric, and the Visual Arts and ENGL 343 Literature, Rhetoric, and Music that focus on both literature and rhetoric. These two courses will complement ENGL 292 Rhetorical Theory and Criticism as preparation for advanced rhetorical study.

The Associate Chair, Undergraduate and the Undergraduate Committee are presently examining the role and focus of ENGL 200A/B Survey of British Literature, two core required courses that the reviewers named as potentially “incorporat[ing] both rhetorical and literary studies” and perhaps becoming survey courses that do “not just focus on British texts.” Changes to the survey courses were on the agenda for discussion at the Department’s April 2020 retreat, which was cancelled owing to COVID-19. The Associate Chair plans to bring changes to the survey courses to the Department for discussion in the coming year preparatory to moving specific changes to the courses.

4.4 Consider permitting more room for RMPC students, especially those in Honours degrees, to focus more on their interests within English by reducing their literature course requirements beyond the core.

Status: complete

In 2018-19, the Department approved changes to the Honours and Four-Year General Rhetoric, Media, and Professional Communication (RMPC) degree plan to increase the number of electives within the plan from 0 to 2.

4.4.1 Consider whether the 100 and 200 level requirements for RMPC students are adequately preparing them for their third and fourth years.

Status: in progress

In 2018-19 the Department approved a change to the RMPC Honours, Four-Year, and Three-Year plans to reduce the number of required 200-level courses by one. The reduction means that students in these major plans are now required to take three literature courses rather than four and have an additional English elective course available to them.

Discussions in the Undergraduate Committee with respect to other 100- and 200-level requirements for RMPC students are ongoing.

4.4.2 Consider that an existing or reworked rhetorical theory course could be an alternative to ENGL 251 for RMPC students.

Status: in progress

A sub-committee is currently tasked with assessing the content and assignments across 251 sections and will make recommendations concerning a master syllabus for this course. It is expected that this sub-committee will discuss core content and possibly recommend changes to it. Depending on these recommendations, the Department may consider an alternative requirement to ENGL 251 for RMPC students. A challenge to instituting a rhetoric alternative to ENGL 251 is that 251 functions as a cohort builder and bridge between different sides of the English program and thus helps to maintain the uniqueness of the Department and the undergraduate degrees that it offers.

4.4.3 Consider the purpose of requiring the introduction to linguistics course, ENGL 306A, for RMPC students when this course is neither required for Honours literature students nor for literature and rhetoric students.

Status: complete

In 2018-19 the Department eliminated ENGL 306A as a requirement for RMPC students. As a result of this reduction, RMPC students have an additional elective English course available to them in their plan.

4.4.4 Consider whether it is necessary to require RMPC students to take two upper-level courses in literature.

Status: in progress

The reviewers wrote that “Students in this plan, like students in the Literature plan, desire and deserve freedom to take advanced courses in their declared area of interest.”

The Undergraduate Committee is presently reviewing major requirements in the Department’s three undergraduate major plans. While the Committee has not, to date, recommended a reduction in the number of upper-level literature courses RMPC students are required to take for their major, the elimination of ENGL 306A from the RMPC plan has resulted in the addition of an elective to that plan, which students may fulfil by taking an ENGL course in any of the Department’s areas (literature, rhetoric, media, professional communication, creative writing).

4.5 Consider the role of other Arts course offerings in degree requirements.

Status: complete

UW’s Faculty of Arts is deeply committed to multidisciplinary. Arts academic regulations stipulate that Arts students must fulfil significant breadth requirements: 5 units (10 semester-length courses) of the 20-unit Honours Bachelor degree must be completed via courses in Fine, Performing, and Communication Arts (0.5 unit); Humanities (1.0 unit); Languages and Cultures (1.0 unit); Social Sciences (2.0 units); and Interdisciplinary Studies (0.5 unit). These breadth requirements ensure that all students complete courses across the full range of disciplines in UW Arts. Students access additional opportunities for interdisciplinary study by pursuing double majors, minors, and electives, all of which are enabled by the Faculty’s plan standardization, which mandates that each major plan in Arts require 8.0 units (16 semester-length courses) in the major subject.

Several courses in English are cross-listed with courses in Digital Arts Communication, Gender and Social Justice, History, Legal Studies, Speech Communication, Studies in Islam, and Theatre and Performance. The Department regularly engages in conversations with other Arts departments about courses that may satisfy major requirements across academic units. Students also have the option to ask the Associate Chair, Undergraduate to substitute a course in another discipline for one of the courses required in their English major plan.

