

Final Assessment Report

History (BA, Minor)

February 2026

Executive Summary

External reviewers were invited to review the **History (BA, Minor)** delivered by the **Department of History**.

“We were very impressed with the outstanding caliber of instructors, who have distinguished themselves in both research and teaching; the quality of course design and the learning opportunities for students; and course and program support, including the department’s two excellent staff members.

Faculty are deeply committed to undergraduate pedagogy and bring both energy and innovation to course development and delivery. Courses are designed with student interests in mind and are informed by faculty research. The program also does an excellent job supporting the development of students’ critical capacities and writing skills through a robust and rigorous Major”

A total of **4** recommendations were provided by the reviewers, regarding revisions to the program structure, field requirements and specialization, and increasing enrollments for upper-level courses. 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 2031-32

Enrollment over the past three years (History)

	General	Honours	Honours Co-op	Minor
2025-2026 (Fall 2025)	8	44	35	62
2024-2025 (Fall 2024)	3	40	37	43
2023-2024 (Fall 2023)	4	43	38	48

*Based on Active Student extract from Quest on 23 February 2026

Enrollments over the past 3 years (Specializations)

	Digital and Public History Specialization	Global Interactions Specialization	International Relations Specialization	Revolutions, War, and Upheaval Specialization
2025-2026 (Fall 2025)	0	1	4	2
2024-2025 (Fall 2024)	0	1	3	5
2023-2024 (Fall 2023)	1	1	4	5

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 **History (BA, Minor)** delivered by the **Department of History**. 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 **January 7, 2025**. The self-study (Volume I) presented the program descriptions and learning outcomes, an analytical assessment of the programs, including data collected from an alumni survey and focus groups with current students, 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: **Associate Professor Jewel L. Spangler, Department of History, University of Calgary;** and **Associate Professor, Rebecca Maley, Department of History Queens University.**

Reviewers appraised the self-study documentation and conducted a site visit to the University on **May 5-8, 2025**. An internal reviewer from the University of Waterloo, **Professor, Vasudevan Lakshminarayanan, Department of Optometry and Vision Sciences** was selected to accompany the external reviewers. The visit included interviews with the **Associate Vice-President, Academic; Dean of the Faculty of Arts; Vice President Academic and Dean (St. Jerome); Faculty Associate Dean of Undergraduate Studies (Arts); Chair of the Department, Associate Chair Undergrad of Department as well as faculty members, staff and current undergraduate students.** The Review Team also had an opportunity meet with representatives from the library, and Co-operative Education.

Following the site visit, the external reviewers submitted a report on their findings, with recommendations. Subsequently, 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

The program offers three pathways to a History Major, which students can declare beginning in their second year

Honours History and Honours History Co-op: Students must maintain a cumulative History Major Average (MAV) of at least 70%

Four-Year General: Students must maintain a cumulative MAV of at least 65%

Three Year General: Students must maintain a cumulative MAV of at least 65%.

Students can also enroll in the Arts and Business (co-op and regular) Program and Major in History.

Specialization (optional)

Students in the Honours History program are eligible to declare a specialization by taking a minimum number of courses in one of four areas:

- Digital and Public History: Explores practical, real-world uses for the past in society and the marketplace.
- Global Interactions: Moves beyond borders to explore human interactions on a global scale.
- International Relations: A shared specialization with Political Science that is available to students majoring in History and/or Political Science.
- Revolution, War, and Upheaval: Examines the impact of conflict on the course of history

History Co-operative Education program (optional)

- Honours students can choose to pursue a History Co-operative Education plan, which involves the completion of a minimum of four Co-op work terms and a minimum of four Professional Development (PD) courses

Minor in History

Students enrolled in any other degree program can choose to pursue a Minor in History. The Minor requires a cumulative History average of at least 65%