4.6 Consider a 400-level academic plan capstone course for each stream.

Status: complete

Students in all three major plans are required to take at least one 400-level Special Topics course in their major field. There is considerable variety in these courses, which differentiates them from the “capstone” course, where “capstone” means a common course that all students in the major must take in fulfilment of their major plan requirements. However, as a means of offering students in the final year of their programs a seminar experience and/or to facilitate their transition into the next stage of their academic or professional careers, we believe the Special Topics courses fulfil the mandate typically attached to a “capstone” course.

5. Graduate program

5.1 Continue to carefully track graduate student recruitment and admission, funding packages (and their components), and supervision (with a view towards dispersion throughout the Department) to try to attract the best and brightest novice scholars from Canada and beyond and match them with the full range of the Department's strengths.

Status: ongoing

5.2 Consider measures to recruit diverse, high quality graduate students.

Status: ongoing and complete

Discussion of the Department’s actions concerning items listed in 5.1 and 5.2 appear under the recommendations in 5.2.1, 5.2.2, and 5.2.3.

5.2.1 Consider changing the wording of admission requirements so that students who have very high grades and relevant coursework are not discouraged to apply despite lacking an “honours” designation on their BA degree.

Status: complete

“The University of Waterloo, Senate Graduate and Research Council (SGRC) establishes the **minimum** academic admission requirements common to all graduate students” (<https://uwaterloo.ca/graduate-studies-postdoctoral-affairs/future-students/before-you-apply/admission-and-english-language-proficiency-requirements>).

A 75% overall standing in the last two years, or equivalent, in a four-year Honours Bachelor's degree or equivalent is the minimum requirement that the Senate Graduate and Research Council sets for admission to a Master's program. The Department is therefore unable to admit

applicants to our MA programs, even strong ones, with three-year General degrees. Instead, it accepts these students to a qualifying year of undergraduate courses, during which they reapply to the MA program for the following year. In cases where a strong candidate has a three-year degree and extra credits that fall short of a full four-year Honours program, the Department has succeeded in making a sufficiently strong argument to admit the student. However, the Faculty and University reject applicants who hold a three-year degree only.

5.2.2 Make active efforts to research and recruit from specific Canadian and international programs that are likely to produce eligible and strong graduate students.

Status: ongoing

The Graduate Studies Committee will discuss this item in Fall 2020.

A note on international students: The reviewers' recommendation refers to international programs rather than international students. However, since the first implies the second, it is important to point out that the Faculty severely restricts the number of international graduate students English is allowed to accept. The Faculty of Arts has recently announced that until further notice, it will not accept international PhD applications unless they are fully funded via external sources. (Being fully self-funded, as distinct from being funded by external sources, does not make applicants eligible for admission.) Full external funding is a rare occurrence for potential international English graduate students. Moreover, success rates for SSHRC grants, especially those sufficiently large to fully fund an international graduate student, are very low. Therefore, the Department is generally unable to admit international students whom the Faculty is not willing to fund.

In previous admission cycles, the Department has been permitted to accept just one international graduate student to its MA and PhD programs. In rare years, it has received permission to admit two international students in the same cycle. Thus, while the Department gladly corresponds with all international students who express an interest in our graduate programs, it cannot recruit more actively until it is allowed to admit more of these applicants.

5.2.3 Consider the value of recruiting students not only from English literature programs but closely related programs in other disciplines.

Status: complete

A significant number of MA and PhD candidates in the Department have completed undergraduate degrees in fields other than English literature. Current students in these programs hold Honours BAs in: Comparative Religion and Philosophy; Creative Writing; Economics; Education; Film and Communication; Gender Studies, History; Interdisciplinary

Studies; Political Science; Public Administration; Sociology; Theology. One student holds a BSc in Biochemistry.

The reviewers write that such recruitment “may be especially appropriate when recruiting students for the media and rhetoric MA and PhD.” A number of students in the MA and PhD programs hold undergraduate or graduate degrees in media, rhetoric, and closely related fields such as: Graphic Design and Illustration; Journalism; Literature and Linguistics; Media, Information and Technoculture; Public Texts.

The Department regards recruitment from students from related programs in other disciplines as important, ongoing work that will continue in the future.

5.3 Continue to implement the excellent systems developed to shepherd graduate students smoothly through their programs, such as checklists and TA mentoring and training.

Status: ongoing

The Department’s TA Coordinator, Dr. Bruce Dadey, completed a TA Time Tracking Report (interim report submitted in Winter 2019; final report submitted June 2020) that examined the distribution of teaching assistant responsibilities across the thirteen-week term. Carried out over the Winter 2018 and Fall 2018 terms, the report involved a representative sample of 18 teaching assistants who kept careful records of the time they took to complete their assigned tasks according to the instructions Dr. Dadey gave them. Further details regarding the report findings appear in the Department’s response to the external reviewers’ Recommendation 5.4 in this report.

After tracking the time that TAs spent to perform their assigned tasks, Dr. Dadey presented his findings and summarized actions taken since 2018 to continue to ensure a reasonable TA workload:

- During the teaching orientation incoming students are introduced to strategies for balancing coursework and teaching, such as planning for the whole term by creating a list that includes both coursework- and teaching-related deadlines and choosing presentation and other assignment dates so they don’t overlap with heavy marking weeks.
- The fall teaching orientation for incoming students includes a workshop on effective, efficient marking, in which students are instructed on how to mark efficiently while giving their students quality feedback.
- At the beginning of both ENGL 109 and ENGL 210F, all course coordinators distribute a detailed marking schedule that includes assignment due dates, marking due dates, and estimated marking times for each assignment based on the average times in these time tracking studies. Having these times lets students know when they are taking too much

time marking and need to contact their coordinators for strategies to increase efficiency.

- Since the TA Time-Tracking Report was undertaken, marking rubrics for ENGL 210F were revised so they are clearer and more concise, which should facilitate marking. ENGL 109, which previously didn't have rubrics, is undergoing revision.
- Both the TA Coordinator and course coordinators meet with students who are having trouble handling their marking loads in order to offer marking coaching. In their weekly meetings with TAs, all course coordinators also provide marking regularization sessions for each major assignment in their weekly meetings.

Other actions planned to enhance the Department's management of the TA experience include revising the TA manuals for ENGL 210F and ENGL 109 to include information from the time-tracking study and creating Course Coordinator manuals for both courses.

5.4 Ensure that graduate students' teaching and academic workloads are reasonable.

Status: ongoing

The reviewers wrote that "it is essential to continue maintaining small class sizes per TA and to provide TA training and support. Departments must not only account for the labour involved in students' teaching duties but also their professional development as instructors while they are progressing through their graduate program."

The TA Time Tracking Report described in 5.3 looked at how much time graduate students spend on their teaching duties in ENGL 109 (Introduction to Academic Writing) and ENGL 210F (Genres of Business Communication), the Department's two largest undergraduate courses and the courses to which most Department teaching assistants are assigned.

The report found that "the total number of hours over the term spent by individual TAs on the courses" was almost always well below 140, the number of hours for which TAs are paid over the term. Not surprisingly, more experienced TAs took less time to finish their assigned duties than first-time assistants. Dr. Dadey concluded that "through the TA manuals, weekly meetings, and peer mentoring, there is an extensive support network for first-time TAs in the courses, but it would be worth exploring if other forms of support might help to bring the overall times of first-time TAs closer to those of experienced TAs."

5.5 The Department and University should consider adjusting program length expectations and advertising to account for the wide variation in time to completion. The reviewers added, however, that "the university's program evaluation standards and statistical measures should not be too demanding in regard to this metric, which can be skewed by a few individuals. Delays often have unavoidable causes such as health and family responsibilities that should be

accommodated.”

Status: ongoing

At the Master’s level, the Department maintains its one-year MA.

Efforts to re-design milestones in ways that could reduce students’ time to completion are led by the Associate Chair, Graduate Studies, and the Graduate Studies Committee. In 2018-19, redesigned area examinations were introduced. These are intended to improve completion rates by (among other things) increasing early contact between the candidates and their dissertation committees. In advance of the examinations, candidates must assemble their dissertation committees and work with them to generate both a reading list and a dissertation proposal, which they defend in the oral component of the examination in their area of concentration. This new process is intended to help students: streamline the process of assembling the dissertation committee; determine a dissertation topic; complete the reading necessary to begin drafting dissertation chapters. The new examination procedure means that these activities now happen during doctoral candidates’ second year in the program. Two cohorts have now had dissertation proposals approved during their second year. As these cohorts enter the later years of the PhD, the Department will compare their completion times to those of students who completed under the older area examination process.