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

Strengths

- Our program and plans offer students the freedom to tailor their learning experience to their interests.
- We offer courses on a wide range of topics and provide students with multiple ways of engaging with and interpreting the past.
- We deliver on the expectations of a large department with a limited faculty complement.
- The quality of our teaching is exemplary. This was a main subject of feedback from both our current students and our alumni. Teaching awards are but one of many indicators of teaching excellence, but it is noteworthy that our faculty complement has won a collective five Outstanding Teaching Awards and three Faculty of Arts Teaching Awards.
- We provide first-rate support and advising for student learning and our student learning community. This support has been especially valuable since the COVID-19 pandemic when students have needed additional support.
- Our program is deeply integrated with other programs in Arts and other Faculties. We have long embraced interdisciplinarity, one of the pillars of the Faculty of Arts 2023 Strategic Plan. We demonstrate this commitment to a collective Arts and Waterloo learning experience through the high number of cross-listed courses we offer, our active collaboration with other units, and the flexibility we offer our students.
- The program benefits from the collaboration of colleagues at Conrad Grebel and St. Jerome's.

Challenges

- It can be a challenge to offer a breadth of spring term courses to meet students' curricular requirements, especially co-op students taking a full course load in spring. This challenge has become more acute as sessional budgets have declined.
- We are concerned about our ability to offer the breadth and depth of teaching we presently deliver as our faculty complement changes over time, our sessional budget is constrained, and we do not presently have new prospective faculty lines.
- Clarifying and regularizing the program relationships and structure with the AFIW
 - Our curriculum committee, which has representatives from both the AFIW and the main department, is a collaborative model that could potentially be adopted at higher administrative levels.
- It is a challenge to staff the Department's administrative positions – Chair, Associate Chair Undergraduate, Associate Chair Graduate, and Tri-U director (a three-year term once every six years)
- The formatting constraints of the new Academic Calendar make it difficult for our students to navigate their program requirements

Weaknesses

- The program currently has a large number of courses listed in the academic calendar. Some of these are courses that were taught by colleagues who recently retired or left the university. We need to deactivate courses, as students rightly ask why some courses listed in the calendar are not regularly taught, but we have sometimes struggled to make decisions on which courses to deactivate.
- Providing program information for students in a post-COVID period where students are exhibiting some difficulties in asking for help.

Summary of Key Findings from the External Reviewers

- Retirements and shrinking faculty have reduced the department's ability to offer diverse courses.

- The department is at risk of becoming *too narrow* (reliant on Canadian history) due to faculty losses and budget cuts.
- Financial constraints now require courses to meet higher enrollment targets to justify costs.

External Reviewers' Recommendations and Program/Dean Responses

Recommendation 1: Revise program field requirements.

We suggest simplifying the field requirements. The exact contours of the new fields will need to be determined by the Department, but one option that we would suggest for consideration consists of one course in Canadian history and one course that addresses global issues or adopts a more global perspective, broadly conceived. We also advise expanding the type of course that is eligible to fulfil the field requirement from the current band of courses at the 200 level to all courses beyond the first-year level, including 400 level courses. To this end, a new 400 level course number could be added (423) that meets the global requirement.

Program Response

Our curriculum committee and wider Department have agreed upon new, simplified field requirements. We are planning to retire most of the existing fields, which are confusing to students and are not very flexible. It has become difficult to offer some of these courses due to faculty departures and retirements. Furthermore, as the external reviewers' report indicates, our current regional fields "no longer reflect the state of the discipline" and are overly focused on the Global North. The three new fields will be: Global History, Canadian History, and Pre-1800 History. These new requirements ensure both temporal and spatial breadth while maintaining the Canadian requirement, which we feel is important based on our location and the number of faculty specializing in this area. In the last few years, we have also expanded our Global History offerings and the number of faculty with expertise in this field. Students will be able to choose from a list of 200 and 300-level courses to meet these requirements. Expanding the field courses to include 300-level courses will significantly increase students' options while still being easy to understand. Overall, the new requirements will be much easier to understand and meet. These changes have been approved at the Arts Undergraduate Affairs Group (UGAG) and, if approved at the subsequent levels of academic governance, would take effect in Fall 2026. In contrast, including 400-level courses as recommended could create a lot of confusion, as our current 400-level course format is based on special topics that rotate from term to term and are often highly specialized. The flexibility of these 400-level courses allows our faculty and students to engage with topics, themes, and case studies that don't consistently get covered in