The Department will work with the Faculty of Arts and University on messaging around program length expectations.

5.6 The University administration should applaud this department for its ability to adapt with such sensitivity to individual graduate students’ situational challenges and to foster their academic strengths. Their respect for graduate students’ experience is well in line with the university’s strategic plan -- its desire for “a vibrant student experience” and its value for “Integrity, equity, diversity and a balanced life for students, faculty and staff.”

5.7 Consider occasionally offering opportunities for PhD students to teach a higher-level course in their own research area, not just a first-year course.

Status: ongoing

Under the past two Chairs and the current Chair, established practice has been to try to assign all students nearing the completion of the PhD a course either in their research area or in an area closely related to their field of specialization. In certain years, when a high number of doctoral candidates have defended in the same semester, this has not been possible. In this situation, every effort is made to offer all students teaching that will diversify their experience and increase their competencies ahead of their entrance onto the job market.

5.8 Support and collaborate with the graduate students' organization in their efforts to provide peer support and mentoring for PhD students after their coursework is complete, when students feel most isolated and challenged.

Status: ongoing

Starting in Fall 2019, the Associate Chair, Graduate Studies has collaborated with the Student Association for Graduates in English (SAGE) to co-deliver SSHRC and area examination workshops. The aim of these workshops is to ensure more effective support for graduate students and a more consistent focus on scholarships.

The high success rate that English graduate student applicants had in the 2019/20 SSHRC Doctoral Fellowship and OGS competitions suggests that the SSHRC workshops attracted a high number of students, increased student awareness of external funding opportunities, and improved their preparedness to compete for this funding.

Presently the Associate Chair, Graduate Studies, with the Chair, is working with SAGE and senior graduate students on anti-racism initiatives within the Department. Graduate students have spearheaded these efforts, two aims of which are to increase awareness of institutional racism and to work to address it. As racism exacerbates feelings of isolation and challenge, it is hoped that this work will help address this recommendation. The Department notes that the University has also introduced a PhD Candidate workshop to help celebrate, prepare and support students in this phase of their academics

5.8.1 A “graduate student handbook,” if not already in existence, could be co-developed by the student society and the graduate officer, perhaps with appendices customized to each unique stream.

Status: in progress

The current and incoming SAGE executive are in discussions about a handbook, which will take shape as updateable web pages rather than a paper document. The Associate Chair, Graduate Studies will work with the incoming executive once these discussions are complete, and will coordinate with the Faculty and GSPA to ensure the handbook is complementary to existing student support resources.

5.9 Carefully look into the distribution of graduate supervision through a task force, working group, or committee with representation across the Department based on supervisory activity.

Status: in progress

The reviewers felt that PhD supervision is “very unevenly distributed across the Department.” Among other things, it wondered whether the Department should look for ways to spread supervisory activities more evenly among faculty. The reviewers suggested a task force made up of Department members with a range of supervisory loads, from zero to the maximum number allowed by the Department, to look into the distribution of doctoral supervision.

At present, two faculty members are supervising the maximum number of PhD candidates (5) permitted by the Department. Three faculty members supervise 4 students. Other faculty supervise 0-3 doctoral candidates. The 2019 loss of a faculty member in two highly-subscribed areas of the graduate program, Experimental Digital Media (XDM) and Rhetoric and Communication Design (RCD), increases the urgency of addressing this issue.

The Graduate Studies Committee will constitute this task force, which the Associate Chair, Graduate Studies will lead. In 2020-21, Graduate Studies Committee membership includes faculty with supervisory loads ranging from zero to the maximum number. In consultation with the Graduate Studies Committee, the Associate Chair will formulate the questions that the task force will answer, taking into account the three questions that the external reviewers put forward as suggestions for the task force to consider.

Implementation Plan

| | Recommendations | Proposed Actions | Responsibility for Leading and Resourcing (if applicable) the Actions | Timeline for addressing Recommendations |
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| 1. | <p>Maintain the uniqueness of the department: The Department demonstrates strength on both its literature side and its rhetoric side; however, the challenge will be to continue to collaborate, maintain morale, support one another’s development (of programs, of research areas), and to permit each undergraduate and graduate plan to express sufficiently distinctive characteristics while sharing core values and resources.</p> | <p>Faculty in English agree that these elements—continuing collaboration, mutual support, maintaining morale, and carefully considering possible degree plan development—are essential for sustaining the uniqueness and strength of the Department.</p> <p>Changes have been made to the Rhetoric, Media, and Professional Communication (RMPC) undergraduate major plan. The Undergraduate Committee (UGC) will consider the other undergraduate plan requirements.</p> <p>A new undergraduate major plan in creative and professional writing is planned.</p> <p>The Graduate Studies Committee (GSC) will continue to review requirements, milestones, and recruitment efforts in its graduate degree programs.</p> | Chair SJU Chair | <p>Ongoing</p> <p>2018-20 academic years: Motions to change the BA Honours Rhetoric, Media, and Professional Communication (RMPC) major plan were passed.</p> <p>2020-22 academic years: The UGC will consider further changes to the undergraduate major plans.</p> <p>At the graduate level: Changes made to the area examination committees have been implemented; the area examination process has been revised to include a defense of the PhD dissertation proposal by the dissertation committee; a new required methods course for graduate students in Rhetoric and Communication Design (RCD) has been introduced.</p> <p>Fall 2020: the GSC will review the Department’s graduate recruitment efforts per Recommendation 5.2.2 below.</p> |
| 2. | <p>Service teaching initiatives: 2.1 The increasing number of service courses taught by English (as seen in the current Math Initiative and upcoming English Language</p> | The careful development of and planning for the new UCOI communication courses and the hiring of excellent new faculty members has ensured the success of the new UCOI service teaching initiatives for the Faculties of Science and Engineering. We believe they will | Chair; UCOI Associate Chair; SJU Chair | 2.1 Ongoing - The UCOI Advisory Committee meets monthly and provides reports to the Department at its regular meetings. Members of the UCOI Committee have organized several events to bring together instructors from Arts, |

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| | <p>Competency Initiative) needs to be closely monitored.</p> <p>2.2 The department and university should have discussions with the lecturers regarding such issues as “definite term” vs. “continuing” lecturers, course loads over several years, TA assignments, and other relevant issues.</p> | <p>be as successful as the on-going communication course delivery for the Faculties of Math and Environment (GEM).</p> <p>To manage current service teaching obligations, the Chair will appoint a UCOI Associate Chair; any new service teaching requests will need to be carefully considered in light of current course offerings.</p> <p>The Chair and the new Associate Chair will be fully involved in the UCOI advisory process. Assessment of the overall UCOI initiative and of the place of English within that initiative will be important future markers of success.</p> | | <p>Science, and Engineering to discuss diverse kinds of teaching and learning in the different Faculties.</p> <p>In 2018-19 delegates from the UCOI Advisory Committee met with Samantha St. Amand (Science) to discuss methods of assessing the impact of first-year Science UCOI courses. UCOI Committee delegates explored similar assessment measures with Co-op.</p> <p>2.2 Ongoing - 2020-21: Regular meetings between the Chair and Definite-Term Lecturers have been scheduled for Fall and planned for Winter. These will continue the Chair’s practice in 2018-19 of meeting with DTLs to discuss subjects such as process and timelines to lecturer reappointment; policy language re. continuing lecturer applications; the “1-in-6.”</p> <p>2020-21: The UCOI Associate Chair and the Chair will continue to work with colleagues across campus and in administration on best ways to support the initiative.</p> |
| 3. | <p>Program communication</p> <p>3.1 Make detailed course outlines more readily available publicly online</p> <p>3.2 Encourage instructors to collaborate on “master syllabi” for core required courses.</p> <p>3.3 Promote experiential, applied and innovative pedagogy (especially those involving the use of communication technologies).</p> | <p>These program communication recommendations are referred to the Undergraduate and Graduate Studies Committees for discussion and possible recommendations.</p> <p>Note:</p> <p>3.3. may require new communication resource technologies from the Faculty of Arts (e.g. licenses for products such as Adobe Creative Suite; student labs to access these tools, etc.)</p> | <p>Undergraduate Associate Chair; Graduate Associate Chair; Chair; Dean</p> | <p>3.1 In progress - 2020-21: Beginning in Fall 2020, Department course outlines will be archived in an online repository by the Department’s Support Services Coordinator.</p> <p>3.2 In progress - 2020-21: The instructors of ENGL 251, a course required in all undergraduate major plans, are meeting to discuss a “master syllabus.” The UGC will review two other core requirements, ENGL 200 A/B.</p> |