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our curriculum, widening the breadth of our offerings. If we added a 423 course for the global field requirement, we would need to do the same for our other fields. Practically, we can't offer more than two 400-level courses per term, so the field courses would essentially take over the scheduling, limiting the flexibility of topics at this level.

VPAD (St. Jerome) Response

St. Jerome's supports the program response. We have three full-time tenured faculty members in History who are mid-career and can continue to support the new fields.

Dean's Response (Arts)

The Dean of Arts supports the program response, which manages the integrity of the curriculum while working with existing teaching capacity and student requirements.

Recommendation 2: Reimagine the specializations, focusing on interdisciplinarity

We believe that the current International Relations specialization is a good model to follow. It is interdisciplinary, requiring Political Science majors to take some history courses as well as the reverse. Seeking to develop reciprocal specializations with other Social Science or Humanities programs would be a way to lean into the reorganization, potentially attract new majors, and gain some enrolments in history courses from students in other Arts programs. See 3.2 above for some possibilities to consider. We also recommend discontinuing the existing specializations that are offered solely by History, as they have not attracted as much student interest as one might hope for, constrain course offerings, and are not set up to bring new students into History classes.

Program Response

We agree that the specializations should be changed and have discussed multiple reciprocal options to consider, such as Human Rights, Law, and Justice (which could be linked to Sociology & Legal Studies). We would like to make these changes once the new Faculty reorganization structure has been implemented, as this will allow for further synergies between programs, ensuring longer-term sustainability of these new offerings. We are also considering implementing thematic minors (as Political Science has done), rather than specializations, as this will enable students who are not in History to pursue these minors. We will look to finalize these changes once reorganization has occurred.

VPAD (St. Jerome) Response

St. Jerome's supports the program recommendation and looks forward to conversations about how our other shared disciplines can collaborate on interdisciplinarity under the new schools structure.

Dean's Response (Arts)

The Dean of Arts supports these initiatives and hopes that the new interdisciplinary school to which History will belong will encourage and cultivate new programming to engage students and maximize the intellectual and creative potential of our faculty.

Recommendation 3: Clarify program structure and prune class list.

Should the Department opt to change the field requirements, as recommended above, it should also revisit the structure of the program, which currently treats the field courses as a distinct category. More generally, this presents an opportunity to clarify the difference between 200 and 300 level courses. We would encourage the Department to have a discussion devoted to how these differ in terms of reading loads, assessment types, learning outcomes, format, and support (i.e., tutorials, discussion components, etc.). We also advise pruning the class list to remove courses that can no longer be taught due to faculty departures. Reducing the course list will help students navigate the program, given the cumbersome layout of the degree requirements in the university's academic calendar and offer students a more realistic sense of the courses they can expect to see offered.

Program Response

In Fall 2025, our curriculum committee and wider Department will meet to discuss and better define the key pedagogical differences between our 200- and 300-level courses. Additionally, we are in the final stages of retiring many courses. After extensive consultation, we have settled on a list of nineteen courses to retire. These are all courses that no longer fit with the priorities of our program, have not been taught for a long time, or are not likely to be taught in the foreseeable future due to faculty retirements and hiring freezes. These changes have been approved at UGAG and, if approved at the subsequent levels of academic governance, would take effect in Fall 2026.

VPAD (St. Jerome) Response

St. Jerome's will support departmental and Faculty of Arts decisions here.