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| | | | | 3.3 Ongoing - 2020-21: The Chair will monitor the uploading of course outlines to track the time required to make them available online, and to determine whether they require new communication technologies (see 3.1). |
| 4. | <p>Undergraduate Curriculum</p> <p>4.1 Consider bolstering the role that 100-level courses play</p> <p>4.2 Consider focusing the list of 100-level courses.</p> <p>4.3 Consider balancing literature and rhetoric course offerings at the 200 level.</p> <p>4.4 Consider permitting more room for RMPC students, especially those in Honours degrees, to focus more on their interests within English.</p> <p>4.4.1 Consider whether the 100- and 200-level requirements for RMPC students are adequately preparing them for their third and fourth years.</p> <p>4.4.2 Consider that an existing or reworked rhetorical theory course could be an alternative to ENGL 251 for RMPC students.</p> <p>4.4.3 Consider the purpose of requiring the Introduction to Linguistics course, ENGL 306A, for RMPC students</p> <p>4.4.4 Consider whether it is necessary to require RMPC students to take two upper level courses in literature.</p> <p>4.5 Consider the role of other Arts course offerings in degree requirements.</p> | <p>The UGC is reviewing these undergraduate curriculum recommendations and have made, or are considering making, recommendations to the Department as a whole.</p> <p>Note:</p> <p>4.4.1.-4. would create a more distinctive RMPC degree stream. The benefits of these proposed curricular changes must be weighed against the strengths of the existing structure of collaboration and common degree elements.</p> <p>4.5. Other Arts courses already play a crucial role in all undergraduate degree programs. English majors can request to substitute a non-English course for a required course in their plan.</p> <p>4.6. Our degrees do have 400-level capstone courses relevant to each stream. These are called “Special Topics” courses in the degree plans. Students have some choice in the capstone course they take, and so there is no “one” capstone course per degree plan. The exigencies of a large Co-op program, in which students must fit their degree requirements into their study terms, demands a flexibility that discourages the introduction of a capstone course, where “capstone” means a specific required course that must be taken in the student’s final semester of study.</p> | Undergraduate Associate Chair | <p>4.1- 4.3 In progress</p> <p>4.4 Complete - In 2018-19 the Department approved changes to the Honours and Four-Year General Rhetoric, Media, and Professional Communication (RMPC) degree plan to increase the number of electives within the plan from 0 to 2.</p> <p>4.4.1 In progress - In 2018-19 the Department approved a change to the RMPC Honours, Four-Year, and Three-Year plans to reduce the number of required 200-level courses by one.</p> <p>4.4.2 In progress - The Undergraduate Committee (UGC) continues to evaluate the plan requirements in RMPC and its other degree plans.</p> <p>4.4.3 Complete - In 2018-19 the Department approved the elimination of 306A as a requirement for RMPC students. 306A is now one of two courses that they can take in fulfilment of plan requirements.</p> <p>4.4.4 In progress - Degree plan requirements for all three undergraduate Honours degrees are presently under discussion.</p> <p>4.5 Complete</p> <p>4.6 Complete</p> |

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| | <p>4.6 Consider a 400-level academic plan capstone course for each stream.</p> | | | |
| <p>5.</p> | <p>Graduate matters 5.1 Continue to carefully track graduate student recruitment and admission, funding packages (and their components), and supervision 5.2 Consider measures to recruit diverse, high quality graduate students. 5.2.1 Consider changing the wording of admission requirements 5.2.2 Make active efforts to research and recruit from specific Canadian and international programs 5.2.3 Consider the value of recruiting students not only from English literature programs but closely related programs in other disciplines. 5.3 Continue to implement the excellent systems developed to shepherd graduate students smoothly through their programs. 5.4 Ensure that graduate students' teaching and academic workloads are reasonable. 5.5 The department and university should consider adjusting program length expectations and advertising 5.6 The university administration should applaud this department for its ability to adapt with such sensitivity to individual graduate students' situational challenges and to foster their academic strengths. Their respect</p> | <p>5.1. and 5.3. Effective tracking and mentoring will continue to be managed by the Graduate Associate Chair. 5.2 Recruitment and admissions: recruiting diverse, high quality graduate students has been and will continue to be a key consideration. 5.2.1. Recommended changes to graduate admission criteria are referred to GSPA; Changes to admission wording to make it clearer will be considered by the Graduate Studies Committee. 5.2.2. This item is referred to the Faculty of Arts; it controls the admission of international students. 5.4. Reasonable workloads for students will be discussed by the Graduate Studies Committee and is also referred to the Faculty of Arts; it controls the 2-course/year teaching load of graduate students. 5.5. Adjusting program length expectations and advertising will be discussed by the Graduate Studies Committee and are also referred to the Faculty of Arts. 5.6. We hope that the university administration will applaud our efforts to support and respect graduate student aspirations and strengths. We believe we offer "a vibrant student experience" and that we value and support "Integrity, equity, diversity and a balanced life for students, faculty and staff."</p> | <p>Graduate Associate Chair Dean; Associate V-P, Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs (5.2, 5.2.1, 5.6); Provost Student Association of Graduate English (SAGE) Executive</p> | <p>5.1 Ongoing - The introduction in 2018-19 of an oral defense of the dissertation proposal as part of doctoral candidates' area examinations now enables the Associate Chair, Graduate Studies to track PhD supervision at a relatively early stage of students' progress through the program. Efforts to find new ways to track supervision at later stages are ongoing. 5.2 Ongoing - For the 2019-20 recruitment cycle, the Department requested and received an increase to the number of international graduate students it was allowed to admit (it went from 1 to a maximum of 4). For the PhD program, the Department has successfully recruited award-winning students from other universities. The Department will continue its active efforts to recruit diverse, high-quality graduate students. 5.2.1 Complete 5.2.2 Ongoing - The Graduate Studies Committee will discuss this item in Fall 2020. 5.2.3 Complete - In the 2018-19 recruitment cycle, the Department accepted XDM and RCD students from communications, environmental science, and accounting as well as English literature programs. 5.3 Ongoing - Implemented in 2018-19, the new design of PhD area examinations puts students in closer contact with their dissertation committees as they draft their dissertation proposals. 5.4. Ongoing - In 2018-19 the Department's TA Coordinator completed an audit of students to compile data on their teaching workload and address possible differences in hours worked.</p> |