Dean's Response (Arts)

The Dean of Arts supports the departmental response

Recommendation 4: Develop a plan to increase enrolments at the 200 and 300 level while strategically protecting select lower-enrolment courses

We recommend that the Department develop a few new in-person courses that are likely to enroll well and have potential to attract non-History students and expand the pool of potential History minors. We also recommend that the Department work with the Faculty to develop a plan to protect lower enrolment courses of particular strategic importance to the program and the university, most notably the program's newly developed courses in Indigenous history.

Program Response

In Fall 2025, we will be submitting two new 200-level courses that will likely draw a significant number of non-History students: 1) The History of Death, and 2) Violence, Justice, and Memory. The former will examine the history of death – a universal experience – in societies around the world. We anticipate that it will draw students from a range of disciplines in Arts and could be an elective for students from Health or STEM. The latter explores how communities around the world have sought to reckon with and remember historical atrocities using various transitional justice mechanisms. It will likely draw students from Legal Studies, Political Science, Psychology, and Peace and Conflict Studies, and may be cross listed with Legal Studies and/or Peace and Conflict Studies. Both courses will be included in the Global History field. We are also looking to cross-list several of our existing courses to boost enrolment, including our courses in Indigenous History. We have already had meetings with the Faculty of Arts to discuss options to protect newer, lower enrolment courses in Indigenous History.

VPAD (St. Jerome) Response

I wonder if the History of Death would work well in the Health Humanities program housed at St. Jerome's. I will raise this possibility with the Chair of History and the program director of Health Humanities. I appreciate the departments thoughtful response here.

Dean's Response (Arts)

The Dean of Arts supports the department's response, but cautions that minimum enrolment levels for courses (or sections thereof) will continue to be monitored.

Recommendations Not Selected for Implementation

none

Implementation Plan

	Recommendations	Proposed Actions	Responsibility for Leading and Resourcing (if applicable) the Actions	Timeline for addressing Recommendations
1.	Revise program field requirements	Replace our existing field requirements with three new field requirements: Global History, Canadian History, and Pre-1800 History.	Undergraduate Associate Chair	Fall 2025 – Spring 2026
2.	Reimagine the specializations, focusing on interdisciplinarity	Discuss the future of existing specializations (we have already cancelled one), and the establishment of joint specializations with other programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Department Chair, Undergraduate Associate Chair, Undergraduate Curriculum Committee (until summer 2026) School Director and other relevant administrative officers (after summer 2026)	Fall 2025 - 2027
3.	Clarify program structure and prune class list	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Retire a list of courses Discuss pedagogical “scaffolding” of 200- and 300-level courses	Department Chair, Undergraduate Associate Chair, Undergraduate Curriculum Committee	Fall 2025 - Spring 2026
4.	Develop a plan to increase enrolments at the 200 and 300 level while strategically protecting select lower-enrolment courses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Submit new 200 level course offerings - Discuss cross-listing several existing courses with other programs Discuss with Faculty of Arts the issue of select lower-enrollment courses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Department Chair and Undergraduate Associate Chair (until summer 2026) School Director and other relevant administrative officers (after summer 2026)	Fall 2025 - 2027

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

Date of next program review

2031/32

Date

Signatures of Approval



Please keep this document in Word version. We do require you to sign it or demonstrate your approval. If you have issues with signing a Word document, please confirm your approval by adding the following wording when you send back the document by email "I hereby approve the attached document." We will collect formal signatures at a later stage on a pdf version.



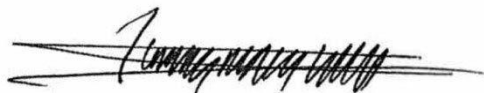
February 26, 2026

Chair/Director

Date

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

Date

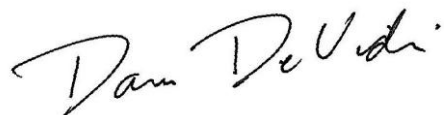


April 28, 2026

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.



February 19th, 2026

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

Date



Associate Vice-President, Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs

Date

(For graduate and augmented programs)