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| <p>for graduate students' experience is well in line with the university's strategic plan -- its desire for "a vibrant student experience" and its value for "Integrity, equity, diversity and a balanced life for students, faculty and staff."</p> <p>5.7 Consider occasionally offering opportunities for PhD students to teach a higher-level.</p> <p>5.8 Support and collaborate with the graduate students' organization</p> <p>5.8.1 collaborate on a "graduate student handbook"</p> <p>5.9 Carefully look into the distribution of graduate supervision</p> | <p>5.7. Graduate student teaching assignments are based on student expertise and Departmental need. The Chair will determine if upper-level courses can be offered to graduate students.</p> <p>5.8. The Department is pleased to work with the Student Association of Graduate English (SAGE). SAGE has indicated an interest in collaborating on a graduate student handbook. The Department will consult with SAGE on creating an updateable resource to aid graduate students in navigating their degree programs.</p> <p>5.9. The distribution of graduate supervision will be investigated by the Associate Chair, Graduate Studies and the Chair. Recommendations will be made to the Graduate Studies Committee and the Department.</p> | <p>One result of the audit is that students now fill out a contract for teaching to safeguard equity in the teaching assignments. The TA Coordinator subsequently completed a time-tracking report, with recommendations, on student hours spent performing TA duties. The Department is implementing those recommendations.</p> <p>5.5 Ongoing - At the Master's level, the Department maintains its one-year MA. At the PhD level, the revamped area examinations rolled out in 2018-19 are designed to improve completion rates by (among other things) increasing early contact between the candidates and their dissertation committees.</p> <p>5.6 Ongoing - The Department continues to highlight graduate student experience, achievements, and organization on its web pages and in its blog.</p> <p>5.7 Ongoing - Teaching opportunities for graduate students continue to be determined by Departmental need. While the Chair tries to offer students this kind of valuable teaching experience, such courses are not always available for graduate students to teach.</p> <p>5.8 Ongoing - The Associate Chair, Graduate Studies has collaborated with SAGE to co-deliver SSHRC and area examination workshops, starting in Fall 2019. This has ensured more effective support for graduate students and a more consistent focus on scholarships.</p> <p>5.8.1 In progress</p> <p>5.9 In progress - The 2019 loss of a faculty member in two highly-subscribed areas of the graduate program, Experimental Digital Media (XDM) and Rhetoric and Communication Design</p> |
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| | | | | (RCD), increases the urgency of addressing this issue. 2020-21: The Graduate Studies Committee will form a task force to examine supervisory loads among English faculty. |
| | <p>Graduate student funding¹</p> <p>6.1 A five-year funding package should be projected for each admitted PhD student, consisting of a combination of teaching remuneration and fellowships. Since the times to completion in English are empirically something over 5 years, in order to make satisfactory progress towards the degree (and not be distracted by external employment) students should be supported for this time period; as well, 5 years of funding is common at many competing English PhD programs.</p> <p>6.2 This package should be clearly communicated to prospective students so that they understand exactly how they can support themselves throughout the degree and the means by which this support is provided.</p> <p>6.3 We recommend that no more than half of the terms during 5 years should be spent in teaching.</p> | <p>6.1-3 Because these recommendations are beyond the scope of the Department of English, they are referred to GSPA and the Faculty of Arts. The Department agrees that a five-year funding package is ideal for all new PhD students. While the Department is taking various steps to ensure timely PhD completion (e.g., a new comprehensive exam structure), a five-year funding package will significantly assist students and assist recruitment.</p> <p>6.2. The Department agrees that it is desirable that letters of offer sent out by GSPA be as clear as possible.</p> <p>6.3. PhD students currently teach or TA 2 courses per year. Reducing that number would, we believe, improve degree completion times.</p> | <p>Dean; Conversations with GSPA</p> | <p>6.1 Complete - In 2018-19 the Dean and Acting Associate Dean, Graduate Studies, of the Faculty of Arts advocated unsuccessfully at GSPA for a five-year funding package for doctoral students in the Faculty.</p> <p>6.2 Complete - The Department's Graduate Coordinator and Graduate Studies Associate Chair provide guidance to students on the interpretation of their letters of offer and explain the means by which the support described in these letters is provided. In particular, they explain the roles that teaching assistantships and graduate teaching play in that support over the duration of their funding packages.</p> <p>6.3 Ongoing - The Associate Chair, Graduate Studies will continue to advocate for a reduction in the teaching currently expected of PhD students.</p> |

¹ This was not identified as a formal recommendation in the external reviewers' report and is being put forward at the suggestion of the program. It is not required to be included in the implementation plan.


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| <p>Staffing² Increasing the number of support staff and honoring and rewarding them appropriately, especially in light of the complexity and necessity of their current roles and the increased logistical workload accompanying the expansion of the writing service courses. Given the unavoidable increase in workload with the introduction of the writing initiative, we feel it would be opportune at this time to reassess the workload and position designations of the entire support staff and include the Department’s human resource needs in the writing initiative planning.</p> | <p>The Department agrees that increasing the number of support staff, giving them appropriate job titles, and reviewing work load and job descriptions are important in order to retain the excellent staff members that we have. These items are referred to the Faculty of Arts.</p> | <p>Chair, Dean</p> | <p>Ongoing In 2018-19 the Chair asked Department staff to keep detailed lists of their activities and to note new tasks they begin to perform, especially in connection with the rollout of UCOI courses in several Faculties. She highlighted these tasks in staff evaluations for 2018-19 and will continue to do so in 2019-20 with the intention of reviewing workload, job titles, and job descriptions. For 2020-21, the Chair has asked Department staff to track time spent on UCOI-related tasks such as scheduling, grad funding management, Provost funds tracking and analysis, and contract preparation. These activities have demanded considerably more time in 2020 owing to the sudden, exponential growth of the Mathematics and Computing first-year class.</p> |
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The Department Chair/Director, in consultation with the Dean of the Faculty shall be responsible for monitoring the Implementation Plan.

² This was not identified as a formal recommendation in the external reviewers' report and is being put forward at the suggestion of the program. It is not required to be included in the implementation plan.

Date of next program review: 2024-25
Date

Signatures of Approval:

 24 June 2021
Chair/Director Date

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

 25/06/2021

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.

 4 January 2021

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

 4 January 2021

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